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The Difficulties of Conversion

Non-Catholic Students in Jesuit Colleges in Western Hungary in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century

The societies of the multiethnic and multilingual region of Central Europe became more diverse through the emergence of distinct confessions (Konfessionalisierung). The first half of the seventeenth century is especially interesting in this regard. In this period, the Catholic Church started to win back its positions in the Hungarian Kingdom as well, but the institutionalization of the Protestant denominations had by that time essentially reached completion. The schools, which were sustained by the various denominations, became the most efficient devices of religious education, persuasion and conversion. In this essay I present, through the example of the Jesuit colleges of western Hungary, the denominational proportions and movements of the students in the largely non-Catholic urban settings. Examining two basic types of sources, the annual accounts (*Litterae Annuae*) of the Society of Jesus and the registries of the Jesuit colleges in Győr and Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia), I compare and contrast the data and venture an answer to questions regarding the kinds of opportunities non-Catholic students had in the Jesuit colleges. In contrast with the assertions made in earlier historiography, I conclude that conversion was not so widespread in the case of the non-Catholic students of the Jesuits. They were not discriminated against in their education, and some of them remained true to their confessions to the end of their studies in the colleges.

Keywords: conversion, Jesuit colleges, school registries, annual accounts (*Litterae Annuae*), denominations in towns, urban history, Hungary, Győr, Pozsony, Pressburg, Bratislava, Sopron

A student, the son of a soldier or a burgher, took leave of Calvinism, an act with which he completely infuriated his parents, so much so that his father planned to kill him. What did this young man do then? He unhesitatingly went down on his knees and cleared his neck for the lethal strike. ‘Do it, father’ he said, ‘do as you wish. I do not want to live as a bad Christian.’ The father was softened at the sight of this heroic cry. Moved, he kissed his son and burst into tears, and shortly, he followed his son’s example.¹

1 *Litterae Annuae* 1639. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Handschriftensammlung (= ÖNB) Cod. 12218. 358r. – My research in Rome and in Vienna was supported by the scholarships of “Campus Hungary” (2013) and “Collegium Hungaricum (CH/2)” (2013) of the Balassi Institute (Budapest).

The annual account (*Litterae Annuae*) of the Győr Jesuit College from the year 1639 describes a typical example of conversion in the case of an unusually dauntless student.² Based on the college's registries of students (*matriculae*) from the seventeenth century, he may well have been Ferenc Teyfalvai, a student who is mentioned in 1638 as a Calvinist but in 1640 as a Roman Catholic.³ By examining the two above mentioned basic types of sources, the annual accounts and the registries of the Jesuit colleges in Győr and Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia), and comparing and contrasting their data, I have sought an answer to the question concerning the opportunities non-Catholic students had in the Jesuit colleges in Western Hungary. Was conversion really as "self-evident" as has been assumed, primarily on the basis of the narrative sources?

In the worldwide process of "Catholic renewal," the Habsburg Monarchy and the Hungarian Kingdom, as part of the "militant Church," were in a distinctive position because of the variety of nations and denominations. Moreover, the religious situation of Hungary in the Habsburg state-conglomerate was unique.⁴ In the Kingdom of Hungary, the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century were not yet an era of forceful Counter-Reformation, but rather one of the "missionary seigniorial Counter-Reformation."⁵ There was no state intervention in religious life, nothing comparable to the activity of the Klostersrat in the Austrian hereditary provinces at the end of the sixteenth century, for instance. Furthermore, after the Bocskai uprising (1604–06), the Habsburg dynasty was

2 The story resembles the conversion of Zsigmond Holló, which was also the object of numerous school dramas, see below. Pintér Márta Zsuzsanna, "A jezsuita ifjúság 17. századi példaképe: Holló Zsigmond," in *Historicus Societatis Iesu: Szilas László Emlékkönyv*, ed. Antal Molnár, Csaba Szilágyi, and István Zombori, METEM Könyvek 62 (Budapest: METEM, 2007), 322–31.

3 *Catalogus discipulorum Jauriensis Gymnasii Societatis Jesu, 1630–1668*. Pannonhalmi Főapátsági Könyvtár Kézirattára, 120b A 19. (= *Cat.Jaur.*) 44v, 47v.

4 On the contemporary religious situation of the Habsburg Empire see: Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht: Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im Konfessionellen Zeitalter*, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Österreichische Geschichte 1522–1699*, ed. Herwig Wolfram (Vienna: Verlag Carl Ueberreuter, 2003), 9–90. Cf. R. Po-chia Hsia, "Introduction", in *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770*. 2nd edition (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 7–8.

5 On the notion of "missionary seigniorial counter-reformation" ("térítő földesúri ellenreformáció") see: Katalin Péter, "A jezsuiták működésének első szakasza Sárospatakon," in Katalin Péter, *Papok és nemesek: Magyar művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból*, A Ráday Gyűjtemény tanulmányai 8 (Budapest: Ráday Gyűjtemény, 1995), 186–99, and István Fazekas, "Falusi közösségek hitváltoztatása a XVII. században," in István Fazekas, *A reform útján: A katolikus megújulás Nyugat-Magyarországon*, A Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár Kiadványai, Források, feldolgozások 20 (Győr: Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár, 2014), 187–95.

forced to reach a compromise with the Hungarian Estates.⁶ In spite of the Thirty Years' War and the reorganization of power, the Protestant population, which constituted the significant majority at the beginning of the century, only started to lose numerical superiority gradually, and did not reach a critical period, the so-called Protestant "Decade of sorrow" (1671–81), until the reign of Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary.

Scholarship on conversion in Hungary, which is based on a more limited range of sources than similar scholarship in Western Europe, can also be furthered through case studies and intensive analysis. In addition to providing data, such as the numbers of conversions, information regarding the converts (such as their social status and relationships), and the institutional background of conversions (religious orders, papal institutions, educational institutions, missions, etc.), recent research has focused on the personal motivations, distinguishing between "real" and "unreal, extrinsic" conversions and shedding light on the preparation for, processes involved in, and consequences of conversion, and devising a new typology of the act.

Lieke Stelling and Todd M. Richardson examine a particular aspect of the theme by focusing on the individual and the "turn of the soul." The volume of essays edited by them concentrates on three subjects: agency, authenticity and imitation. It presents the complexity of cases of conversion by drawing on literary compositions and works of the visual arts.⁷ Although I do not have many sources on which I could base conjectures regarding personal motivations, as I hope to make evident, the example of Zsigmond Holló can be interpreted as a kind of connecting point between the theme of conversion and works of literature because of the school dramas written about his case. Ricarda Matheus examined the process of conversions on the basis of the example of a central institution for conversion in Rome, the Ospizio dei Convertendi. Because of the large multitude and the denominational, national and cultural diversity of the converts, this subject can be studied from a number of perspectives. Research has shown that the central, elaborate method of conversion was adapted to

6 Cf. Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, transl. J. Thomas and Helen D. DeKornfeld, CHSP Hungarian Studies Series 18, East European Monographs 735 (Boulder, Col.: Social Science Monographs, 2009), 209–33.

7 Lieke Stelling and Todd M. Richardson: "Introduction," in *The Turn of the Soul: Representations of Religious Conversion in Early Modern Art and Literature*, ed. Lieke Stelling, Harald Hendrix, and Todd M. Richardson, *Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture* 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–17.

the circumstances of individual converts.⁸ (Case studies could also compile data regarding the converts who arrived from a single state, e.g. from Hungary.) Ines Peper analyzed cases of conversion in the Habsburg Court in Vienna. Her analysis sheds light on the indicator role of the Court of a monarch and on the public discussion in connection with the conversion of a member of a dynasty on the basis of the example of later empress Elisabeth Christine von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.⁹ The questions raised by researchers are summarized in the study by Jörg Deventer.¹⁰ He enumerates the most important problems of conversion research. There are many problems with the numerical data, because the different types of sources have varying relationships to the numbers. He also mentions the annual reports of the Jesuits, which often give very high numbers of converts, even tens of thousands. The second question concerns the inclusion of social classes, because we have detailed knowledge about aristocrats and nobles, but we know almost nothing about members of the lower classes, the “anonyms.” Third, researchers have to reckon with the institutions, the various opportunities and manners of conversion, which ranged from persuasion to the use of military force. Finally, Deventer cautions his reader to examine conversion as a complex phenomenon and study not only its spiritual, but also its social, cultural, political and economic aspects.¹¹

In this paper I focus on a special type of institution, the Jesuit college, which played a prominent role in the conversion processes and in the realization of the Tridentine reforms in the Early Modern period. In addition to the annual reports (*Litterae Annuae*) of the Jesuits, which are widely used by historians,¹² I also use the college registers of pupils (*matriculae*) as control sources. My

8 Cf. Ricarda Matheus, “Forschungsstand,” in *Konversionen in Rom in der Frühen Neuzeit: Das Ospizio dei Convertendi 1673–1750*, Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom 126 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 3–18.

9 Cf. Ines Peper, “Einleitung,” in *Konversionen im Umkreis des Wiener Hofes um 1700*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 55 (Vienna–Munich: Böhlau–Oldenbourg, 2010), 13–28.

10 Jörg Deventer, “Konversionen zwischen den christlichen Konfessionen im frühneuzeitlichen Europa,” *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 7, no. 2 (2007): 8–24 (with a comprehensive bibliography).

11 These questions are also studied by Martin Scheutz, “Glaubenswechsel als Massenphänomen in der Habsburgermonarchie im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Konversionen bei Hof sowie die ‘Bekehrung’ der Namenlosen,” in *Geheimprotestantismus und evangelische Kirchen in der Habsburgermonarchie und im Erzstift Salzburg (17./18. Jahrhundert)*, ed Rudolf Leeb, Martin Scheutz, and Dietmar Weikl, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 51 (Vienna–Munich: Böhlau–Oldenbourg, 2009), 431–55.

12 On the genre and documentary value of the *Litterae Annuae* see: Markus Friedrich, “Circulating and compiling the litterae annuae: Towards a history of the Jesuit system of communication,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 153 (2008): 3–37.

intention is to investigate the confessional identity of non-Catholic students of the Jesuit colleges in Western Hungary and, more specifically, their decisions to maintain their faith or convert.¹³ The aforementioned problems with numbers, the difficulties of identifying the individuals, and the question of motivations emerge in this case study as well, although these problems can rarely be solved.

Jesuit Colleges and Their Students

As of the 1610s, the Society of Jesus, which had come into being in the sixteenth century, began to expand rapidly in the Eastern territories of the Habsburg Monarchy, including Hungary. After the establishments in Zágráb (today Zagreb, Croatia) (1607), Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia) (1615) and Homonna (today Humenné, Slovakia) (1615), new colleges were opened in Pozsony and Győr in 1626–27 and Sopron in 1636. These institutions, according to the Jesuits' assimilation strategy, were adapted to the local conditions. Despite the Hungarian prohibition (act 8/1608. before the coronation),¹⁴ according to which the order was not allowed to possess estates in the Kingdom of Hungary, they managed to obtain suitable buildings and estates with pontifical and aristocratic support. By this time, the profile of the Society of Jesus as a “teaching order” had proven essential. The order's members had therefore increasingly undertaken to educate the laity on the basis of their uniform educational code, the *Ratio Studiorum*, published in 1599.¹⁵ They provided free education to anyone who met the minimal admission requirements, regardless of background and circumstances.

In this period, the region of Western Hungary was a frontier between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire, a borderland of Hungary. Essentially the two ruling forces in the communities were the town councils on the one hand and the military troops stationed in them on the other. The Jesuits found

13 The registries have only been used to a lesser extent and with debatable success, e.g. Sándor Horváth, “Horvát diákok a nyugat-magyarországi jezsuita gimnáziumokban a XVII–XVIII. században,” in *A magyar jezsuiták küldetése a kezdetektől napjainkig*, ed. Csaba Szilágyi. Művelődéstörténeti Műhely Rendtörténeti konferenciák 2. (Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, 2006), 520–38. The analysis of the *matriculae* is proposed by István Fazekas, “Bevezetés helyett: katolikus megújulás a győri egyházmegyében a XVI. és XVII. században (kutatási lehetőségek és eredmények),” in Fazekas, *A reform útján*, 15.

14 Dezső Márkus, ed., *Corpus juris Hungarici. Magyar törvénytár: 1608–1657. évi törvénykezések*, trans. Sándor Kolosvári and Kelemen Óvári (Budapest: Franklin-társulat, 1900), 15.

15 On the early phase of the development of the Jesuit college as an institution see: Ladislaus Lukács, “De origine collegiorum externorum deque controversiis circa eorum paupertatem obortis (1539–1608),” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 29 (1960): 189–245, 30 (1961): 3–89.

strong Lutheran and significant Calvinist communities, as well as multilingual and multiethnic populations in each of the three towns under examination, namely the free royal towns of Pozsony and Sopron and the episcopal market town and captain-general headquarters of Győr. Despite the conflicts accompanying the settlement of the Society of Jesus in towns with Lutheran leaderships (Pozsony, Sopron) and with local ecclesiastical institutions such as the chapters (Pozsony, Győr), all these new Jesuit establishments and colleges were successful.¹⁶ Within a couple of years, they functioned in a 5–7-year system with a large number—indeed hundreds—of students. The geographical catchment area of these schools exceeded even the regional boundaries (from Poland to the Croatian Trans-Drava regions, from Switzerland and the Holy Roman Empire to the Principality of Transylvania).

For the Jesuit colleges in Pozsony, which at the time functioned as the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the free royal town of Sopron, the local Lutheran schools were the most significant competitors. The Lutheran community of Pozsony, which had had its own pastor since 1606, soon established a new school, to which a schoolmaster was invited from Bavaria. The institution was organized on the model of the town of Lauingen, according to the humanist Johann Sturm's pedagogical method.¹⁷ A similar 4-year Latin school functioned in Sopron, which, after modest beginnings in the sixteenth century, flourished later on in the period in question.¹⁸ The arrival of Jesuits who settled in their community touched a tender spot for the Sopron city leadership, and they reacted immediately. According to one of the October 24, 1636 entries in the Ratsprotokoll (the minutes of the town council), they demanded that the

16 On the foundation of each college see: Tamás Dénesi, "Missziótól a kollégiumig: Jezsuiták Pozsonyban 1635-ig," *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok* 10, no. 3–4 (1998): 87–115; Zsófia Kádár, "A jezsuiták letelepedése és kollégiumalapítása Győrben (1626–1630)," in *In labore fructus: Jubileumi tanulmányok Győregyházmegye történetéből*, ed. Gábor Nemes and Ádám Vajk, A Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár Kiadványai, Források, feldolgozások 13 (Győr: Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár, 2011), 209–34; Zsófia Kádár, "A soproni jezsuita kollégium kezdetei: Dobronoki György SJ superiorása (1636–1640)," *Soproni Szemle* 65 (2011): 381–402, 66 (2012): 54–70; Zsófia Kádár, "Jesuitische Kolleggründungen im westungarischen Raum in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts: Die Beispiele von Győr/Raab und Sopron/Ödenburg," in *Frühneuzeitforschung in der Habsburgermonarchie: Adel und Wiener Hof – Konfessionalisierung – Siebenbürgen*, ed. István Fazekas et al., Publikationen der Ungarischen Geschichtsforschung in Wien 7 (Vienna: Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung in Wien, 2013), 155–70.

17 Cf. Sámuel Markusovszky, *A pozsonyi ág. hitv. evang. lyceum története kapcsolatban a pozsonyi ág. hitv. evang. egyház multijával* (Pozsony: Eder István, 1896), 1–31.

18 Cf. Sándor Payr, *A reformáció kezdetétől az 1681. évi soproni országgyűlésig*, vol. 1 of *A soproni evangélikus egyházközösség története* (Sopron: Soproni Ág. Hitv. Evang. Egyházközösség, 1917), 202, 297–99.

leadership of the Lutheran school pay more attention to the youth because of the “danger from the Jesuit side,” and that the students remain together even in the afternoon so that the Holy Scripture could be expounded to them, and that they perform the vespers (evening service) in the proper order (the town offered to help the schoolmasters if necessary).¹⁹ The assumed competition seems to be justified by the fact that in 1638 the inner council proposed new motions in connection with the school that reflect the Jesuit model. They prescribed that the students compose essays and poems and perform orations and religious school dramas, that weekly revisions and rewards be introduced, and that the discipline among the students be improved.²⁰

In Győr there was no functioning Protestant school in the period under discussion. Although the number of Lutherans and Calvinists was significant here too, by the middle of the century, because of the efforts of the bishops, the Jesuits, and the captain generals of Győr (Philipp Graf von Mansfeld and Maximilian von Liechtenstein, who were already Catholic), the influence of the Counter-Reformation had become perceptible. Still, given the fact that there was really no alternative, it is probable that the highest number of non-Catholic students attended the Győr Jesuit College. According to Lutheran historian Sándor Payr, the Lutheran and Calvinist students “were not accepted into the higher classes of poetics and rhetorics unless they converted.”²¹ This view is characteristic of the earlier historiography. However, the registry entries prove otherwise.

Models of Conversion in the Annual Reports

But let us first return to the source of the aforementioned annual reports, which serves as the best basis for comparison in the case of these three Transdanubian colleges. Despite the fact that the usefulness of these accounts is limited due to their generic features (the uses to which they were put within the order, their propagandistic functions, the tendency for anonymity, and the repetition of

19 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Levéltárának Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Város Levéltára, Ratsprotokoll, October 24, 1636.

20 Cf. Sándor Kolosvári and Kelemen Óvári, eds., *A dunántúli törvényhatóságok jogszabályai*, vol. 5, bk. 2 of *A magyar törvényhatóságok jogszabályainak gyűjteménye* (Budapest: n.p., 1904), 187–88. The statute of free royal town Sopron (1638), point 2.

21 Sándor Payr, *A Dunántúli Evangélikus Egyházkerület története*, vol. 1 (Sopron: Székely és Társa, 1924), 370.

schematic stories),²² they nonetheless help fill a gap in the historiography on this geographical area at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The *historia domus* in Sopron is the only one preserved since its foundation, while of the one in Pozsony only a fragment is known, and of the one in Győr, nothing. However, the annual accounts before 1651 do not commemorate the major events of the year in thematic order, but rather according to colleges, so they are much richer in detail compared to later entries, and sometimes the cases of conversion, which regrettably are mentioned only anonymously, provide a very detailed image after one has peeled off the topical elements.

I focus on accounts of the conversion of children or youths.²³ These suggest that, apart from the more “urgent” cases of elderly people nearing death, the Fathers paid close attention to the young, who were regarded as the pledges of the future.

1. In what was from the Jesuits’ point of view the least successful case, the youngster recognized the truth of the Catholic faith, but fearing the wrath of his Protestant family, did not openly convert, as for instance in the case of an early example from Győr.²⁴

2. In some cases, conversion was furthered by some external influence, such as miraculous recovery from an illness. In 1637 in Pozsony, two students of the Protestant school weakened in their newly acquired Catholic belief, so as a “punishment” they were both injured. They only recuperated after they had reaffirmed their Catholic faith.²⁵

3. The most frequent type of conversion involved the freshly converted student who was incited against his “papist” faith by his family and was threatened or hindered in the practice of his religion. This type is well-known in the literature, because of the abovementioned example of Zsigmond Holló. He was the son of a Lutheran nobleman, a tricesimator in Szepesség (today Spiš, Slovakia). As young student in the Homonna Jesuit college, he converted in the 1610s. From his funeral sermon we know the story of his conversion, which is very similar to the case mentioned at the beginning of this study. His father wanted to kill him because of his “apostasy,” but the boy adhered to his faith despite the threat of death. Seeing this, his father converted as well. This

22 Cf. note 11.

23 The conversion reports of juveniles are repeated in the *Litterae Annuae* almost every year; in the cases of Pozsony and Győr from 1630, and of Sopron from 1636.

24 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (= ARSI), Austr. 135, 684 (Győr, 1630).

25 ÖNB Cod. 12218, 243v (Pozsony, 1637).

case became so popular that in multi-confessional Upper-Hungary more school-dramas were written about him. These dramas were performed in the Hungarian Jesuit colleges, so the example of Holló probably incited other conversions as well.²⁶ In addition to these examples, one could also mention the case of a nine-year-old boy who had to bear his Lutheran mother's persecutions after having converted because of his attraction to the Holy Sacrament and the Holy Trinity and for wearing a rosary under his clothes.²⁷ Another pupil from Győr was threatened with death for his faith.²⁸ In another case, in 1647 the family of two youths who had converted to Catholicism wanted to make them eat meat mixed with bread during a time of fasting, but as soon as they noticed the trick, they disgorged the entire meal rather than fall from grace.²⁹ In Sopron a student held out successfully against his family, which wanted to reconvert him, for half a year. An attempt was made to corrupt another young boy by his mother, who used a maid, in vain.³⁰ We know of other similar stories from Pozsony.³¹ For instance, a seven-year-old boy, holding out against his family, wanted to attend Catholic services,³² and another student left his home for the sake of his conversion.³³

4. To the missionaries' great delight, the families of the students watched the boys' examples not with outrage, but with interest. An entry from 1630 mentions the conversion of a seventy-year-old nobleman, who converted under the influence of his son.³⁴ In Győr, Catholic practices and the strict penitence of a former Lutheran and a Calvinist student sufficed to prompt their families to convert as well.³⁵

5. In extraordinary situations, the convert not only became an earnest believer, but also entered priesthood, as an allegedly talented pupil of the College of Sopron did in 1643.³⁶

By mentioning negative examples in the annual accounts, the Jesuits in a few rare cases admitted not only their achievements, but also their limitations. In an

26 Cf. Pintér, *A jezsuita ifjúság*.

27 ÖNB Cod. 12218, 451r. (Győr, 1640).

28 Ibid., 12219, 136r. (Győr, 1642).

29 Ibid., 12220, 38v. (Győr, 1647).

30 Ibid., 12219, 81r. (Sopron, 1641), ÖNB Cod. 12220, 345r–v. (Sopron, 1650).

31 E.g. ARSI Austr. 136, 385. (Pozsony, 1635).

32 ÖNB Cod. 12220, 50r. (Pozsony, 1647).

33 Ibid., 226v. (Pozsony, 1649).

34 ARSI Austr. 135, 681. (Pozsony, 1630).

35 ÖNB Cod. 12219, 136r–v. (Győr, 1642).

36 Ibid., 180r. (Sopron, 1643).

exceptional case, a Catholic pupil came into conflict with his own faith. In the College of Pozsony a student who strayed from the true path reviled the Virgin Mary and the saints, so he was imprisoned and then expelled from the college.³⁷ The accounts sometimes mention the opposite extreme too, when Catholic students helped the Fathers convert Protestants.³⁸ However, in most cases the data only includes the number of converted students: in Győr 23 pupils were converted in 1630 and 20 in 1647. In Pozsony 5 were converted in 1646 and 6 in 1647.³⁹

Counting Conversions in the School Registries

As it is clear, the schools were one of the main scenes of the rivalry between the confessions. Although the first half of the seventeenth century could be considered part of the period of the Counter-Reformation, bearing the stamp of influence of Archbishop Péter Pázmány (1616–37), the situation of the Protestant communities was not especially difficult in spite of the Catholic confession-building tendencies. The numerical superiority of Protestants was unquestionable in the whole territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. It is no wonder that in each of the three towns under discussion (but primarily in Pozsony and Sopron, both of which had Lutheran schools) all of the schools strove to attract more pupils. As no investigation of the Protestant institutions of the era is possible on the individual level due to the lack of relevant sources, the oldest school *matriculae* from the Győr and Pozsony Jesuit colleges, which cover the first half and the middle of the seventeenth century, are especially valuable. (The earliest registries from Sopron unfortunately have been lost or have not yet been found.) The value of the data they contain cannot be overestimated: their social, educational, cultural, and local historical significance is striking. To my knowledge, they have not yet been used in the historical research on Pozsony. In the case of Győr, Ferenc Acsay, who wrote the history of the local college, used the registry. But computer databases open up new perspectives in this field as well.⁴⁰ By organizing the data on the individual pupils in separate rows (records), one can examine changes in longer terms on the level of the individuals. I compare and contrast the available data from the viewpoint of denominational affiliation and

37 Ibid., 12218, 448r.

38 Ibid., 12218, 245r. (Győr, 1637), ÖNB Cod. 12220, 38r. (Győr, 1647).

39 ARSI Austr. 135, 684., ÖNB Cod. 12220, 38r., ÖNB Cod. 12219, 404r., ÖNB Cod. 12220, 50r.

40 Ferenc Acsay, *A győri kath. főgimnázium története 1626–1900* (Győr: n.p., 1901), 88–143.

conversion from 19 years of the first two decades of the Győr registry (1630–50)⁴¹ with the available data from 9 years of the first decade of the Pozsony registry (1650–59).⁴² As the data regarding denominational affiliations is known for a high percentage of the pupils, the study can be considered representative.

In Győr, during the period in question, the denominational affiliations of 1,586 out of 2,836 students are known, which means a majority (56 percent). The chronological distribution of these entries is somewhat narrower than the whole period. This means on the one hand that the registry preserved scattered data about the denominational affiliations of the students only as of 1634. The earliest information about religion is linked with a senior student of rhetoric, the Lutheran András Huditiusz from Besztercebánya (today Banská Bystrica, Slovakia).⁴³ On the other hand, the entries regarding denominational affiliation became more regular in 1637, but data are still missing on individuals or whole classes.

The majority of the students were Catholic, in the case of Győr three-quarters (75.3 percent). They were followed in number by the Lutherans, who constituted one-fifth (19.6 percent) of the students. Compared to them, a considerably smaller share, only 4.7 percent, were Calvinists. The two examples of “heretics” (perhaps also Protestants) represent extraordinary cases, as does the Israelite pupil Izsák Vecker, who attended the College of Győr (as a principist) for a single year.⁴⁴

As the Table 1 shows, only an insignificant minority of the Protestant students converted, 47 pupils altogether. This means that the Jesuits’ missionary work was successful in the case of 13.5 percent of the Lutherans and 9.3 percent of the Calvinists. Therefore, the registry data does not confirm the favorable picture drawn by the Jesuit accounts.

41 Data from 1639 and partly from 1645 are missing. In 1644, schooling was interrupted due to the plague.

42 The register of 1655 is missing. The Pozsony register: *Matrica gymnasii Poseniensis ab anno 1650 usque ad annum 1725*, Esztergomi Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár, Coll. Batthyány, Cat. IX. Lit. Tit. I. f. (= *Matr. Pos.*).

43 *Cat. Jaur.*, 21v.

44 *Ibid.*, 25v. – We also know of other converted Israelites, especially young boys and their mothers, e.g. from Eperjes (today Prešov, Slovakia) in 1701, cf. Paul Shore, *Narratives of Adversity. Jesuits on the Eastern Peripheries of the Habsburg Realms 1640–1773* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2012), 102.

Denomination	Number of Students	Converts
Catholic	1,195	
Lutheran	311	42
Calvinist	75	7
“Schismaticus”	2	
“Haereticus”	2	
Israelite	1	
Altogether	1,586	49

Table 1. The denominational division of the students of the Győr Jesuit College (1630–50)

As further investigation of the registry entries reveals, in the multiethnic College of Győr the vast majority of the Lutheran pupils were Hungarian, and there were also smaller numbers of Germans, Slavs (Slovaks), Croats, and Transylvanian Saxons. The Calvinists, with the one exception of an Italian student (Rodolphus Picina),⁴⁵ were all Hungarians. Compared to the total number of the students, therefore, the Hungarians were overrepresented in both Protestant denominations.

The proportion of non-Catholic students within the individual grades does not deviate from the total. It is also noteworthy that in both colleges (the one in Pozsony and the one in Győr), not only the fluctuation of teachers but also the fluctuation of students was very high. The majority of the pupils only went to one college for one or two years. Almost half of the students only attended the lower—the principia and the parvist—classes. In light of this, it is remarkable that the chances of conversion did not necessarily increase with the number of years spent in the college. Among the non-converts, the “record-holder” is the Lutheran child of a noble family, Márton Szombaty, from Győr, who completed the 5 grades of the college in 9 years but did not convert.⁴⁶ Among the Calvinists, István Collar could be mentioned, who, after having finished his studies in 6 years, still remained true to his faith.⁴⁷

Unfortunately the sources do not enable us to retrace the individual stories of the converts. It is interesting, however, that of the Lutheran converts, on the basis of the registry entry 10 were from Győr. The high proportion of the local

45 *Cat. Jaur.*, 46r.

46 *Ibid.*, 24v, 30r, 32v, 36v, 42v, 47r, 51r, 54v.

47 *Ibid.*, 17v, 23v, 29r, 31v, 35v, 41v.

residents is also supported by the fact that in the Győr registry of citizens⁴⁸ the surnames of these pupils are sometimes included. The same surnames occur in the last wills in Győr, although given the lack of sources we cannot even be certain of the identity of the people denoted by the same names. Nevertheless, I found one example. György Lesemprot (Lesenpront) from Győr, who attended at least 4 classes taught by Jesuits in 1637–42 and in 1640 was, as a syntaxist, already Catholic,⁴⁹ also appears in the will of Anna Lesenpront, which was made in 1662.⁵⁰ She calls György her brother and bequeaths 45 forints to him. The odd thing about the will is that in addition to leaving some of her estate to the cathedral chapter as landlord, the testator also leaves one forint to the Győr Cathedral, which was not a unique gesture among the Győr testaments. She does this in spite of the fact that, in addition to the 10 forints she leaves to the Lutheran denomination, she wills one golden forint to the Lutheran pastor, who in return is entrusted with the funeral sermon. In other words, she must have remained Lutheran in faith, while her brother converted to Catholicism (and perhaps was not the only person in the family to do this). This incident corroborates a sentence found in the annual Jesuit accounts according to which people of different denominations often lived side by side within a family.

Unfortunately there is very little information about the people who were regarded as heretics. The “heretics” János Makranczy and Dániel Zechmaiszter, as well as the “schismata” Pál Laszlo, only studied in Győr for one year each.⁵¹ Miklós Ifju, who abandoned his Catholic faith, attended the lowest class of the college for three years in 1637–40.⁵² After his conversion in 1640, he remained a pupil of the school for one more year, which throws into question the alleged religious intolerance of the Jesuits. Finally, again as evidence of the Fathers’ opportunistic behavior, I mention the example of the Lutheran Ferenc Kiraly, who was domiciled in Győr and who completed 5 grades in the college in 9 years, but only converted to Catholicism in the seventh year, as a syntaxist.⁵³

48 Gyula Morvai, *Mezővárosi időszerűk 1600–1743*, vol. 1 of *Győri Polgárkönyv*, Levéltári Füzetek 10 (Győr: Győr Megyei Jogú Város Levéltára, 2007).

49 *Cat. Jaur.*, 38v, 47v, 51v, 54v.

50 József Horváth, *Győri végrendeletek a 17. századból*, vol. 3, 1655–1699 (Győr: Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Győri Levéltára, 1997), 66–67 (no. 266.).

51 *Cat. Jaur.*, 50v, 52v, 66v.

52 *Ibid.*, 40r, 50v, 54r.

53 *Ibid.*, 38r, 44v, 48v, 52r, 56r, 59r, 64r, 65v.

Altogether 1,464 pupils studied with the Jesuits in Pozsony in the period under discussion, and the religion of the majority of them is known (60 percent). While this data dates to a later period than the data from Győr, it is nonetheless significant, because regular entries concerning denominational affiliation survived exclusively from this decade. The denominational homogenization, i.e. the gradual triumph of Catholicism over the other denominations, may have contributed to the fact that after 1659 entries regarding denominational affiliation are only sporadic.

In comparison with the institution in Győr, the College of Pozsony is different in one fundamental way. In the overwhelming majority of the cases (96 percent) the students were Catholic. Out of the tiny remaining minority, 22 pupils (2.4 percent) were Lutherans and 14 (1.5 percent) were Calvinists. There is no information about other religions. However, as was the case in Győr, in Pozsony, only a very small proportion of the non-Catholics, 4 students, converted (Table 2).

Denomination	Number of Students	Converts
Catholic	879	
Lutheran	22	3
Calvinist	14	1
Altogether	915	4

Table 2. The denominational division of the students of the Pozsony Jesuit College (1650–59)

The ethnic division of the Protestant pupils of the Pozsony College is similar to the Győr data. The ethnicity of each of the Lutherans is known. There were only four Slovaks and two Germans among them, and the rest were all Hungarian. Each of the Calvinists was Hungarian. Furthermore, it is noteworthy (albeit not surprising) that in the case of both Protestant denominations there is a high proportion of students from noble families: 9 among the Calvinists and 10 among the Lutherans.

As was the case in Győr, in the college of Pozsony there was also considerable “through traffic.” This tendency was characteristic irrespective of denomination (in other words it was true of the Protestant pupils as well). More than half (13 pupils) of the Lutherans and one-third (5 pupils) of the Calvinists spent only one year in the institution. In the case of Pozsony progress in school did not necessarily correlate with conversion to the Catholic faith. A conspicuous example is János Váczy, a descendant of a noble family from Nagymad (today

Mad, Slovakia), a village in Pozsony county, who finished all five grades, including rhetoric, and remained Lutheran.⁵⁴

The only Calvinist convert was noble István Udvari from Nagyszombat, who completed the top three classes of the college in four years (1650–53) between the ages of 17 and 20. He is first mentioned as a Catholic in 1652, so he converted after two years.⁵⁵ The Calvinist connection of the family is known. His ancestors were supporters of Albert Szenczi Molnár.⁵⁶ How István's conversion affected other members of the family we do not know.

Among the Lutheran converts, János Brunczlik from Galgóc (today Hlohovec, Slovakia) was probably not of noble origins, and his ethnic background is hazy. (He was presumably multilingual: he was registered as Hungarian in 1657 and as Slovak in 1658.) Between 1657 and 1659, he finished the three lower grades (*principia*, *grammatica*, *syntaxis*), and by his grammatical year he had been converted.⁵⁷ András Czernyansky⁵⁸ and Gáspár Zambokrety,⁵⁹ both of whom were from a noble family, were registered as Slovaks. András finished college with the exception of the topmost grade, rhetoric, between 1650 and 1653, while Gáspár completed only the two lowest grades in three years (1657–59). Both of them converted to Catholicism after (or during) their first year. András was from Szedlicsna, Trenčsén county (today Trenčianske Stankovce–Sedličná, Slovakia).⁶⁰ Gáspár probably was the descendant of the well-known noble Sámbockréty family from Nyitra county, because according to the registry he was from Lieszkó (today Cerová–Lieskové, Slovakia).⁶¹

The enrolment of non-Catholic students was acceptable in the first decades of the Jesuit colleges in both Győr and Pozsony. All we can suppose about the character of the Sopron College, given that we do not have its registry, is that it may have resembled the College of Pozsony. In the case of Pozsony, it is obvious that the presence of the Lutheran school significantly diminished the presence of Protestant pupils in the Catholic college. Further instances in Hungary are

54 *Matr. Pos.*, 11v, 18v, 24v, 30v, 36v. About the family: Denis Pongrácz et al., ed., *Pozsony vármegye nemes családjai* (Somorja: Méry Ratio, 2008), 398–99.

55 *Matr. Pos.*, 9v, 16v, 22r, 30r.

56 Pongrácz, *Pozsony vármegye*, 395.

57 *Matr. Pos.*, 50r, 55r, 59v.

58 *Ibid.*, 11r, 18r, 23v, 30r.

59 *Ibid.*, 49v, 56r, 60v.

60 I could not identify the family, it is not mentioned in the work of Iván Nagy (see below).

61 About the family: Iván Nagy, *Magyarország családai czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. 12 (Pest: Beimel J. és Kozma Vazul, 1865), 25–29, Gáspár is not indicated.

not yet known, hence it is not easy to offer an answer to the question as to which institution could be considered the most typical from the viewpoint of denominational proportions.

* * *

In conclusion, as this examination of school registries shows, the Jesuits were much more tolerant of non-Catholic pupils than has generally been assumed. This phenomenon can probably be taken as characteristic of other Hungarian Jesuit colleges, at least in the beginning and the middle of the seventeenth century. No one was deprived of the opportunity to attend higher grades, and it was not necessary to be Catholic in order to gain admission to the colleges. On the one hand, the reason for this can be found in the denominational proportions and the strength of the Protestant denominations in the Kingdom of Hungary. On the other hand, Protestants attended Catholic schools because these Jesuit colleges had hardly any competition: these institutions provided free education of the highest standard among the denominational schools.

Given the lack of sources, we can venture few conjectures regarding how the non-Catholic students participated in religious life, in Catholic liturgies, processions, prayers or even in dramatic performances of the school, if such participation was required of them at all. However, it seems that in their studies they were not discriminated against. For scholarship on the processes and trends in religious conversion in Hungary this statement is important: the use of new types of sources can enable us to challenge some the stereotypes that have gained widespread acceptance in the historiography. This can influence our understanding of ecclesiastical history and, in a narrow sense, the history of the Society of Jesus, but also, for the later centuries and with sociological methods, research on elites and schooling.⁶² Consequently, Jesuit colleges cannot be considered Catholic “wonder weapons” of conversion, although in the long run it is indisputable that their endeavors had a strong influence, which culminated in the Baroque Catholic Church.

62 Cf. e.g. Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, *Iskolázás, értelmiség és tudomány a 19–20. századi Magyarországon*, Szociológiai dolgozatok 5 (Budapest: Wesley János Lelkészépző Főiskola, 2012), 9–29.

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György Kövér

Intra- and Inter-confessional Conflicts in Tiszaeszlár in the Period of the “Great Trial”

At around noon on Saturday, April 1, 1882, Eszter Solymosi, a 14-year-old girl disappeared without a trace from Tiszaeszlár, a village in Szabolcs county in the Tiszántúl region. The case remains unsolved. In the course of a criminal procedure, one of the charges made was that the Jews living in Eszlár had murdered the girl and used her for a ritual blood sacrifice. Finally, in an extended trial held in Nyíregyháza the accused were acquitted in the absence of proof.

I have found only one open conflict that took place in the public sphere prior to the trial held in Nyíregyháza that was thematized along Christian–Jewish confessional interests: the issue of Jewish education. However, there were numerous intra-confessional conflicts among the Christian denominations. The best way of reconstructing the subtle network of relationships connecting the villagers (Christians and Jews as well) is to make an effort to expose the capillaries of the “female public opinion” of the village. To do this, one must analyze the background of the discourses of the trial, the conflicts of the everyday life.

Rivalry between the approved Christian denominations found manifestation either in conversion or in mixed marriages. After the emancipation of the Jews, the Christian–Jewish conflict still took the form not only of blood libels, but also of the ritual forms of intimidation and violence.

Keywords: intra- and inter-confessional rivalries (religious coexistence, cooperation, competition, conflict), anti-semitism, blood libel, ritual murder trial, exclusionary violence, Tiszaeszlár

At around noon on Saturday, April 1, 1882, Eszter Solymosi, a 14-year-old girl disappeared without a trace from Tiszaeszlár, a village in Szabolcs county in the Tiszántúl region. The case remains unsolved, despite the fact that a number of attempts have been made to track her down. At the request of her mother, a warrant of caption—complete with her description—was issued. The district officer and the county investigating judge tried to reconstruct what may have happened to the girl. During the criminal procedure, one of the charges that slowly took shape was that the Jews living in Eszlár had murdered the girl and used her for a ritual blood sacrifice. Nearly everyone in the village was interrogated regarding the events of April 1. Even the Jews living in Eszlár tried

to discover the potential whereabouts of Eszter. Numerous reports were made concerning the various places where the missing girl had allegedly been seen. None of these reports could be confirmed.

Then, on June 18, 1882, the corpse of a woman was found at Tiszadada. At first, many thought she was Eszter Solymosi. During the official identification procedure, neither her mother nor her sister identified the partially decomposed body as Eszter, nor for that matter did many of the locals. The local physicians performing the post-mortem examination ruled out the possibility of the corpse being Eszter's. However, they clearly recognized the clothes found on the body. With this, a new count of indictment was made: the charge of "floating a corpse." Timber raftsmen from the northeastern county of Máramaros were accused of having dressed an unknown female corpse in Eszter Solymosi's garments. But even though an elite group of medical professors who arrived from the capital city tried to identify the body after it had been exhumed in December 1882, and even though in an extended trial held between June 19 and August 3, 1883 in Nyíregyháza a select team of defense attorneys headed by Károly Eötvös tried to clarify what might have happened, the accused were acquitted in the absence of proof, without any sentence being passed concerning what may have happened to Eszter Solymosi. The courts of appeal also remained silent on this matter.

When Károly Eötvös—the defense attorney who had fought arduously and eventually won the case—wrote the history of the trial two decades later, he used the phrase "great trial" in the subtitle of his book. He was not only making reference to the one-and-a-half-month long criminal procedure conducted in Nyíregyháza; he gave the phrase a wider interpretation. When mentioning "the great trial that has been going on for a thousand years and has not yet concluded," he was making reference to the Christian–Jewish conflict in general: the animosity, or, to put it differently, the embers of anti-Semitism that sometimes barely glow under the ashes but occasionally burst into open flames. In his foreword, he actually outlined the international context:

Throughout the entire duration of the great trial, Hungarian society was overcome by a rush of excitement, as if it were ready to launch a religious war against the Jewish confession. It saw the examples of Russia and Romania, while even among the ranks of the German-speaking nations, both in the territories of Austria and Germany, there were serious phenomena indicating surging hatred of the Jews. Hungarian society is not isolated enough to remain entirely insensitive

to these developments. Especially when a case so regrettably distorted into a blood libel had also emerged on Hungarian soil.¹

It is not difficult to see how right Eötvös was in his prophecy; one only needs to think of the events of the 20th century, which had clearly been unforeseeable at his time.²

If one were to try to understand the events in a millennial framework, it would be necessary to take a few steps back into the past. It is very difficult to envision any dynamic theory that encompasses all of universal history. Theories of religious conflicts explain outbursts of tension either by the internal peculiarities of the individual denominations (although, as is well known, measuring proneness to conflict is problematic at best) or by changes in the external/internal environment (for example, modernization). Structural interpretations link such events to changes in the relationships between denominational or confessional elite groups, religious institutions, and the state (for example, secularization or the separation of state and church). As might be expected, there are also certain hybrid models that operate with various, occasionally conflicting variables.³ Religious studies apply the conceptual apparatus of inter-confessional conflicts to history in a highly sophisticated way. The two historical eras typically studied in this context are the period of early Christianity and the age of the Reformation in the Early Modern Period. The four key categories of the model proposed by the Religious Rivalries Seminar are coexistence, cooperation, competition, and conflict.⁴ Naturally, these concepts are not mutually exclusive; not even coexistence and conflict, provided that the terms are taken in a strict sense.

Without trying to sum up the vast literature on the topic, there are a number of questions that may be worthy of our attention in the context of the local case of Eszlár. Do purely inter-confessional conflicts even exist? Are we not only

1 Károly Eötvös, *A nagy per mely ezer éve folyik, s még nincs vége*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1968), 12.

2 As early as the 1930s, in the foreword to a collective volume published by a Hungarian Protestant student organization, *Soli Deo Gloria*, the case was already thematized as “the Jewish question.” Arnold Kiss et al., *A nagy per (Zsidókérdés)* (Budapest: Soli Deo Gloria, 1933), 4.

3 Jonathan Fox, “Towards a Dynamic Theory of Ethno-Religious Conflict,” *Nations and Nationalism* 5, no. 4 (1999): 432–42.

4 This system of four categories proposed by the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies defined the potential mutual relationships between the religions present in the marketplaces of early Christianity. The history of the research was summarised on the basis of Terry Donaldson’s original project plan by Richard Ascough, “The Canadian Society of Biblical Studies’ Religious Rivalries Seminar: Retrospection, Reflection and Retroversion,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 32, no. 1–2 (2003): 158.

talking about conflicts essentially rooted somewhere else, in the “environment,” and only masquerading as “confessional”? (The question, of course, is equally pertinent to intra-confessional conflicts.) It might be worth taking a closer look at the answer that is most commonly proposed on pragmatic grounds: “an inter-confessional conflict is a conflict that has a confessional aspect.”⁵

Is the conflict under review personal or collective in nature? That is, does it only concern persons that belong to the given confession, or does it concern the whole of the confessional group? And, last but not least, in what “arena” or “field” does the conflict emerge? Is it in the public space (in the street) or in the private sphere (within the yard of a household or at property boundaries)? At what strata of the social space did the events take place? Did they become institutionalized or did they remain informal?

In the case of Tiszaeszlár I try to touch on all of these problems: dynamism and proportions among denominations (coexistence and rivalry), intra- and inter-confessional conflict-management, everyday conflicts, and Christian–Jewish animosity behind the scenes in the public sphere.

“Confessional Fields” (Pierre Bourdieu)
The population and its settlement

Four denominations lived in Eszlár: two mother churches (Roman Catholics and Calvinists) and two *filias* (Greek Catholics and Jews). The individual confessional groups all differed in their degrees of autonomy: there was no local Greek Catholic parson, nor was there a local rabbi in Eszlár.⁶ Government census data in Eszlár reflect a dynamically growing village (an increase from 1,280 people in 1785 to 3,392 in 1910).⁷ The appearance of the settlement changed accordingly. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Eszlár continued to expand in an east-southeasterly direction in two ways. On the one hand, just southeast of Ófalu (*the Old Village*) and Tó(t)falu (*Lake Village* or *Slovak Village*), the village now had a third section, Újfalu (*the New Village*), populated from 1858 on in the wake of the flood of 1855. On the other hand, the village was surrounded by

5 Wendy Mayer, “Religious Conflict: Definitions, Problems and Theoretical Approaches,” in *Religious Conflict from early Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil, *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* 121 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 1–19.

6 György Kövér, *A tiszaeszlári dráma. Társadalomtörténeti látószögek* (Budapest: Osiris, 2011), 94–95.

7 *Az első magyarországi népszámlálás (1784–1787)*, ed. Dezső Dányi and Zoltán Dávid (Budapest: KSH Könyvtára–MŰM Levéltári Osztálya, 1960), 160; *Magyarország településeinek vallási adatai (1880–1949)*, vol. 2 (Budapest: KSH, 1997), 264.

vast open fields to the east-southeast interspersed with several manors (*puszta*) and hamlets (*tanya*).

Year	Central areas						Total
	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Calvinist	Evangelical	Eastern Orthodox	Israelite	
1831	509	200	1,448	1	0	22	2,180
1840	505	190	1,135	4	0	14	1,848
1851	320	203	1,056	0	0	24	1,603
1860	389	93	1,137	0	0	35	1,654
1871	365	131	894	4	1	95	1,490
1880	399	130	907	9	0	129	1,574
1889	429	156	692	7	0	73	1,357
	Outskirts						
1831	23	0	6	5		0	34
1840	35	0	11	0		1	47
1851	11	1	9	0		0	21
1860	52	16	14	0		2	84
1871	276	33	60	6	1	7	383
1880	499	121	133	2		7	762
1889	552	196	234	7		3	992
	Central areas and outskirts together						
1831	532	200	1,454	6		22	2,214
1840	540	190	1,146	4		15	1,895
1851	331	204	1,065	0		24	1,624
1860	441	109	1,151	0		37	1,738
1871	641	164	954	10	2	102	1,873
1880	898	251	1,040	11		136	2,336
1889	981	352	926	14		76	2,349

Table 1. The confessional distribution of the population of the central areas and the outskirts of Tiszaeszlár on the basis of the *schematismi* of the Catholic Diocese of Eger (1831–1889)⁸

The population records collected by the church indicate that population levels, which had been in decline during the Hungarian Reform Era, actually hit rock bottom during the 1850s, only to bounce back in the long run. While

⁸ *Schematismus Cleri Archi-diocesis Agriensis ad annum Jesu Christi 1831, 1840, 1851, 1860, 1871, 1880, 1889.* Agriac.

the population of the central areas of Eszlár fluctuated and even declined after 1860, the dynamism seen in the total population numbers of the village reflected the impact of demographic changes in the outskirts. The Israelite community was the only confessional group where the dynamic population growth seen in the 60s and 70s was limited almost exclusively to the central areas of the village. Their concentrated presence implied greater visibility. In the 1880s, Catholics also produced higher population numbers on the outskirts than in the central areas (and by 1889, this pattern had come to prevail among Greek Catholics as well). The two confessional groups that were most involved in immigration were the Catholics and the Jews.

Tiszaeszlár has always lived in the threat of regularly returning spring floods (1830; 1855; 1876). On March 23, 1888, “the Tisza river rushed into our village, wreaking so much havoc and damaging our embankments to such an extent that the villagers unanimously decided not to stay where they originally had lived,” wrote Tiszaeszlár parson Ödön Jenő Oldall to his archbishop.⁹ The deputy lord lieutenant then issued a decree banning the rebuilding of the collapsed houses and new construction sites around Újfalú for about 140 houses were allocated to those who had been evacuated.

At this point, one should review the debate surrounding the confessional aspects of this belated colonization. Minister of the Interior Count Géza Teleki proposed that 8,000 forints of the resettlement fund should be allocated to the Calvinists and 4,000 forints to the Catholics.¹⁰ Oldall, the parson of Eszlár, mainly emphasized population data. He wrote that “only 992 Calvinists but as many as 1,044 Roman Catholics [live] in Eszlár and in the *filias* that belong to the village; if Greek Catholics, who go to the same church, are also added, their numbers reach as many as 1,452.”¹¹ The Ministry of Interior yielded to the argumentation of the Catholics.¹² The leaders of the Calvinist community believed that the only correct principle on which to base the allocation of the funds between the two parties would be the extent of the damages sustained by each.¹³ But they had to accept the challenge of the Catholic (demographic) argumentation:

9 Egri Főegyházmegeyi Levéltár (=EFL), Tiszaeszlár (=TE) 1765/1888 (April 23, 1888).

10 Count Géza Teleki led the Ministry of the Interior between June 16, 1889 and March 15, 1890; József Bölöny, *Magyarország kormányai 1848–1975* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1978), 164.

11 EFL TE 2580/1889 (June 1, 1889).

12 Cited by Szomjas, February 25, 1890; Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi Levéltár (=TtREL) I. 1. b. 209.

13 *Ibid.*, Parson János Láposy, chief curator Géza Ónody (1889, undated copy).



Map 1. Cadastral map of Tiszaeszlár (1870)¹⁴

The three parts of Tiszaeszlár on the map: *Ófalu* [Old Village] (designated on the map as Tisza Eszlár), *Tótfalu* [Slovak Village] (designated on the map as Tisza Eszlár Tótfalu), and *Újfalu* [New Village] (designated on the map as Tisza Eszlár Újfalu).

14 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (=MNL OL) S 78 225. téka.

[T]he ministerial justification mentions 1,044 Roman Catholics; however, the majority of these persons are mostly foreign and temporary farm hands (according to the statistics taken by the Roman Catholic cantor, there are 695 Roman Catholics living in hamlets) [...] while this same ministerial justification mentions 992 Calvinists, who, in actual reality, number 1,065 souls confessing the Calvinist faith, who—with the exception of very few—have always been inhabitants of Tiszaeszlár.¹⁵

The social dimension of the discord therefore manifests itself in a dichotomy pitting “foreign” and “temporary” Catholic farmhands against “Calvinist villagers of Eszlár who have always lived there.”

Conflict Management within a Denomination *The Calvinist flock and its pastor*

Within the Protestant congregations, the established renewable term system—reappointing or replacing pastors at the end of the year of service—caused much discord between the flock and their preachers.¹⁶ In Tiszaeszlár, pastors either served very long terms or soon left of their own accord to take up the same office in another, more affluent congregation.

Sámuel Csiszár Jr. was the pastor in Eszlár between 1866 and 1878. In retrospect, presenting his case as a model seems fully justified. As soon as he was elected, he got down to work with vengeance. First off, he set about to consolidate the financial matters of the parish. He consistently collected all church taxes.¹⁷ The pastor also tended his flock spiritually: he had a list of school-age children drawn up on the basis of the registry of births, and, “their parents were encouraged, on more than one occasion, to provide for their schooling.”¹⁸ These measures inevitably caused frictions. Moreover, in 1873 the reverend filed a complaint with the office of the district officer against Pál Ónody, the

15 TtREL I.1.b. 209. (April 22, 1890).

16 István Rácz, *Egyház és társadalom. A Debreceni Tractus nagyona és gazdálkodása a 18–19. század fordulóján*. (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2002), 103–07; János Ugrai, “Szoknyák, versek, viszályok (Egy lelkész kétszeres rangvesztése),” *Aetas* 21, no. 4 (2006): 74; László Kósa, *A gyulai református egyház története*, Gyulai Füzetek 17, (Gyula: Békés Megyei Levéltár, 2008), 89–102.

17 Előterjesztés... TtREL I.28.c. 24 (February 1, 1867); Előterjesztés... Ibid., 25 (January 15, 1869).

18 Előterjesztés... Ibid., 24 (February 1, 1867).

chief curator who had just resigned, “for his failure to pay the church tax.”¹⁹ The escalation of the conflict was reflected in the fact that on February 20, 1874 Gábor Farkas, a member of the formerly tax-paying petty nobility, filed a complaint with the dean in which he made reference to a “pasquillus (*pasquil* or *satirical piece*) signed by 65” that he had found in his garden that included a plea to have the pastor relocated to another parish.²⁰ Letters of complaint came one after the other. The one dated March 4 was signed by as many as 100 people. The accusations started slowly to take shape: by humiliating the school teacher, the pastor disrupted the schooling of the children of the parish; using “physical force,” he committed battery against some shepherds and even against his housekeeper; and, finally, he slandered “the magistrate of the Greek Catholic congregation and the officials of the Roman Catholic house of the Kállays.”²¹

Csiszár, instead of offering an explanation, launched a counterattack: “Your Excellency the Dean has no idea of the vile souls that inhabit this parish, where the bread and the whip are inseparable companions.”²² On May 23, the people of Eszlár “appeared in the same place with yet another letter full of complaints and accusations, this time also expressing verbally that the people were ready to lock the church down in the afternoon of the second day of Pentecost (!) unless their demands were satisfied.”²³

The case was examined during the canonical visit, which took place in early June 1874. The complaints and the minutes clearly indicate what the conflicts were actually about. The pastor was not willing to tolerate certain earlier economic practices. In addition, when it came to disciplinary action, he never hesitated to rely on the assistance of any power, earthly and celestial. He punished one culprit by proclaiming that “the death knell will not be tolled and no church funeral services will be rendered” either for him or for his family. A good many Calvinist villagers must have had the feeling that the pastor had turned against the norms of the community.

In the meantime, Lajos Borus, the Tiszaelök priest, an old friend of the dean’s, and himself well known in Eszlár, warned the dean: “What great sorrow

19 Tiszaeszlár ref. egyházközség irattára (=TEREI), A tiszaeszlári helv. hitv. Egyház tanácskozási és határozati jegyzőkönyve, vol. 1 (December 15, 1872).

20 TtREL I.28.j. 15 (Gábor Farkas, February 20, 1874).

21 Ibid., 15, Miklós Pásztor, Gábor Farkas, Sámuel Erdőss, and others, March 4, 1874. When they delivered the complaint personally on March 7, Miklós Pásztor threatened that “he would convert into Catholicism.” Ibid.

22 Ibid., 15, Csiszár–Pápay, March 17, 1874.

23 TtREL I.28.c. 30, Egyházlátogatási jegyzőkönyv, TE, (June 3–4, 1874).

it would be to see my neighboring congregation—the congregation where I spent the most beautiful 18 months of my life—convert to Catholicism.”²⁴

In the spring of 1875, another letter of complaint was delivered to the dean. This time, it had only been signed by twenty people, although—with the sole exception of Gábor Farkas—all of them had been signatories to the previous letter of complaint dated March 1874.²⁵ According to this letter, not all of the accusations made during the previous year’s procedure had been recorded in the minutes. The gravest of them was the contention that Csiszár had raped his maid, Mária Tilk.

In April 1877, the twenty signatories addressed the bishop himself, denouncing a case of blatant immorality that had taken place back in 1876: Sámuel Csiszár first got his maid Mária Fogarasi pregnant and then sought illegal medical help to induce abortion. The district officer conducted the preliminary investigation and then forwarded the case to the Royal Court of Law of Nyíregyháza, where Sámuel Csiszár “was detained for eight days awaiting trial. The detention was reported by the most respectable domestic dailies.”²⁶ Once again, the signatories ask that Csiszár be removed and a replacement parson be sent.

During the trial held on August 28 and 29, 1877, the court acquitted Csiszár in the absence of proof.²⁷ At the same time, the court fined the defendant 100 forints (or, if unpaid, 20 days in simple custody) because he had “breached public order by threatening and making promises to the witnesses heard.” As the Tiszalök pastor Lajos Borus commented, Csiszár, “seated before the very eyes of the audience right next to the slut, was told face to face on more than one occasion how many times he had raped her, yet he showed no shame or remorse whatsoever. A terrible disgrace for all the community of pastors!!”²⁸

Later, the council meeting of the court of law of the diocese held in Püspökladány on September 11, 1877 suspended Sámuel Csiszár from his functions and launched an investigation against him.²⁹ In October 1877, János

24 TtREL I.28.j. 15, Borus–Pápay, Tiszalök, July 29, 1874.

25 Ibid., 15, (April 5, 1875).

26 Ibid., 15, (April 28, 1877). The complaint was delivered to the bishop as an attachment to a letter written by chief curator Géza Ónody on April 30. Talking about the case, he makes reference to “a scandal of a trial.” Ibid., April 30.

27 Ibid., 15, Nyíregyháza, August 29, 1877.

28 Ibid., Borus–Pápay, Tiszalök, August 31, 1877.

29 Ibid., Az egyházmegyei törvényszéki tanács jegyzőkönyve, Püspökladány, September 11, 1877.

Láposy (1848–1902), still single at the time, was appointed substitute pastor.³⁰ When the dean showed him the anonymous letter denouncing his actions, Csiszár concluded that “this campaign of terrible defamation against me was headed by Jews.”³¹

In the middle of November 1877, with the help of the new pastor, the presbytery and the school board were reconstituted.³² Out of the 12 members of the presbytery, only four had been members before, the other eight members having been elected for the first time. (Three of them, namely Ferenc Farkas, József Farkas, and Sándor Farkas, were members of the Farkas clan, a family representing the petty nobility that had lived on serf plots before 1848.) In July, the dean ordered that another investigation be launched.³³ The parish made sure that people were duly mobilized.³⁴ As the chief curator testifies in his letter, the next morning “at least 100 complainants presented themselves to be heard” in front of the vicarage. When Sámuel Csiszár saw the crowds, he submitted his resignation.³⁵ On August 25, in the presence of the aforementioned judges of the ecclesiastical court, the congregation elected János Láposy as their ordinary pastor. Láposy remained in his new position until his death.

There are lessons to be learned from this conflict for the present-day historian much as there were for the elite of the Calvinist community of the village. The conflict of the 1870s may have confirmed the opinion of leaders of the Calvinist congregation that success did not depend on the number of signatories backing a petition (the letter written in 1874 had as many as a hundred signatories, while those of 1875 and 1877 were only signed by twenty). They must also have realized that success took more than just getting the respectable land owners of the village on board, having them sign the petition, following the standard procedure, or even hand-delivering the letter of complaint to the dean. In fact, the alternative approach, when the chief curator—a young, ambitious, local medium landowner—bypassed the dean and approached the bishop directly, may have seemed more efficient. However, Soma Csiszár’s downfall was not brought about by the judgments of any secular or ecclesiastical court of law. Rather, it was caused by the fact that the members of the presbytery were willing

30 Ibid., October 28, 1877.

31 Ibid., Csiszár–Pápay, TE, October 16, 1877.

32 TEREI Jegyzőkönyv I (November 18, 1877).

33 TtREL I.28.j. 16 (August 1, 1878).

34 TEREI Jegyzőkönyv I (July 31, 1878).

35 TtREL I.28.j. 16 (August 1; August 2, 1878).

and able to mobilize about a hundred people who all appeared in the courtyard of the vicarage when the new investigative procedure was launched. Seeing this, the reverend realized he had no future in the village.

To understand the social history background of the conflict better, the historian can analyze the composition of the signatories of the petition. He can establish that there were only nine signatories who took a stand for themselves both in 1874 and in 1877 (and only four who had also signed the petition of 1875). The Farkas clan played a leading role among them. The historian can also study the changes in the composition of the presbytery, where, once again, he or she may establish that the male members of the Farkas family were gaining ground in 1877. However, the feisty hard core included more than just members of this family; other respectable landowning families were also represented among their ranks. It is also beyond any doubt that the Calvinist elite of the village had the chance to travel beyond the boundaries of their village and obtain valuable experience and, indeed, skills in the local (or county-level) techniques of conflict management, and that the experience they had gained in previous conflicts inevitably filtered through and into the rituals used both for stirring up and attenuating future conflicts.

The Catholic parson and his critics

Tensions between pastor and congregation were not limited to the Calvinists, of course. A good example of discontent within a given denomination came in 1884, when a group within the Roman Catholic congregation filed a complaint with the archbishop of Eger against the Reverend József Adamovics.³⁶ While investigations in such cases were also common within the Catholic church, power relations, the available forms of crisis management, and the chances of a priest being removed may have been fundamentally different.

Of course, this specific conflict cannot be classified as one of the antecedents of the “Eszlár case” of 1882–83. Nevertheless, it is striking to see how many fairly overt allusions were made in the complaint to local confessional power relations. The complaint, dated March 1, 1884, begins with a comment to the effect that “there are but a handful of people of the Roman Catholic confession” in Eszlár. Also, when quoting the allegedly offensive words with

36 EFL Acta Personalia 1460/1884, József Adamovics (1845–1887) was appointed as the parson of the Eszlár parish in 1878.

which the pastor chastised his flock, the letter reads “our first thought was that if the Calvinist congregation learns about the words our priest uttered we would be even more exposed to their mockery.” The complaint, which lists the “sins” of the parish priest, ends with the following words:

We must therefore expose these cases and all his wrongs, because we live among villagers of mixed religions and it happens that our sons marry women of other religions, and lest this become even more widespread, and lest our congregation disperse, for if we have to live under the care of such a pastor, we may be forced to place ourselves and all our families under the guidance of a pastor—of whatever confession—who leads us in a sensible manner.

Once again, it seems a never-failing tactic to attract the attention of the higher ecclesiastical authorities was to threaten them with the possibility of conversion to other religions.

In the spring of 1884, having received the five-page long indictment, József Adamovics filed his 22-page long response, in which he claimed to unveil a plot organized against him by the former Greek Catholic judge. Luckily for posterity, he exposed a lot more of the conflicts than the people who had filed the complaint ever mentioned. The specific accusations were fairly run-of-the-mill: the parish priest was frequently drunk; he behaved in a scandalous way while celebrating the wedding of a drunk groom; he used derogatory and offensive language when preaching; he had paid a band of musicians and had his own name day celebrated on March 19, during Lent; etc. They added verbally that the reverend also collected twice as much parish tax in the village as in the manors. In response to the “excitement” following this incident, Adamovics delivered a sermon on February 17, 1884 chastising his flock, the most offensive part of which was, as we know from an account given by the parish priest after the fact, the following adage: “Pigs... the dirtier they are, the more they scratch and whine.”³⁷

At the height of the conflict, one evening a group of congregation members paid a less than friendly visit to the vicarage. They nearly came to blows. The visiting congregation members claimed Adamovics called them names like

37 In comparison with the Csiszár case, it is interesting to see how often the offensive statements made by the reverend allude to the “dirtiness” of the people attacked, regardless of the denomination to which they belonged or the sensitivity of the congregation.

“marha” and “ökör” (“bovine” and “ox,” both used in vulgar language to mean “imbecile” or “idiot”).³⁸

In March, Lőrinc Halasy—the Rakamaz parish priest appointed to carry out the investigation—visited Eszlár on two Sundays to hear the parties filing the complaint. Ferenc Ajler stated that “the discord is solely attributable to how the timber obtained from the felled logs was sold off.” János Kobzos Sr. claimed the wrong done to him: the parish priest “grabbed me and tried to throw me out.” Following the choreography of mutual accusations, Adamovics called Ajler “*földosztó*” (“a leveller,” in the sense of redistributing large-scale land holdings among the landless poor) and “a big mouth,” and Kobzos “a rambunctious type” and “a drunk.”

In his response, Adamovics also made a statement about inter-confessional rivalry:

Has anyone, even a single soul, apostatized ever since I have been the parish priest in Eszlár by the grace of God Almighty and your High Excellency? On the contrary, I take pride in pointing out that I myself have gained two souls for the mother-church, something that has not happened in this village for a long time. I can also point out without boasting that ever since I have been here there have only been a handful of mixed marriages. Even though a few mixed couples announced their intentions to marry, I succeeded in dissuading them and convinced them to marry either a Catholic or at least a Greek Catholic person.

He openly stated that “if need be, I apply the necessary strictness in guiding my flock, as is justified in the case of the rabble that inhabit this village.”³⁹

The Roman Catholics of Eszlár had inferiority complexes not only towards the Calvinists but also, in a certain sense, towards Greek Catholics, even though Greek Catholicism was considered a “sister religion.” The Greek Catholic community of the village was under the guidance of the Tokaj parish. While they were much fewer in number, they were slowly but surely expanding, and they formed part of the elite of the village in terms of their wealth and power positions. Based on the historical distribution of lands, the Greek Catholics contributed relatively more area to the cemeteries than the Roman Catholics.

38 EFL Acta Personalia 1460/1884 (March 1, 1884).

39 Ibid., March 15, 1884. One might recall Soma Csizsár’s “bread and whip” (carrot and stick) approach to managing his congregation.

In 1879, Adamovics threatened to revoke the right of the Greek Catholic congregation to bury their deceased in the cemetery. However, the Greek Catholic curator let him know that, “I might have the right to come to an agreement with them about obligating the members of our congregations to keep the line but I have no right to exclude them from the cemetery.”⁴⁰

During the investigation of the case, Adamovics convinced Calvinist pastor Lápóssy to testify in his support, but he also had a group of 14 members of his congregation who signed the statement in his favor (mostly members of the local intelligentsia). In fact, Adamovics got a bit overconfident. He requested that the archbishop return him the letter of complaint filed against him so he could sue his enemies “for the crimes of making false accusations and fraud committed by the forgery of documents.” He must have been very disappointed when archbishop Samassa sent him a letter closing the case in which he not only dissuaded Adamovics from taking legal action but actually chastised him, saying that “the church is no place for making personal statements of any sort, let alone for using the sort of low language employed in the sermon notes filed; words like those are not fit for a church setting and do not become a priest or even a common person of a certain level of education.”⁴¹

In the Catholic case, the religious congregation as a community was not particularly well-organized. If Adamovics was right, the “first mover” of the complaint came from outside, from the Greek Catholic “sister religion.” The “excitement” was expressed rather occasionally and emotionally. The subtle mobilization technique inside the parish was used first of all by the pastor himself in favor of the local hierarchy and controlled totally by the archbishop.

Affairs inside the Jewish community

I have not found any evidence of confessional animosities within the Israelite community of Eszlár. Possibly the community was too small, or perhaps the sources are too limited. The case I examine here only exemplifies the conflict management customs that existed among the Jews.

The Lichtmanns settled in the village as lessees of feudal *iura regalia* landlords’ rights, but later they hired the estate of the landlord, Ferenc Wesselényi, who lived outside the county, in Transylvania. By the 1880s, they had their own

40 Ibid., 1651, Tiszaeszlár, ad 392/1885 (January 26, 1885).

41 Ibid., 1460/1884. Eger, April 17, 1884 (draft).

regalists or lessees, something that was certainly one of the pillars of the power they wielded in the village. Once the investigation clarified all the events that took place on April 1, 1882, the Jews of the Újfalú section of Eszlár met in the foyer of the house of prayer in order to try to reach an agreement concerning a market-related conflict, Jakab Lichtmann acting as the arbitrator. There were two inns in Újfalú, one operated by Szüszmann, the other by Einhorn, both being *regalists* or lessees of Lichtmann. The two parties had a row over one of them selling *pálinka* or fruit brandy at a lower price.⁴² At the time of the trial held in Nyíregyháza, Jakab Szüszmann claimed that he had approached “Mr. Jakab Lichtmann, *who was, after all, the head of our community*, to settle the issue. For it is our custom that, instead of filing court action right away, we first try to come to an out-of-court agreement if it is at all possible”.⁴³ As far as József Einhorn remembered, he told Lichtmann (the owner of the inns), “How come he [Szüszmann] sells spirits at a lower price? You either ban him from doing that or I will also start selling at a lower price.”⁴⁴ Jakab Lichtmann explained that such arbitration was not only customary within the Jewish community, but also made sense financially:

I was approached to broker some sort of an agreement between the two parties in order to avoid them doing damage to one another and prevent either of the two from ending up in a situation in which he would be unable to pay the lease. For this purpose, we met not in the temple *per se* but in its foyer, this being the customary place to settle business affairs between [Jewish] parties or to hold council, not only in Eszlár but everywhere: such affairs are settled in the foyer of the house of prayer...⁴⁵

Instead of ordering his lessees to report to his mansion in Ófalú, he himself went to the synagogue in Tótfalu to do justice in the foyer of the house of prayer. Formerly, Jewish communities had had their own Jewish judges, but this institution had not existed in the village for a long time. Still, Eszlár Jews considered Lichtmann “the head of our community.” However, the visible

42 *Tisza-Eszlár (Napi Értesítő)*. A tiszai-eszlári bűnper végtárgyalása alkalmából gyorsírói felvétel nyomán kiadja a Nyírvidék szerkesztősége, 1883, no. 1–29 [=T-E (*Napi Értesítő*)] József Scharf (June 19, 1883).

43 *Ibid.*, Jakab Szüszmann (June 24, 1883). Until May or September 1879 Jakab Lichtmann formerly held the office of the ‘chief curator’ in the Jewish religious community. Afterward Szüszmann became ‘curator’ only. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattár (=OSZK Kt) Fol. Hung. 1847/1 (Bary) 583 (Italics: Gy. K.).

44 *Ibid.*, József Einhorn (June 23, 1883).

45 *Ibid.*, Jakab Lichtmann (June 28, 1883).

spatial influence of the Lichtmanns in the central places of the settlement (the manor house in Ófalu and residence in Tótfalu) spread over the whole village.

The Public Sphere and the Christian–Jewish Animosity

Frequent conflicts inside Christian denominations create good opportunities to foster other animosities among all of the inhabitants of the village. In my study of Eszlár prior to the trial held in Nyíregyháza, I have found only one open conflict that took place in the public sphere which was thematized along Christian–Jewish confessional interests.

The issue of Jewish education

At the time, there were only confessional schools in the village. From 1871 on, there were already two Calvinist schools (in Ófalu and in Újfalu) and one Catholic school (in Ófalu) operating locally. But how were the school-age Jewish children of the village schooled? As far as this period is concerned, only the Calvinist schools kept a record of the names of their students in Eszlár. In 1876, all Jewish names on the list are girls, and all of them went to school in Ófalu. In 1883, however, we also find Jewish children in the Calvinist elementary school of Újfalu. Furthermore, Jewish boys also attended school both in Ófalu and Újfalu.⁴⁶ It may be assumed that in earlier periods the Jewish school that operated in Eszlár was made out to look like private tutoring. It had to be kept secret because the school inspector was systematically hunting down unauthorized Jewish schools that operated in a clandestine manner, as they were considered unsuitable by the state.⁴⁷ What is certain is that the first time that an unauthorized school of the Israelite community was officially closed in Eszlár was in 1883.⁴⁸ We do not know whether this was the school that educated all the Jewish children missing from the system during the 1870s or not. All we can assume is that Jewish boys must have received an education somewhere, at least

46 TtREL I.28.c. 49; 31; I. 28. h. 20. d.

47 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltára (=MNL SZSZBML) IV.B.404. 34. d. 590/880.

48 MNL SZSZBML IV. B. 404. 39. d. XIV. 1883/237 Velkey–KB, April 1, 1883.

because of religious reasons. This assumption is supported by the autobiography of Móric Scharf, who played a crucial role in the Tiszaeszlár trial.⁴⁹

After the 1876 flood, the secular municipal authorities of the village adopted a decree according to which the three teachers would receive 160 forints each from the budget of the village for providing what was called recapitulative education to students who would not proceed with secondary education (the decree also cancelled the obligation to pay a tuition fee for normally daily schooling).⁵⁰ However, the elder of the Jewish congregation, Jakab Lichtmann—who was also a *virilist*, one of the biggest taxpayers to the state—filed a complaint with the general assembly of the county against the decree. After this, the general assembly of the county was forced to strike the 480 forint expenditure line from the proposed budget of the village.⁵¹ After several rounds of discussion, the village approached the minister of the interior.⁵² By 1879, Ministerial Counsellor György Lukács had finally approved subsidizing the teachers from the budget of the village.⁵³

The background to the case was that the Calvinist schools of the village collected an additional contribution in the form of a tuition fee from non-Christian students with the justification that the parents of non-Calvinist children did not contribute to the maintenance of the confessional school.⁵⁴ The Catholic parson understood that the Calvinists “demanded a total of 27 forints (Gulden), nine forints for each of his three children, from an Israelite family father.”⁵⁵ Eventually, the Calvinist council of the village adopted a new regulation in 1883 concerning the school fees of the children of the non-Christian denominations:

49 “Initially, just for a few weeks, I went to the school of the village, but then my father enrolled me in the Jewish elementary school.” Móric Scharf, “Emlékeim a tiszaeszlári pörből,” *Egyenlőség*, 46, September 17, 1927, 6.

50 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.404. 33. d. 1069/79. Tiszaeszlár község képviselőtestületi gyűlés jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the Meeting of the General Assembly of the Village of Tiszaeszlár] (November 22, 1876).

51 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.402. 7. k. Szabolcs megye közgyűlési jegyzőkönyve (November 28, 1878).

52 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.404. 33. d. 1069/79. The application contrasted public interest with private interests: “in such a noble case as the spiritual well-being of an entire village, which indirectly also affects the advancement of our country, the selfish objections of a few who claim that they and their families do not benefit from this arrangement should not be considered when they go against the general intentions of an entire village.” (March 15, 1879).

53 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.404. 33. d. 1069/79 (May 26, 1879).

54 The minutes of a 1871 meeting of the presbytery *expressis verbis* only stated that “Any child belonging to any Christian denomination shall pay the same tuition fee in both schools.” TEREI Jegyzőkönyv, vol. 1 (May 6, 1871).

55 EFL TE 974/1878 Bertalan Ferenczy (March 14, 1878).

“in addition to the tuition fee, they shall pay, upon their enrolment, [...] another 80 *krajcár* towards the maintenance of the school.”⁵⁶

Jakab Lichtmann probably hired a private tutor. He may have raised his objections in defense of the children of his older brother, József, who lived in Újfalú. Both on personal and confessional grounds, he believed that this discrimination—and especially the extent of it—was unfair. It cannot be ruled out that when Jakab Lichtmann resigned as the chief curator of the Jewish community in 1879, one of his reasons for leaving was his failure in the affair of the ministerial decree. The two events are certainly very close to each other in time. It follows, therefore, that in 1882 he was formally not an elder and therefore not a legitimate representative of the Israelite community, which certainly weakened its resistance.

Electing the village judge (January 4, 1882)

In another case that took place in the public sphere, confessional aspects seem to play only an indirect role if any. On December 28, 1881, local elections had to be suspended in Tiszaeszlár because of “the brawl” between “two rather angry parties.”⁵⁷ The required forces (40 troops) were mobilized on January 4 to keep order.⁵⁸

Local scuffles of this type were a rather common form of expressing political intentions in this region, but what roused the passions of the community to such a degree at the end of 1881 in Tiszaeszlár?⁵⁹ Ecclesiastical documents give us some insight into the origin of the tensions.

When parish priest József Adamovics was defending himself against the accusations in the spring of 1884, he also brought up a number of older conflicts. He suspected that the complaint filed against him was really backed by former Eszlár judge Ferenc Nagy, who, as Adamovics put it, wanted to take revenge, since Adamovics had played a role in Nagy losing his position. Tódor (Ferenc) Nagy was born in Eszlár in 1834 in a well-respected Greek Catholic family of peasants with a half plot, as defined by the *urbarium*. He married Hermina Roth,

56 TEREI Jegyzőkönyv, vol. 1 (July 22, 1883)

57 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.411. 99. d. 10 205/1881 Kimmerling János segédszolgabíró jelentése [Report by Assistant District Officer János Kimmerling] (TE, December 28, 1881).

58 Ibid., (December 30, 1881).

59 László Szilágyi, *A “kuruc vármegye.” Parlamenti képviselők és választóik a dualizmus kori Szabolcs vármegyében.* (Nyíregyháza: Örökségünk Kiadó, 2006), 76–85; *Nyírvidék*, January 1, 1882, 3.

a Lutheran widow,⁶⁰ in 1864. In February 1872, he took his oath of office as a judge.⁶¹

Adamovics claims first having gotten into a conflict with Ferenc Nagy when Adamovics was chairman of the board of auditors. Adamovics was the *rapporteur* on a case involving “funds missing because of misappropriation” in which the judge was found “to have embezzled, conniving with a Jew, 170 Austrian forints from the village funds.”⁶² Eventually, Adamovics broke all ties with Ferenc Nagy when he refused to hand over an estate: “Then I told him openly that [...] in fact I would do everything in my power to rid the village of him.” In fact, Adamovics did achieve his goal: Nagy “was not even registered as a candidate when the time came for electing a new judge.”⁶³ Thus, at the end of 1881 Ferenc Nagy could not openly head his “party.” The most he could do was organize a plot from the background.

While he served as a judge, Ferenc Nagy also had conflicts with other leaders of the village. The complaint related to the missing village funds was reported to the county by Géza Ónody.⁶⁴ This was one of the reasons why János Láposy, a Calvinist pastor, welcomed the elections of January 4 as a favorable turn of events:

after a heavy siege taking several years, we have finally managed to approach Gábor Farkas, who is known for the interest he takes in the matters of the church, his good will, and his sensibility, and to get him to make a clear statement that he would accept the position of judge, and we have been able, at the expense of great efforts, and much to our pleasure, to elect him as judge.⁶⁵

60 MNL OL A 4677 G. kat. anyakönyvek (Tokaj) 83 (September 10, 1834); A 2568 Ref. anyakönyvek (TE) 38 (October 3, 1864).

61 MNL SZSZBML IV.B.411. 1. d. 101/1872, Dobozy Ferenc jelentése [Report by Ferenc Dobozy] (February 27, 1872).

62 EFL Acta Personalia 1460/1884. According to the register of the county archives, Géza Ónody submitted an application in 1880 “concerning 117 forints missing from the accounts of the village judge Ferenc Nagy.” MNL SZSZBML IV.B.411. 1153. k. 1880.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 99. d. 7935/1881. Ónody Géza levele [Letter by Géza Ónody] (September 9, 1881).

65 TtREL I.28.j. 16. 3/1882 Láposy János, TE–Pápay Imre alsószabolcs-hajdúkerületi esperesnek, Hajdúböszörmény [János Láposy, TE to Imre Pápay, the Dean of Alsószabolcs-hajdúkerület, Hajdúböszörmény] (January 12, 1882).

During the race leading to the election of the judge, the Calvinist community supported Gábor Farkas, who, being from an old and well-respected local Calvinist family representing the petty nobility, had already played an important role in the drive for the removal of pastor Soma Csiszár.⁶⁶

The municipal assembly of the village consisted of 40 delegates, half of whom were *virilists*, the biggest tax-payers of the village. The other half of the assembly were elected delegates, out of whom 10 people had been selected by a draw for replacement; it was their mandates that now had to be filled by way of elections. As far as the confessional composition of the elected delegates is concerned, the most apparent observation that can be made is that 15 delegates out of the 20 were Calvinists. Ferenc Nagy held the 11th position, which apparently indicates that the efforts to completely disqualify him from local politics were not entirely successful. One of the new names was József Klein, a day worker, who was the only Jew elected as a delegate in the municipal assembly.

As far as the actual numbers of the votes cast are concerned, only the data for the election of the judge is available. The real challenger of Gábor Farkas was a Catholic candidate, Ferenc Ailer (Eiler).⁶⁷ This may be of some interest because Ailer was not one of the wealthy men, yet he must have been one of the leaders in community opinion: he appears as one of the key figures of the conflict that surrounded Adamovics in 1884. Gábor Farkas received 110 votes in favor and 97 against, a clear win, but a rather tight result. He was probably not very confident about his success, which may have contributed to things getting out of control. The fact that more than 200 votes were cast suggests that there was considerable mobilization; in the case of the municipal assembly of the village, every adult male had one vote to cast. Confessional fault lines may also have played a role in the election propaganda: Adamovics believed that some of his opponents were convinced to join the camp of his rival “party” by people who had spread the allegation that “the priest himself wants to convert to Calvinism that is why he wants Gábor Farkas to take the office of the judge.”⁶⁸

Other officials were elected by acclamation. Looking at the final results, the vague outlines of a certain proportionality seem to appear: the judge was Calvinist, the magistrate of the adjunct judge was Greek Catholic, and the treasurer was Roman Catholic. Two of the sworn officials were Calvinists, two

66 As far as the person and family of Gábor Farkas are concerned, see Kövér, *A tiszaeszlári dráma*, 285–94.

67 (Gusztó) Ferenc Ailer was born around 1839–40. MNL OL A 900.

68 EFL Acta Personalia 1460/1884.

were Catholics (Kobzos and Ajler!); one of the elected municipal sergeants was also Roman Catholic, while the other was Calvinist. Can such careful political proportionality be purely accidental? One might say that while the composition of the municipal authorities reflects a moderate balance between the various confessions, all signs indicate that the elections had an effect of adjusting power relations in favor of the original Calvinist population. Without doubt, it was the Jewish community of the village who were least favored by such adjustment. After the elections, no former Jewish delegates remained among the members of the authorities. And “the great trial” was nowhere to be seen yet.

During the trial held in Nyíregyháza, in which Ferenc Nagy was not involved even as a witness, one of the defendants, Sámuel Lustig, finally spoke his mind: “Had Ferenc Nagy, supported by the Jewish vote, become the judge, the disappearance of Eszter would not have caused so much trouble.”⁶⁹ In other words, even if the conflicts emerging in the public sphere did leave a mark on the discourses of the Nyíregyháza trial, they did so only very indirectly. The weak and hidden signs of public rivalry, however, do not mean that one cannot search for further interactive mechanisms inside the local community, in everyday practice of coexistence and conflicts on a smaller scale, and in the private sphere of the peasant households.

*The Hidden Networks of the “Incriminated Case of the Girl Gone Missing”
Coexistence: the neighborhood*

The best way of reconstructing the subtle network of relationships (secular and religious as well) connecting the villagers is to expose the capillaries of the “female public opinion” of the village. To do this, one must analyze the background of the discourses of the trial. I present three cases, one from each of the three sections of the village.

The first case is related to the events of April 1. The investigation began in late April or early May 1882, one month after the case of the girl gone missing, investigating the statements made by five-year-old Jewish boy Samu Scharf in the

69 *Függetlenség*, June 22, 1883. A tárgyalások képe [The Standing of the Trial]. Even József Bary, the investigating judge of the affair remembered to reference this sentence in his memoirs. Bary seems to have either not known or forgotten the antecedents of the election of the judge in early 1882 in Esztlár: “Had Ferenc Nagy, *the person we wanted to elect*, been the judge, Eszter’s disappearance would not have caused any trouble.” (Italics – Gy. K.) *A tisztaeszlári bűnper. Bary József vizsgálóbíró emlékiratai* (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1933), 37.

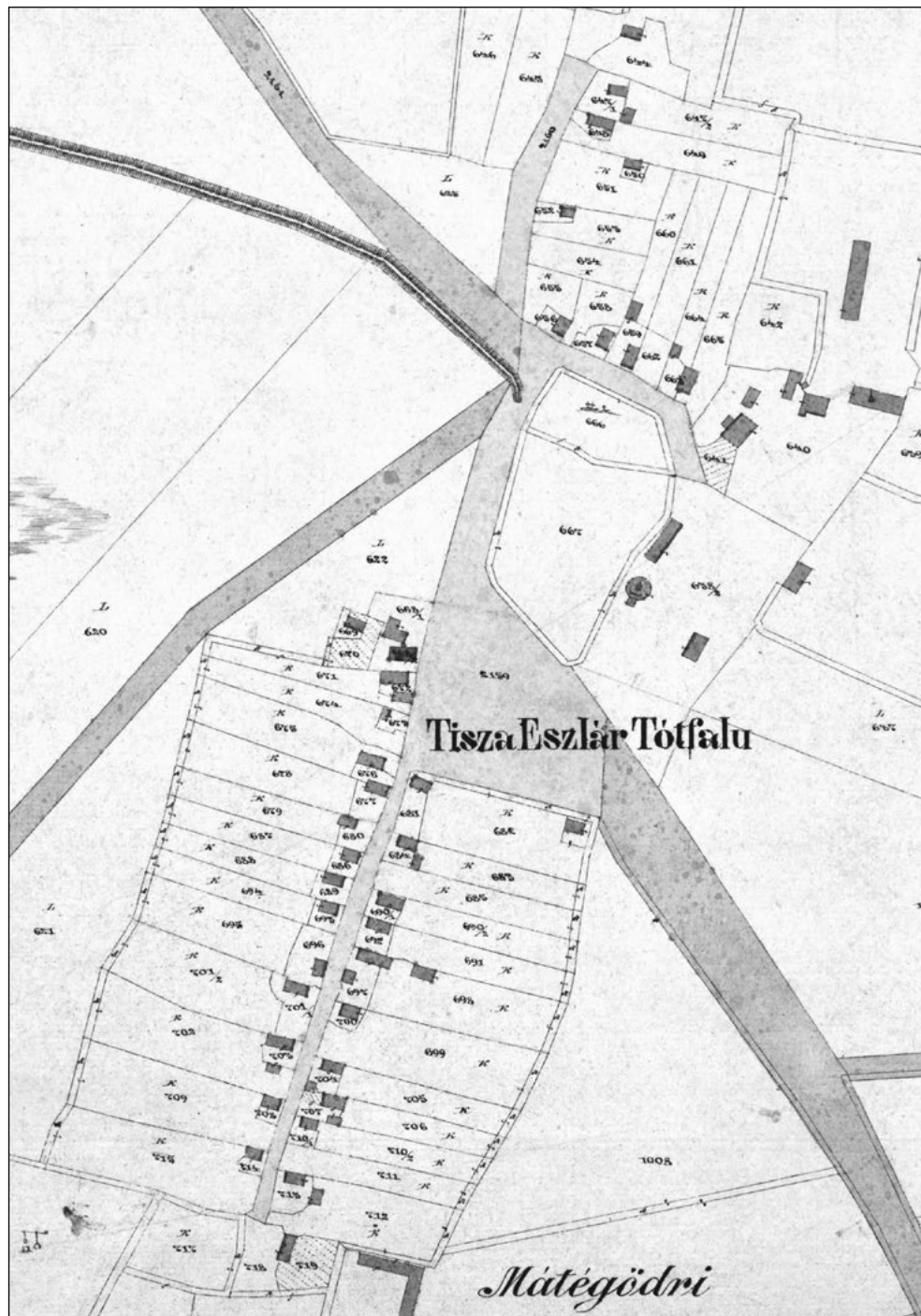
goose grazing land near Tótfalu. Allegedly, he saw Jews take the blood of Eszter Solymosi in the Synagogue. Who else heard what this child allegedly had said? Eötvös (defense attorney in the case and writer of the documentary novel about it) believed that, in addition to village judge Gábor Farkas, the key people were “his female relative Eszter Farkas, the wife of András Sós,” whose “daughter may have been” twelve-year-old Erzsébet Sós, and two “young women whom they knew: Julianna Szabó and Eszter Tanyi. It was these four women who produced the first Jewish child witness.”⁷⁰ Eötvös also tried to reconstruct kinship relations in the case of Erzsébet Tanyi, but he failed.⁷¹

Without casting doubt on the importance of kinship relations in rural societies, the most common feature of the people testifying in the case seems to have been that they fit equally well into a certain spatial structure based on neighborhood. The space between the upper part of Tótfalu (just a few houses) and the rectangular, recently settled part of Tótfalu was very special in many respects (in brackets the cadastral number of the site): it was where the old Catholic cemetery, then used for grazing geese, was located (666); the road leading from Ófalu to Újfalu crossed it (2159); it was where the embankment surrounding Ófalu ended; it was where the synagogue was located, along with the warden’s (*shamash*) home (668); and, finally, it was where Eszter Solymosi allegedly disappeared. It was this part of the village, “the throat of Tótfalu” as I will refer to it, that “swallowed” Eszter. This was the space of the everyday lives of all of the people who “supplied” the data for the investigation. Erzsébet Tanyi (Mrs. Pásztor) was driving her geese from the grazing land in the old cemetery to their house in the middle of Tótfalu (701) when little Samu jumped in front of her on May 2, saying “I won’t tell you what my father did to the Hungarian girl!” It was Mrs. Gábor Bátor, a widow who lived behind the Synagogue (669) who questioned Mrs. József Scharf, Samu’s mother standing outside at the time, about what they had just heard. Eszter Tanyi was on her way to see Mrs. Mihály Soós, who lived in the northeast part of Tótfalu (681), to have some feed milled. On the April 30, Mrs. András Soós (690), on her way home, was standing in the gate of Mrs. István Lengyel, the blacksmith’s widow, who lived right under the Synagogue (672) and allegedly had heard Samu talk.⁷² All the hearsay and gossip circulated within a tight network of neighborhood relationships, in “ecumenical turnover” among Calvinist and Catholic women.

70 Eötvös, *A nagy per*, I 82–83.

71 *T-E (Napi Értesítő)*, June 22, 1883.

72 *Ibid.*



Map 2. The “throat” of Tótfa⁷³

73 MNL OL S 78 225. téka.

Eötvös believed it was “unusual and, in fact, unprecedented” that this system of neighborhood relations should also include the Jewish child. However, the witnesses considered it fairly normal that little Samu would be playing together with the other kids. Mrs. Mihály Soós did not feel any need to explain why Samu had been at their house: “I too have a child, Samu was playing with him.”⁷⁴ However, by “inviting him into the house,” she had indeed granted him access to a more intimate inner sphere. It is not entirely implausible that this may have had to do with a desire to question the child. The dimensions of the rather closed micro-world of Samu are well reflected by the fact that, in his statement made in front of the investigating judge of the affair, József Bary, all the Jewish actors he listed as being involved in the imagined “murder” were somehow linked to Tótfalu.

Of course, neighborhoods also have their everyday female conflicts, after all, it is women who are at home all day long, that time. For example, the trial shed light on a dispute between Mrs. József Scharf and Mrs. András Sós. Although Mrs. Sós tried to give the impression that after April she and Mrs. Scharf “continued to visit one another as [they had] before,” the comments made by József Scharf, who interrupted the hearing, make it clear that a good many things had changed. For example, according to Scharf, when his wife wanted to buy “a small goose for 40 *krajcárs*” from Mrs. Sós, the latter responded: “Why, neighbor, you don’t need geese, for the Jews will be expelled soon; I’ll be there myself driving them with the fire iron.” Mrs. Sós admitted having said this; in fact, she shed light on the background of the incident: “On one occasion she drove my geese off to the estate steward, and now she is angry at me for making a witness statement against her.”⁷⁵ During the trial, the neighborhood seemed to be very peaceful on the surface, but underneath this veneer there was a silent, suppressed tension probably best put into words by Eszter Tanyi, who said “we are quiet among the Jews.”⁷⁶

Another example, which took place at the time of the trial in Ófalu, involves the case of witness Julianna Vámosi. Eighteen-year-old Julcsa Vámosi (in the trial, she was consistently referred to by her nickname), who was in the third year of her service at Jewish shopkeeper Löventhal’s family, first testified in the

74 T-E (*Napi Értésítő*), Mrs. Mihály Soós, June 23, 1883. In fact, she even remembered that “his mother never allowed [Samu] to go there ever again. I asked her why. She told me »because he always gossips.«” Ibid.

75 Ibid., Mrs. András Sós, June 22, 1883 (Interruption: József Scharf).

76 Ibid., June 23, 1883.

trial that she had seen Eszter walk home from the shop as late as 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon.⁷⁷ Later, yielding to pressure from her parents, she changed her statement, in spite of the fact that she could have been charged with making a false witness statement. At the end of the day, the parents practically denounced their own child to the municipal authorities.

The mother, Erzsébet Tóth (Mrs. József Vámosi), a 48-year-old Calvinist woman, stated that her daughter “had been asked to swear that she had seen Eszter Solymosi at 1:00 o'clock. What she told us, though, was this: »Yes, mother, I did see her, but that was between 10:00 and 11:00«; however, her master, an Israelite, had asked her to »swear that you saw Eszter Solymosi at one o'clock and you shall be greatly rewarded.«” The mother even added that her daughter used to be “a proper anti-Semite”:

This girl, she used to be the type that could have killed Jews; she would not have talked the way she does now. These last few days, however, she must have been somehow cajoled into saying these things... I am her mother, I have been a married woman for twenty years, and I have never seen such a thing, her not knowing something and then, just a few days later, all of a sudden knowing what she had not known before, that she had seen Eszter Solymosi, even at that time.

When Eötvös warned her that other witnesses had also seen Eszter later, Mrs. Vámosi responded: “The entire village can prove that she could not have seen her at that time; she could only have been seen at 11:00 or 12:00.” When the defense attorney asked her “did the villagers confront either you or your husband about your daughter testifying in support of the Jews?”, she first refused to answer. Later, she admitted that her husband had brought their daughter home from the Löventhals, where she was a maid, because he had heard that they wanted to beat her to death. “Friedmann: »Who told you that they wanted to beat her to death?« Witness: »It was word of mouth in the village.« Friedmann: »And why did your husband go there?« Witness: »To calm folks down.«”⁷⁸

Under all this pressure, Julcsa Vámosi admitted on July 20 that she had made a false statement earlier, and that it had been Samu Lichtmann, the son of influential Jakab Lichtmann, former head of the Jewish community, who had

77 Ibid., Vámosi Julcsa [első] tanúvallomása [The [First] Witness Statement of Julcsa Vámosi], June 25, 1883. It was evident, that after the end of the Jewish sermon, at noon, all the members of the community had left the synagogue and returned home.

78 Ibid., Vámosiné tanúvallomása [The Witness Statement of Mrs. Vámosi], July 9, 1883.

convinced her to say 1:00 o'clock. By then she allegedly remembered having seen Eszter before the bells were tolled at noon, and she noted that she had not received anything other than the 50 *krajcárs* that the court of law offered to witnesses. In response to a question asked by Eötvös, she recalled a scene that had taken place in the village:

Eötvös: “Did they want to beat you to death, did they swear at you?”
 The witness: “They often said so.” Eötvös: “Was that when you went to fetch water from the Tisza?” The witness: “Yes, Sir.” Eötvös: “Who told you there that you had sworn falsely?” The witness: “Mrs. András Farkas, Mrs. Bálint Cseres, and the third one was Mrs. József A[r]dai.”⁷⁹

The girl's father and even the Jewish woman she had served were heard the same day. The father, a 42-year-old man employed as a servant guarding the vineyards of the village, stated that he had met and had talked to Mihály Cseres—who was also heard in Nyíregyháza—in the vineyard, and Cseres had said “your daughter did not say the right thing, ... so no wonder the villagers almost beat her to death.”⁸⁰ Mrs. Löventhal, the 30-year-old Jewish woman, gave an account of how their maid had been taken out of service.

[Mrs. Löventhal, asking the mother]: “When are you bringing her back? I ask her. Look, I cannot give her back to you right now, folks are way too agitated around here.” Mrs. József Papp, the wife of the adjunct judge [the second elected official of the village] confronted me and told me, “I will kill your daughter myself if you ever allow her to come back!” Judge Gábor Farkas said, “Your daughter had better not come back to the village, it wouldn't end well.”

Mrs. Löventhal also recalled the incident that took place along the road to the Tisza. “We went to the Tisza and those four women surrounded her right away, »You Jewish witness this, you Jewish witness that.«” Asked by Eötvös, she identified the four women they had encountered on their way to the river.⁸¹ Eötvös was not especially interested in the chorus of the four women along the embankment; it is, however, of interest to this inquiry. The women surrounding

79 Ibid., Vámosi Julcsa [második] tanúvallomása [The [Second] Witness Statement of Julcsa Vámosi], July 20, 1883.

80 Ibid., Vámosi József tanúvallomása [The Witness Statement of József Vámosi], July 20, 1883.

81 Ibid., Löventhal Salamonné tanúvallomása [The Witness Statement of Mrs. Salamon Löventhal], July 20, 1883.

Julcsa lived in the same general area, but were not next door neighbors. The shop and home of the Löventhals was located right in the middle of the circle along the road leaving Ófalu towards the south. It was a narrow plot of land with a long house on it. Originally, they were not listed among the persons accused; however, they were now heard as witnesses because of their maid. Salamon, the father of the young Jewish grocer, had had a shop in Eszlár already in 1848. The women who surrounded the Vámosi girl all represented socially well embedded fates, with strong links to one another, coming either from lesser noble or wealthy peasant families, or they were descendants of former cottagers (*zsellér*). In contrast, the Vámosi family held a peripheral, highly dependent position in the society of the village. They lived in the vineyard guard's house outside of the village limits, and the wife was not even from the village to begin with. Having heard the threats of these angry women, all of whom were influential in public opinion in the local society, they may well have feared for the life of their daughter and for their home, which they could only keep as long as they served the village by working in the vineyard. During the trial, there was gossip according to which the father, perhaps to release stress after the great scare, beat his daughter in order to impress upon her the importance of solidarity with the village community.

The third example took place when the trial was already in process and Mrs. András Cseres, who lived in Újfalú on the row of the cottagers, volunteered to make a witness statement to the municipal authorities. The Cseres family lived in Újfalú, across the street from the Groszberg family, and as is even more important from the perspective of this inquiry, the woman spoke “Jewish.” She had learned the language in Tiszalök, where she had served the local *shochet* for one and a half years. On April 1, her husband had been hoeing the vineyard on the slopes of the Tokaj mountain and had come home very tired. She was trying to wake him, in vain, to show him what she saw, looking out the window, across the street, which was just a few meters wide: Jews gathered in the courtyard of the Groszberg family late in the evening. The husband objected to the wife testifying, although the wife, allegedly, did not tell her husband what she had seen. “One should not tell him things of that sort because he does not like gossip,” the woman said. The husband tried to convince the wife not to testify, saying “We are poor people; we must work... I’m telling you, you’ll get yourself into big trouble.”⁸² The most interesting part, however, is Mrs. Cseres’s explanation as to why, one year later, in the summer

82 Ibid., July 9, 1883.

of 1883, she still decided to make a witness statement: “Witness: »There was talk in Tiszaeszlár that Christians were about to lose and Israelites were about to win; that’s what drove me to go and talk to the judge lest my soul should burn in hell.«” Eötvös put some pressure on her, asking:

“Who told you the Christians were about to lose and the Jews were about to win?” Witness: “It was word of mouth all over the village, all the righteous people said so.” Eötvös: “Were folks upset?” Witness: “Very much so.” Eötvös: “Was there a gathering of people?” Witness: “Oh, yes, indeed.” Eötvös: “At whose house?” Witness: “We never went to that house; I was just coming home from hoeing when I heard so.” Eötvös: “Who told you?” Witness: “The Lord Almighty knows.” Eötvös: “What did you mean by saying that the Christians were about to lose and the Jews were about to win?” Witness: “That the Christians wasted Eszter... that they wasted Eszter and were now going to put the blame on the Christians.” Eötvös: “The Jews did?” Witness: “Yes.” Eötvös: “So did the Jews waste Eszter?” Witness: “It’s supposed to be them, isn’t it, not the Christians.”⁸³

I have presented three examples, one from each part of the community: Ófalu, Tótfalu, and Újfalu. One incident took place on the way to the river, one took place on the way home from the goose grazing land or on the way to the mill, and one took place on the way home from hoeing the vineyard. The sites are everyday locations. The communication is purely oral. A bit of hearsay, a bit of gossip. However, the situation is extraordinary. The point of reference that weighed most (“It was word of mouth all over the village...”) suggested that Christianity as such was at stake. For if it was not the Jews who had killed Eszter Solymosi, then the sin would revert to it was the Christians, or rather some person or people belonging to one of the (competing) Christian denominations. The peasants followed the imperative of their instinct for self-defense, and that imperative was mediated by everyday coalitions consisting of neighborhood and kinship networks among women. The mobilization of the witnesses during the investigation and trial forged the majority of the Christian inhabitants together against the Jews. Although the Lichtmanns were not sitting in the dock in the

83 Ibid., July 9, 1883. Of course, it turned out that there were petty conflicts between the women in the background. Mrs. Groszberg shed some light on the conflict: “I had March chickens and her swine ate all of them up. I asked her to come to the parish hall; there, she told me she would work for me because of the chicken. The judge told her to go and come to a settlement with me, and now she refuses to even put in that one day of work.” Ibid.

court (they were present also as witnesses), the thinly veiled message to intimidate the whole Jewish community had been sent to its informal leaders.

“Popular excitement” (May 29, 1882)

On one occasion during the investigation, emotions flew so high in Eszlár that there was a real chance that things would get out of hand. At the time, there were already dozens of news reporters on the lookout for any new development in the investigation. On May 30, 1882, dailies reported in their dedicated “The Eszlár Case” column that the previous day, which was Pentecost Monday, a group of Jews had gathered at the southern end of Tiszaeszlár alongside the road to TiszaLök, something that created major tensions and revived old memories of collective violence in the villagers. It is therefore an essential component of this conflict that by this time the case was gaining significance beyond that of a village affair in a narrow sense. Wider localities (the manor, the district, and the county) exerted more and more influence on the course of events.

The story was reported by Verhovay’s *Függetlenség* (“Independence”), a newspaper known for its anti-Semitism, which emphasized, that “several hundred Jews gathered from within and outside of the village, raiding the house of Mrs. Solymosi”.⁸⁴ According to Miksa Weinstein’s account, it was not only the Jews or people from outside the area who participated in the search for Eszter.⁸⁵ The explanation: a reward was offered to whoever might succeed in tracking the girl down.

The case cannot be interpreted simply at a local scale. “People from the neighboring villages continuously provoked and incited the people of Eszlár: “We can hardly wait for the people of Eszlár to start beating the Jews so we can follow suit.”⁸⁶ Not even three weeks after Pentecost, the population of Eszlár—due to the efforts of both pastors—appeared a paragon of calmness—at least according to the report. All these journalistic interpretations show that the Eszlár case (the conflict) was not simply mirrored but at the same time was also shaped by the agents of the local and national press (and politics).

During the semi-annual county assembly, deputy lord lieutenant János Zoltán presented an official report on the events that took place around Pentecost

84 *Függetlenség*, May 31, 1882 (Királytelek, May 30).

85 W. M. A tiszta-eszlári eset [The Case of Tiszaeszlár] (Dated: TiszaLök, May 30). *Debreceni Ellenőr*, May 31, 1882 (later, as a publicist of Jewish weekly, *Egyenlőség*, he changed his name to Miksa Szabolcsi).

86 *Egyetértés*, June 22, 1882 (Nyíregyháza, June 21, 1882).

(also outlining the types of county-level measures he believed necessary to implement). The deputy lord lieutenant also had to report to the minister of the interior.⁸⁷ It is worth taking a look at the original minutes surviving in the estate of Investigating Judge József Bary. Bary was indeed personally present on site adopting measures, and he provided the information on the basis of which the deputy lord lieutenant drafted his report. According to these minutes, village judge Gábor Farkas approached Bary at about 9:00 o'clock in the evening, saying:

large groups of villagers are heading towards the part of the village called Újfalu where, people say, large numbers of Jewish strangers are gathering and standing around at the end of the village with unknown intentions, whose unexplainable appearance has provoked the Christian population of the village, whereby it is to be feared that the people, partly agitated over the events and partly fuelled by the alcohol they have consumed during the Pentecostal festivities, might resort to physical violence against the suspicious strangers.

Riding on a cart, the investigating judge, the deputy prosecutor, the judge, and a municipal bailiff passed the groups walking towards Újfalu, checking the identity documents of three Tiszalök Jews in Újfalu and of another eight at the end of the village and ordering them to leave the settlement, “or else they will be held responsible for any and all consequences of the popular excitement provoked by their unjustified presence.” The Tiszalök Jews complied with the order. Soon after this, “a group of some 200 to 300 locals” appeared armed with “pitchforks, sticks, bars, and similar utensils suitable for striking.” As they claimed, “they were afraid that the suspicious Jewish strangers would set fire to their houses at night, so it was their intention to remove them from the village and its vicinity by any means necessary.”⁸⁸ The next morning, Bary had a number of witnesses testify to the veracity of his report.⁸⁹ Actually, it was he who—writing about the sequence of events he had just experienced—came up with the term “popular excitement” to describe the events in the title as well as in the body of his report.

87 MNL SZSZBML IV. B. 411. 107. d. 4687/ 882 Zoltán János alispán–BM [Deputy Lord Lieutenant János Zoltán to the Ministry of the Interior] (Nyíregyháza, June 2, 1882, draft).

88 OSZK Kt, Fol. Hung. 1847/ I (Bary) 118–19. T. Eszláron május 29-én történt népzgatottság alkalmából felvett jegyzőkönyv [Minutes Taken On Account of the Popular Excitement Taken Place on May 29, in Tiszaeszlár] (May 30, 1882).

89 József Juhász, a 53-year-old farmer living at the very edge of Újfalu saw a total of more than ten, and, later, a cartload of Jews in the area. OSZK Kt, Fol. Hung. 1847/I. (Bary) 114.

The press continued to report on the events for quite some time. Author Sándor Teleki asked Eszlár judge Gábor Farkas why he believed “the Jews came to the village and rushed to the house of Mrs. Solymosi. »Just to provoke, so that they can call in the military. Much to our luck, the investigating judge was right there with us; our good village folks listen to reason, and those gentlemen clearly told the villagers that there was no point in picking a fight.«”⁹⁰

These reports—divergent as they may be—help one reconstruct the sequence of events in a highly plausible manner. The tabloid-style exaggerations and absurdities presented by some of the newspapers can also be discarded. It is highly improbable to assume that, as a result of the atrocities allegedly committed, the house of Mrs. Solymosi suffered any damage without this ever being even mentioned in the Bary report dedicated to the disappearance of Eszter. If, as some stated, 600 Jews gathered with the intention of launching such an attack, could 200 to 300 drunk locals armed with pitchforks and sticks have really driven them out of the village? The estimates concerning the number of people who allegedly gathered at the outskirts of the village vary widely, from ten to several hundred. Did the Jews of Eszlár really need to have all the strangers arriving from the neighboring villages beaten up only to have an excuse to provoke the deployment of the armed forces in the village? How can one speak about collective violence when people standing around in groups must face the full force of the law while those unnamed few instigating an atmosphere of lynching are “tactfully” dissuaded by an investigating judge?

The “quasi violence” of Pentecost was not the sole anti-Semitic excess in the village. The synagogue of Tótfalu, where Eszter Solymosi had been murdered according to the accusation, was vandalized as well. The fact itself that Bary conducted an investigation on the spot two times (May 20, September 11) emboldened some rabble-rousers (leading to window smashing and damaged interiors).⁹¹ The decisive impetus, nonetheless, came again from the outside: on July 25, 1882, Gyula Verhovay traveled to the settlement in the company of adjunct judge József Papp. He wrote of the “filthiness of the ghetto” in his newspaper.⁹² Moreover, according to some reports, several days later a few women from the village took a wooden crucifix into the building. After this

90 Teleki, Sándor, Solymosiné [Mrs. Solymosi], *Debreceni Ellenőr*, July 6, 1882.

91 *A tiszkeszlári bűnper. Bary József vizsgálóbíró emlékiratai*, 56; OSZK Kt Fol. Hung. 1847/1 (Bary) 586.

92 Az eszlári zsinagóga és a fürdőház [The Synagogue of Eszlár and the Bathhouse], *Függetlenség*, July 30, 1882. In his anonymously published article, Verhovay did not state that he had entered the synagogue, but otherwise the description of its inner space could not be given.

gesture of “sacrilege,” the Jewish community allegedly left the synagogue and held the Saturday sermons in Lichtmann’s nearby residence.⁹³

Of course, an interpretation of the local “popular excitement” would also be possible within another framework of reference, that of mass psychology or, possibly, mass hysteria—these concepts were emerging right in the era under review, even though the study of the related symptoms only really commenced in the twentieth century.⁹⁴ However, what makes this phenomenon special is that the promise of legality and fair procedure did appeal to the reason of those concerned. Nationally, things only got out of control when on August 3, 1883 the Nyíregyháza court acquitted the defendants. Once again, for the last time, sentiments flared up in Eszlár. Péter Soltész wanted to throw one of the daughters of Weiszstein, an acquitted defendant, into the fire, and he hit Farkas Wertheimer (the estate steward) in the head with a hayfork, although Wertheimer had not even testified. In his own defense, the perpetrator claimed having been drunk at the time.⁹⁵ He was duly punished. And in the spring of 1884, the emperor decorated judge Gábor Farkas with the crowned silver medal of merit for the role he played in keeping order.⁹⁶ However, cantor and *schochet* Salamon Schwarz, who was the number one defendant in “the case of the girl gone missing,” and synagogue sexton József Scharf, who was accused of aiding and abetting (and after whom the trial was named), were never able to return to the village, and neither were their families.

* * *

93 A tiszaeszlári zsidó hitközség nyilatkozata [The Communiqué of the Jewish Community in Tiszaeszlár], *Egyenlőség*, November 5, 1882, 8–9. The Communiqué of the local community had been not signed by the Lichtmann family members. The action was interpreted in different ways in the press. *Pesti Napló*, August 9, 1882.

94 Károly Eötvös himself was also thinking of offering a description: “The masses, once they have had their tempers roused, seek success in revenge, and will not only excuse but in fact demand all the violence that may be needed to achieve that goal, so much so that they will easily resort to violence themselves. They do not care about the law, about formalities, about any sacred protections, or about the natural rights of man.” Eötvös, *A nagy per*, I, 80. As far as the phenomena related to the psychology of the masses and to mass hysteria in the early phases of these academic fields are concerned, see Gustave Le Bon, *La psychologie des foules* (Paris: Alcan, 1895).

95 These events were reported by *Egyenlőség* (August 12, 1883, 7); I have not found pertinent data in the documents of the deputy lord lieutenant.

96 *Egyenlőség*, February 10, 1884.

Victor Turner's concept of social drama has proven especially inspiring when interpreting all these cases in the history of Esztlár. Going beyond the limitations of the positivist concept of structures, he drew a distinction between formalized structures on the one hand and temporary structures generated by social dramas mainly in the course of conflicts. These are open, and the observer may recognize them in retrospect. Their organizational focus is not in the intersection of diagrams. Instead, they surface in the minds of the actors as objectives of actions and efforts. They encompass alternatives and they can be grasped through analyses of psychological factors.⁹⁷ When examining various conflicts, apparently everything happens the way it usually does, as might be expected, and yet, everything might change completely in a split second. Coexistence, rivalry, and conflicts are inevitably intertwined. Rivalries between the approved Christian denominations manifested themselves either in conversion or in mixed marriages. There was never a plan to crowd out the other party, though. However, in this region, in this time period, after the emancipation of the Jews, the Christian–Jewish conflict could still take the form not only of blood libels⁹⁸ but also of the ritual forms of intimidation and violence. This is what international literature calls “exclusionary violence.”⁹⁹ However, after the trial ended with acquittals, and after the flames of collective violence went out, the various forms of local coexistence once again reorganized themselves in a business-as-usual manner.

It is no coincidence that, speaking of the Dreyfus affair, social psychologist Serge Moscovici makes the following claim: “Great thunderstorms, great discharges of human energy, great breaks of tension in society remain opaque to contemporaries and are seen in their true light only after a time. But their riddle never seems to receive any unquestionable solutions. This is what makes their fascination, which can last a long time.”¹⁰⁰ In our case hopefully not for another thousand years.

97 Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 35–37.

98 Hillel J. Kieval, “The Importance of Place: Comparative Aspects of the Ritual Murder Trial in Modern Central Europe,” in *Comparing Jewish Societies*, ed. Todd E. Endelmann (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 135–65.

99 Christhard Hoffmann, “Political Culture and Violence against Minorities: The Antisemitic Riots in Pomerania and West Prussia,” in *Exclusionary Violence. Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 67–93; Helmut Walser Smith, “From Play to Act: Anti-Jewish Violence in German and European History during the Long Nineteenth Century,” in idem, *The Continuities of German History. Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 115–67.

100 Serge Moscovici, “The Dreyfus Affair, Proust and Social Psychology,” *Social Research* 53, no. 1 (1986): 27.

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“The Jewish Ambassador to Budapest”: Mór Wahrmann and the Politics of “Tactfulness”

In this article I explore the cultural paradoxes associated with the articulation of Jewish identity in fin-de-siècle Hungary. By focusing on the political career of Mór Wahrmann, I trace the implicit contradictions of a liberal public sphere that officially recognized freedom of religion for Jews but implicitly banned all expression of Jewish cultural or ethnic difference. Reading Wahrmann’s career through his famous joke about the “Jewish ambassador in Budapest,” I argue that this system gave rise to a radically bifurcated public culture, which prohibited even the mention of a distinct Jewish identity in official politics or social life, but tolerated and even celebrated the performance of Jewish difference in the realms of commercial entertainment and humor. The paper is part of a larger book project entitled “The Invisible Jewish Budapest,” which attempts to recuperate the lost world of Jewish urban experience that flourished in Budapest in the years between 1867 and 1914.

Keywords: Jewish identity, fin-de-siècle Hungary, tolerance, anti-Semitism, Mór Wahrmann, political culture

The Funeral

On November 29, 1892, the citizens of Budapest were treated to an elaborate state funeral, staged according to the theatrical traditions that had become the custom of the fin-de-siècle Monarchy.¹ The funeral was to honor Mór Wahrmann, the first Jewish Member of Parliament, who had represented for almost a quarter of a century the affluent *Lipótváros*, a neighborhood closely affiliated with Jewish capital and high finance. Wahrmann’s unexpected death provoked an outpouring of tributes in the national press, which showed remarkable consensus about the significance of his life and career. Wahrmann, the prominent politician, fabulously wealthy banker and businessman, and influential President of the Neolog Jewish Congregation of Budapest, was invariably depicted as the ideal type of the assimilated Hungarian Jew. More

1 See Vilmos Tóth, “Wahrmann Mór temetése és a Wahrmann-mauzoleum,” in *Honszeretet és felekezeti híűség: Wahrmann Mór, 1831–1892*, ed. Tibor Frank (Budapest: Argumentum, 2006), 205–11.

than the sum total of his individual achievements, Wahrmann's life was seen as the symbolic expression of the aspirations of a secular and modernizing Jewish community. "The Jews of Hungary," proclaimed the liberal daily, *Pesti Hírlap*, "possessed in Mór Wahrmann their virtual chief and leader."² Wahrmann's exemplary status, however, transcended the Jewish community. He was also celebrated as a symbol of Hungarian liberalism and one of the mainstays of the Compromise of 1867, which had established the constitutional framework of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy.³



Figure 1. Ceremonial image of Wahrmann
Source: *Neues Politischer Volksblatt*,
November 27, 1892



Figure 2. Wahrmann's Funeral Procession
Source: *Neues Politischer Volksblatt*,
November 30, 1892

Wahrmann's funeral represented the summation and reenactment of the progressive principles that defined the liberal party. In particular, the funeral served to showcase a series of highly controversial secularization laws, recently

2 *Pesti Hírlap*, November 27, 1892, XIV, no. 328. Wahrmann's obituaries were collected in "Néhai Wahrmann Mór országgyűlési képviselő, a Pesti Izraelita Hitközség elnöke stb. stb. emlékezete" [Remembrances of the Deceased Mór Wahrmann, Member of Parliament and President of the Budapest Jewish Congregation] by the Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár [Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives], Budapest.

3 For a comprehensive account of Wahrmann's life, see Tibor Frank, "Magyar és zsidó: a Wahrmann-életrajz kérdései," in *Honszeretet és felekezeti büség*, 11–36. For collected primary sources, see: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library], "Jüdische Delikatessen," Öregbb Bonyhád Pérczel István, Oct. Hung. 730.

introduced in parliament by the liberal party, which became the fulcrum of political battles for years to come. Since the crowning achievement of these measures was the so-called Law of Reception, granting Judaism equal status with other religions of the state, Wahrmann’s figure was a particularly charged symbol for the liberal establishment. There was no attempt to disguise the political agenda that formed the subtext of the funeral. As an editorial of the illustrated family magazine, *Vasárnapi Ujság* acknowledged the week after the ceremony:

In these days of deepening religious antagonism and strife, the general sympathy manifested at the funeral of this veteran figure of our public life has a virtually symbolic importance. Present at the funeral were members of the ruling party and officials representing every branch of our state and national institutions. Even the man of the street, usually indifferent to such things, made an attempt to express his condolences by his participation in the event. This was the emblem of our national solidarity, an encouraging sign for the future, and a rebuttal of hundreds of dark prophesies and thousands of disquieting fears.⁴

The political hopes proclaimed by the *Vasárnapi Ujság* were echoed in the hundreds of obituaries published in the wake of Wahrmann’s funeral. The defining themes of these obituaries were already sounded at a special session of parliament convened on the Monday after Wahrmann’s death. Sándor Hegedűs, speaking on behalf of the finance committee that Wahrmann headed for years, touched on Wahrmann’s remarkable abilities as an economic and financial expert.

No one had a more impressive capacity to harmonize practical life with abstract considerations [...] Thus, he never supported a practical measure without theoretical and principled justification, and he never put forth a theory or principle without practical illustration.⁵

Károly Eötvös, a member of the opposition Independence Party and the former defense attorney of the Jews of Tiszaeszlár,⁶ singled out Wahrmann’s contributions to the Budapest Jewish Congregation, and Count Albert Apponyi

4 *Vasárnapi Ujság*, December 4, 1892, XXXIX, no. 49.

5 Sándor Hegedűs, “Wahrmannról,” *Vasárnapi Ujság*, December 4, 1892.

6 In 1882, the Jews of Tiszaeszlár were accused of ritual murder in connection with their Passover celebration. The ritual murder trial, in which Károly Eötvös acted as the defense attorney of the accused Jews, became one of the notorious events in the history of late nineteenth-century Hungarian anti-Semitism.

stressed Wahrmann's exemplary role in the transformation of the national capital into an increasingly Hungarian-speaking city.⁷

In these accounts, Wahrmann assumed the larger-than-life role of a man whose sheer force of character had allowed him to transcend the myriad contradictions threatening the unity of the liberal state. Successfully balancing economic pragmatism with political idealism, Hungarian national interests with the imperatives of Dualism, Wahrmann became the symbol of an ideal liberalism that increasingly eluded political practitioners. His greatest and most frequently cited achievement, however, was his ability to align and harmonize his Jewish identity with his Hungarian identity. In the words of a representative who identified himself as a political opponent of Wahrmann's, no other member of the Jewish elite possessed a comparable ability to "reconcile—we would say even fuse—a genuine love of his native land with an equal devotion to his religious denomination."⁸

Perhaps not surprisingly, it was the Hungarian–Jewish press that produced the most effusive narrative on the theme of reconciliation embodied in Wahrmann's figure. He exemplified, wrote the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, "all the characteristic traits of Hungarian Jewry: enthusiasm for the Hungarian state, striving for economic modernization and prosperity, a fervent liberalism and clear-sighted religious consciousness."⁹ Wahrmann's death, proclaimed the Jewish liberal weekly, *Egyenlőség* affected all segments of Hungarian society: "Charitable institutions mourn the loss of their benefactor; the representatives of political life, their hard-working colleague; business and industrial interests, their leader; the creators of scholarship and art, their patron; Jewish organizational life, its column of fire."¹⁰

Challenges to the Liberal Narrative

The image of Wahrmann created by these eulogies bore only slight resemblance to the actual politician who had participated in Hungarian political life since 1868. In fact, the relationship between assimilated Jewry and the Hungarian liberal state was far more problematic than these narratives of inclusion and reconciliation suggested. Equally idealized was the narrative of liberalism presented in these commemorations. Not surprisingly, challenges to the public celebration

7 *Pesti Napló Esti Lapja*, November 28, 1892, no. 329.

8 *Egyetértés*, November 27, 1892, no. 328.

9 Sándor Bücher, "Wahrmann Mór életrajza," *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* 10, no. 3 (1893): 9.

10 Samu Haber, "Wahrmann Mórról," *Egyenlőség*, December 2, 1892, XI, no. 49.

and Wahrmann’s role within it emerged almost immediately after the funeral. Predictably, the most common objection was the alleged inappropriateness of according a mere Jewish politician the honor of a state funeral, usually reserved for prominent national figures. The Catholic conservative *Magyar Állam* voiced these concerns in their most explicit form. Wahrmann, suggested its editorial, was hardly equal to such political luminaries as the former Prime Minister, Gyula Andrásy, or the prominent railway developer, Gábor Baross, who had been given similar funerals in 1890 and 1892 respectively. What had been enacted in this ceremony, suggested the writer, was a defense of Jewish interests, not of Hungarian values. “At such times, the true face of the famous Hungarian liberalism is revealed: it is nothing more than Jewish liberalism!”¹¹



Figure 3. Photograph of the young Wahrmann

Source: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum [Hungarian National Museum] Történelmi Fényképtár
[Historical Photo Gallery]

The attempt to incorporate Wahrmann into the Hungarian national pantheon typically found more muted and indirect forms of opposition. One of the most bizarre was reported in the Viennese liberal paper, the *Neue Freie Presse*, which never missed an opportunity to embarrass the Hungarian political establishment. The episode, described in a postscript to an otherwise respectful

11 *Magyar Állam*, November 30, 1892, III, no. 274.

obituary for Wahrmann, had to do with a conflict about the size of the black flag raised at the time of Wahrmann's death above the Hungarian Lower House. The flag in question, it turns out, was not identical with the large one ordered on the occasion of the death of Archduke Rudolf in 1889 and also used to honor Dániel Irányi, a hero of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, who had died only weeks before Wahrmann. The older, smaller flag hoisted for Wahrmann presumably denoted a lesser degree of respect than the one accorded to Irányi. When Dezső Bánffy, the President of the House, found out about the substitution, "he called to task the official responsible, explaining that he would not tolerate even the hint of anti-Semitism, and he ordered that the large flag be raised."¹²

Behind the triviality of these episodes were fundamental and unresolved questions about the relationship of Jews to the nation state, which were hardly a concern unique to conservative and anti-Semitic opponents. These were issues deeply embedded within the fabric of Hungarian society and characteristic of the entire period of liberal hegemony since 1867. What political role should Jews assume within the liberal state? Under what conditions could Jews appear as Jews in the public sphere? Theoretically, these questions had been rendered irrelevant by emancipation, which had granted Jews full legal and political equality. With the rights of citizenship, Jews had presumably gained equal access to a disinterested and transparent public realm, where they could articulate their interests in the same way and under the same conditions as other citizens. In the context of liberal ideology, the discussion of Jewish collective identity or political strategies made no sense, since Jews were by definition citizens indistinguishable from others in the state. In fact, however, the ideal of a neutral public sphere was a fiction and Jews never became transparent, unmarked selves within the modern Hungarian state. The stigmatized status of Jews remained an unspoken and inadmissible fact of liberal society, creating unceasing tension between official political ideology and everyday social practice. The solution to the conflict was the repression of all public expressions of Jewish difference, which became an implicit clause of the so-called assimilation contract between Jews and the Hungarian nation.¹³

In theory, all representations of Jewish identity were banished from the public realm. In practice, however, Jews did not disappear from public view, but became hyper-visible. Jewish difference was performed in the ubiquitous Jewish

12 *Neue Freie Presse*, November 28, 1892, no. 10153.

13 About this contract see András Kovács, "A magyar zsidók és a politika," *Világosság* 39, no. 2 (1998): 78.

joke, which became the *lingua franca* of Budapest urban culture; it was represented in venues of commercial entertainment, where parodies of Jewish life became an unavoidable staple; it was reflected in popular literature and the mass media, where the interaction between Jews and non-Jews was a constant theme. Representations of Jews were everywhere in the culture and it was impossible to navigate public life without encountering them. Significantly, however, there was nothing haphazard or improvised about these representations. They were governed by protocols that functioned as internalized reflexes, making some kinds of public statements about Jews acceptable and others not.

The Jewish Ambassador Anecdote

Perhaps no one was a more adroit practitioner of these unwritten rules than Wahrmann himself, who, through much of his life, managed to be the consummate political insider, as well as the ultimate cultural outsider. His true skills were those of the performer, who could function in different social settings and play in different cultural registers at the same time. It is not surprising that during his life Wahrmann was far better known for his wit and humor than for his elevated public sentiments. *Borszem Jankó*, the major humor magazine of the age, paid him the ultimate professional compliment by writing his obituary in Wahrmann’s own distinctive voice.

I have to admit, that the speech pronounced by Miksa Falk at my graveside was brilliant. But I can’t help feeling that I would much have preferred my own speech at his gravesite.¹⁴

A connoisseur of jokes, Wahrmann frequently used the double-edged weapon of humor to deflate official ideologies and to give expression to the actual conditions of Jews in a fractured political culture. He was, in fact, the author of arguably the most famous witticism on the subject of Jews in public life, which came to be known as the “Jewish ambassador” joke. It provides an appropriate point of entry into my analysis of this tangled subject.

The joke, which circulated in Budapest as late as the 1890s, assumed the classic question and answer format, with Cohen representing the Jewish protagonist.

14 “Börzevicy W. M. élcei,” *Borszem Jankó*, December 4, 1892, 4.

Question: “Why does Cohen support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine?”

Answer: “So he can become Jewish ambassador in Budapest.”¹⁵

In its final version, the joke was clearly a witty reference to Hungarian Jewry’s well-known patriotism and excessive devotion to the urban culture of Budapest. The historical context of the Jewish ambassador joke, however, suggests a more complex, explicitly political provenance. Despite appearances, the joke was not about the conflict between Zionism and assimilation, which only became a concern of the Hungarian–Jewish press in the course of the 1890s. The origins of the joke reached back to the late 1870s, when a new brand of political anti-Semitism was introduced to Hungarian parliament by ideologues like Győző Istóczy. Istóczy and his followers single-handedly radicalized the Jewish question by demanding the revocation of the emancipation decree of 1867 and the physical expulsion of the Jews from Hungary. The actual reference to a Jewish state in Palestine came from Istóczy, who suggested that the solution of the Jewish question would be the forced emigration of Jews to Palestine.

Wahrmann formulated the most memorable rebuttal to this proposal. Several versions of the response were passed from mouth to mouth at the fin-de-siècle,¹⁶ but the most reliable was probably the following. Wahrmann was accustomed to visiting the home of Cardinal Lajos Haynald, a prominent Catholic cleric who was a good friend of his and whose afternoon teas were attended by the political luminaries of the age. At one of these gatherings, the conversation turned to Istóczy’s recent parliamentary speech about deporting the Jews to Palestine. Haynald jokingly turned to Wahrmann with the remark:

Haynald: “If they establish a Jewish state in Palestine, all Jews will be expected to go there, including you Moric, no matter how great a patriot you are.”

Wahrmann replied: “I have no intention of going. I cannot live anywhere but here.”

15 The joke still had enough traction as late as 1972 to find its way into Georg Lukács’ autobiography, *Gelebtes Denken*, where he characterized his father’s conformism and patriotism with the dismissive phrase: “Jewish ambassador in Budapest.”

16 A version of the episode found inclusion in one of Wahrmann’s obituaries, which recounted that, “[m]any of his [Wahrmann’s] former colleagues in parliament still remember the following witty saying of his. It took place during the outbreak of anti-Semitism, when Istóczy suggested that the Jews of Hungary should be deported to Jerusalem. Wahrmann humorously commented on this idea to his friends: ‘The plan is not a bad one and I have no objections to it. But I reserve the right to stay among you as ambassador from Jerusalem.’” “Wahrmann Mór” *Egyetértés*, November 27, 1892, no. 328.

Haynald: “And if you have to?”

Wahrmann: “If I have to, I will go, but I would hope to have enough influence to have myself immediately appointed Jewish ambassador to Budapest.”¹⁷

AZ ISTÓCZY UJ-ZSIDÓORSZÁGA.



Figure 4. Wahrmann portrayed as Jewish ambassador

Source: *Borszem Jankó*, June 23, 1878

The predicament at the heart of the joke was the so-called Jewish question, or the irreducible otherness of Jews within the body politic.¹⁸ In Istóczy’s radical definition of the Jewish question, Jews themselves were presumed to be alien and fundamentally threatening to the political community. In the friendly environment of Haynald’s salon, no essentialist assumption was made about individual Jews like Wahrmann, who was a welcome guest. But on the collective level, even liberal Hungarians tended to define Jews in terms of difference and incompatibility with national values.

The significance of Wahrmann’s response was that it circumvented the specific problem of anti-Semitism as posed by Istóczy’s challenge. It addressed

17 For a full version of the incident, including its sources, see Tibor Frank, “Magyar és zsidó: a Wahrmann-életrajz kérdései,” in *Honszeretet és felekezeti híűség*, 36–37.

18 For an analysis of this problem, see Zygmunt Bauman, “Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern,” in *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’* ed. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 143–56.

the broader issue of the Jewish question itself, which had clearly invaded not only political life, but also semi-private spaces of sociability like Haynald's salon. Wahrmann's bargain to return to Budapest in the guise of Jewish ambassador from Palestine was more than a clever ploy to reaffirm his Hungarian identity; it was also a proposal to renegotiate the terms of his identity as a Hungarian Jew. It involved a strategic concession on two crucial issues that had always been central to Jewish liberal ideology. By hypothetically accepting the existence of a Jewish state, he implicitly recognized what advocates of the Jewish question had always claimed, that Judaism was not just a religion, but also a collective ethnic and political identity. By agreeing to a symbolic emigration to Palestine, he made an even bigger concession, abdicating his symbolic status as a citizen in the state. In a sense, he was withdrawing from the contested terrain of political life, where Jews continued to be considered strangers in fact, if not in law. In return, however, he gained the right to return to Budapest in the guise of the stranger with the legal credentials to settle there. The bargain was not as disadvantageous as it appears. It is true that the Jewish ambassador lost his unequivocal status as citizen, but he acquired the more tenuous, but also more creative, role of the insider/outsider, with the freedom to express his identity and interpret reality within the alternative public sphere of popular culture, commercial entertainment, and, especially, humor.

The Jewish ambassador joke was, in a sense, the unacknowledged master metaphor for the much-acclaimed Hungarian–Jewish symbiosis of the *fin-de-siècle*. It functioned on different symbolic and analytic levels at the same time. On the most obvious level, it provided a brilliantly subversive reformulation of the liberal ideal of emancipation, which continued to define official Jewish narratives of assimilation throughout the *fin-de-siècle*. It offered a sly parody of the idealized self-representation of Jewish officialdom, which refused to acknowledge the ambiguities of liberal politics, mistaking political rhetoric for reality. At a different level, however, it was also a daring thought-experiment, which used the utopian conventions of humor to reimagine the relationship between Jews and politics under the changed conditions of late-nineteenth-century nationalism. It supplied an explicitly cultural, as opposed to a social, definition of Jewish identity in an attempt to bypass the deadly and irresolvable conflicts of the Jewish question. At the most general level, however, the Jewish ambassador joke was what Kenneth Burke has called a “representative anecdote,” which provided an abstract model of actual social relations between Jews and non-Jews. According to Burke, the representative anecdote was a condensation

or distillation of social realities that made no pretense at formal realism. It was, he suggested, “summational in character... wherein human relations grandly converge.”¹⁹

Viewed as a representative anecdote, the Jewish ambassador joke offered a blueprint of an empirical world that was far closer to the hypothetical logic of the joke than to the ideological formulae of politics. It suggested that in the world of social relations and collective experience, Jews did in fact function as ambassadors from a non-existent nation, and their status was defined by informal rules and unspoken conventions. Within this world, Jews alternately played the roles of insiders and outsiders, natives and foreigners, depending on the context in which they found themselves. Their dual status may not have been formally acknowledged in politics or the legal system, but it was imprinted within the subliminal cultural codes of society. This explains why the representation of Jewish themes became such a highly charged matter, in constant need of supervision and discipline. In official politics, in respectable society, in high culture; the formal principle of Jewish equality prevailed and the presentation of Jewish difference, or even references to individuals as Jews, was considered bad form and strictly banned. In popular culture, however, especially in commercial entertainment and the realm of humor, Jewish difference was not only permitted, but encouraged and given unchecked expression.

Representation of Jews in Literature, Society and Politics

One of the striking features of this bifurcated cultural system was its unofficial, informal character. There were no publicly acknowledged codes or formulae that defined the appropriate representation of Jews in public life. These matters were a part of an elaborate set of internalized cultural reflexes, which were surrounded by a peculiarly illicit, underground quality. The subject could not be openly broached and analyzed without exposing the ideological inconsistencies and even hypocrisy of the liberal order. The very definition of cultural competence at the fin-de-siècle presumed the mastery of the codes for talking about Jews in public life.

Ignorance of these codes could have serious consequences. One revealing example was recounted in the autobiography of the working class, non-Jewish

19 Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1969), 324.

writer, Lajos Nagy, whose initial attempts to break into the literary life of the capital ran aground precisely on his lack of understanding of the unwritten rules for representing Jews in literature. According to his account, he submitted to the modernist literary journal *Nyugat* a short story written in the naturalist style, modeled on a Polish-Jewish immigrant family living in Király Street. The point of the story, which was based on the family of his best friend, Gábor Kaufman, was to explore the complicated linguistic practices and cultural identities of a typical, lower-middle class Jewish family in Budapest. To the astonishment and indignation of the author, his short story was published in a severely truncated form. Ernő Osvát, the powerful Jewish editor of *Nyugat*, had unilaterally expunged nearly all references to the Jewish origins of the characters and to the ethnic features of their milieu. Even the original title, “The Schvarczes” (The Schvarcz family) was changed to the non-descript “Este van” (It is evening).²⁰ As this painful introduction to contemporary literary life illustrated, the political shadow of the Jewish question could not be exorcised from even the most innocent and high-minded literary enterprises.²¹

The discrepancies between legitimate and illegitimate expressions of Jewish identity provided a virtual gold mine for the humor mills of Budapest. Indeed, central to Budapest Jewish humor was the paradoxical status of Jews, who were considered simultaneously equal, but also unequal in society. The problem found a wonderfully economical illustration in a caricature of *Borszem Jankó* that focused on the common dilemma of children of mixed marriages, but implied a much broader kind of experience as well.

“Imagine papa,” asks the little girl of her father, “mama says that you are Jewish!” “I am darling,” responds the father, “and it is not something to be ashamed of. But I don’t want to hear you ever talking about it again!”²²

The Jewish humorist, Adolf Ágai, provided an astute parody of the same phenomenon in one of his urban essays published in *Travels from Pest to Budapest 1843–1907*. The essay, which focused on commercial entertainment in Budapest, sardonically commented on Jewish middle class attitudes to parodic representations of Jewish themes in Orpheums and music halls.

20 Lajos Nagy, “Este van,” *Nyugat* I, no. 10, May 16, 1908, 554–58.

21 Idem, *A lázadó ember, 1883–1914* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1956), 484–87.

22 “Polgári házasság,” *Borszem Jankó*, April 3, 1881, 10.

Strange, he mused. If our Israelite fellow citizens are made fun of in Hungarian—be it on stage, in literature, or in art—he is full of indignation. But if the Jew is represented through the characteristic dialect and disjointed gestures of Szerecsen Street or in the Polish–Jewish inflections of ‘Ingvar,’ his amusement is without bounds.²³

Ágai’s mock surprise at the apparent hypocrisy of Jewish elites, who seemed unwilling to acknowledge their Jewish identity in official culture but were more than willing to laugh at it in popular venues, was only rhetorical. He was perfectly aware of the cultural codes that constrained public articulations of Jewish identity in fin-de-siècle Budapest. Ágai’s readers, no less sensitized to these codes, recognized their own self-portrait in Ágai’s imagined Orpheum audiences. Whether they were aware of it or not, they were all “Jewish ambassadors in Budapest,” who had learned the art of monitoring their performance and self-presentation in the public sphere.

The imperative for Jewish self-censorship in all areas of public life could lead to paradoxical results, especially in the realm of politics. In 1884, when the Lower House publicly condemned anti-Semitism in the wake of the election of sixteen anti-Semitic members to parliament, the Jewish deputies conspicuously recused themselves from participating in the debate. The periodical *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* praised their action in the following words:

The Jewish deputies in the House displayed enough tact to refrain from participating in the pre-advertised debate, and enough self-esteem to refuse to enter into dialogue with the anti-Semitic gentlemen.²⁴

The same strategy of non-involvement was repeated in 1895, during the final phase of the controversial Law of Reception debate. The ten Jewish deputies in the Lower House, including Wahrmann himself, agreed not to address the question as a separate group, but to have their voices represented by the liberal Hungarian leadership as a whole. Their reasoning was that the Reception of Judaism was not a parochial Jewish issue, but a universal liberal principle, and therefore, best represented by Hungarian liberal politicians. The actual reason, however, was the old fear of being perceived as acting collectively in Jewish interests.

23 Porzó (Adolf Ágai), *Utazás Pestről – Budapestre 1843–1907: Rajzok és emlékek a magyar főváros utolsó 65 esztendejéből* (Budapest: Fekete Sas Kiadó, 1998), 408.

24 “Az országházból,” *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* I, no. 9 (1884): 580.

The deputies of the Jewish faith in both the Lower and Upper Houses abstained from addressing the matter for reasons that, in my opinion, can be understood. They were concerned that if they addressed the question as Jews, their words might be construed by the nation as the collective voice of Hungarian Jewry. For this task, however, they did not feel empowered by their charge.²⁵

The Code of “Tactfulness”

As these random episodes illustrate, the very act of representing Jewish identity in the public arena (be it in literature, in society or in politics), was surrounded by anxiety and uncertainty. The special skill needed to navigate the treacherous waters of this realm was commonly referred to as “tact” (tapintat). Wahrmann, for instance, was praised for his “discretion and tact” in dealing with the conflicts of party politics.²⁶ The Jewish deputies who chose to remain passive during the parliamentary initiative that condemned anti-Semitism in 1884 were commended for showing “tact” in refusing to engage with their opponents. Perhaps most puzzling of all was the frequent use of the word in the context of the Tiszaeszlár blood libel affair in 1882–1883. Jews who manifested solidarity with the accused Jews were reproached for showing “tactlessness” and thus provoking public opinion. When in the summer of 1882 the Jews of the Tokaj region purchased guns to defend their property against anti-Semitic vandalism, they were sharply rebuked for their “tactlessness.”

Their first tactless act was their open decision to purchase weapons from Zákó’s gunsmith [...] and this was far from the only tactless act they committed... Certain Jewish elements alienate the intelligentsia far more than the so-called common people, because the sense of justice among the intelligentsia is stronger and their displeasure against lawless, provocative and aggressive action greater and more natural.²⁷

The very extremity of the language of the article is instructive, for it reflects the unacceptability of even the most justifiable collective action on the part of the threatened Jewish population. The fact that it was the intelligentsia, rather than the common man, who was most provoked by such acts was added as an afterthought, but suggests an important motif in the debate. Clearly, Jewish

25 Béla Vajda, “A zsidóság és a prozelita-csinálás,” *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* XII, no. 3 (1895): 260.

26 *Budapesti Hírlap*, November 30, 1892, XII, no. 331.

27 “A Tisza-eszlári gyilkosság,” *Függetlenség*, July 1, 1882.

collective action in public life was perceived as a theoretical, not just a practical, infraction that seemed to be more apparent to intellectuals than to the man of the street. But why this should be the case and why such actions were invariably described as “tactless” needs further elaboration.

The word was obviously derived from the realm of etiquette, rather than politics. The notion of “tactless behavior” suggests not a transgression against impersonal rules used to regulate political society; but a breach of social courtesy in an intimate setting such as a salon or a closed circle of friends. In fact, the most fraught interactions between Jews and non-Jews often did take place in the semi-private spaces of professional life and urban sociability, where the identity and legitimacy of the Jewish participants were by definition ambiguous or imperfectly articulated. One of the paradoxical results of the success of Jewish integration within Hungarian society was the growth of opportunities for social tensions and misunderstandings between Jews and non-Jews.

The predicament could result in excruciating situations, poignantly depicted in an essay published in 1890 in *Egyenlőség*. Simply entitled “Jews in Society,” the article examined the common situation of individual Jews finding themselves in social settings where the general topic of conversation turned to the “Jewish question” or the negative character of the Jews, without the company being aware of, or concerned about, the presence in their midst of a member of the group under discussion. The explicit goal of the article was to provide its Jewish readers with practical guidelines for dealing with such awkward encounters. According to the author, the extremes of silent acquiescence or open confrontation were both to be avoided.

Let us admit quite openly that there are Jews who, on occasions when the ‘Jewish question’ is raised as a general topic of conversation, prove themselves quite capable of listening with external calm, though with inner disquiet, to even the most insulting details, as if they had nothing to do with the subject.²⁸

Such behavior was condemned as both ethically contemptible and socially unrealistic. Yet, the alternate strategy of open affirmation of Jewish difference was also rejected as disruptive of social harmony among friends. “The tendency,” concluded the article, “to fall into the other extreme and exercise a kind of terrorism on the relaxed good cheer of the company would also be a pity. The

28 Lajos Palágyi, “Zsidók a társaságban,” *Egyenlőség*, November 17, 1890, VIII, no. 42, 7–8.

Jew should have self-respect, but should be selective about the occasions on which he chooses to express it.”²⁹

The suggested solution for the inherent ambiguities of Jewish presence in public life was, of course, “tact,” that elusive quality capable of resolving the intractable contradiction between equality and difference, self-effacement and self-assertion. The actual recipe for “tactful” behavior remained sketchy in the article, the aim of which was essentially didactic, pointing out behavior to avoid rather than practices to adopt. Its general concern, however, helps illustrate the everyday dimension of the problem of Jewish and non-Jewish interaction in the public realm. “Tact” was an indispensable requirement of everyday life, as well as of politics, which were inseparably associated with each other. The “tactful” Jew was not just an individual who had learned to avoid embarrassing confrontations in the public realm, but one capable of mastering distinct discursive realms for the appropriate articulation of his Jewishness.

The Janus Face of Wahrmann/Börzeviczy

One of the reasons the attribute of “tact” proved so difficult to define or identify lay in the fact that, for an action to be truly successful, it had to become virtually invisible and unnoticeable. Tactfulness was a social skill and political attribute that needed to be seamlessly incorporated into daily life, perceived and experienced as part of the inevitable order of things. Perhaps this is why the idealized portrait of Wahrmann, produced at the time of his death, appeared so unsurprising and “realistic” to the general public. He was able to embody and represent the ideal type of the assimilated Hungarian Jew because this is the type people expected to encounter in public life. On closer view, however, Wahrmann’s apparently harmonious persona hid a highly fragmented and paradoxical self, whose inner contradictions could still be read between the lines of the respectful obituaries. It is worth returning to these tributes, in order to analyze more fully the meaning of “tact” in the life of one of the consummate practitioners of the genre.

Wahrmann, as most of the obituaries directly or obliquely acknowledged, was not a typical Hungarian politician. He was, for one thing, a poor orator, whose skepticism toward great ideals deprived his speeches of all theatricality. “His arguments,” one obituary admitted, “often fizzled into mere cleverness.”³⁰

29 Ibid.

30 *Pesti Hírlap*, November 27, 1892, XIV, no. 328.

Wahrmann avoided the political limelight, suggested another, preferring to express himself through “silent, tireless and successful work.” He stood outside the conflicts of party politics and “wore the honorable mantle of independence... with discretion and tact.”³¹ Wahrmann’s public persona, however, was not synonymous with the self-effacing technocrat, working anonymously behind the scenes. Almost every obituary made extended reference to Wahrmann’s humor, which apparently enjoyed universal acclaim.³² “Eventually,” elaborated one account, the jokes and witticisms associated with Wahrmann became independent of him, “and congealed into a recognizable social persona, constructed in part by his colleagues and in part by *Borsszem Jankó*, the pages of which featured him as a permanent caricature.”³³

In the guise of his comic alter ego, W. M. Börzeviczy, Wahrmann regularly transgressed the boundaries of tactful behavior and confronted questions such as anti-Semitism and his own Jewish identity with remarkable directness and insight. Wahrmann’s relationship to Börzeviczy is a complex one, not easy to define in any direct or causal way. Though Wahrmann did not single-handedly create Börzeviczy, there is no question that he was the inspiration for the rotund, wisecracking Jewish businessman/politician, who became a regular feature and beloved social type of *Borsszem Jankó*. Börzeviczy’s physical characteristics, as well as his habit of punning in Hungarian and commenting on his own wit in German, were closely modeled on Wahrmann himself. It is also probable that most of the jokes published on the pages of *Borsszem Jankó* under the title, “The Witticisms of W. M. Börzeviczy,” were actual transcriptions of Wahrmann’s famous jokes that circulated in parliament and beyond. At the same time, however, Börzeviczy as a social type unquestionably owed its broader symbolic power to the editors of *Borsszem Jankó*. It is they who assigned the Wahrmann caricature the satiric name of “Börzeviczy,” which was a reference to Wahrmann’s complex relationship to the Hungarian political elite and to the public realm in general. While the initials, “W. M.” unambiguously pointed to Wahrmann, “Börzeviczy” was a comic distortion of the name of the liberal politician, Albert Berzeviczy, a descendant of an illustrious Hungarian noble family. With the substitution of only one letter, the original historic name gained an entirely new connotation, since “börze” meant stock exchange in Hungarian. “Börzeviczy,” thus became not only the shadow of the liberal politician, but also a commerce-minded

31 *Budapesti Hirlap*, November 30, 1892, XII, no. 331.

32 *Nemzet*, November 27, 1892.

33 *Szabadság*, November 27, 1892, XVII, no. 293.

transformation and usurpation of his historic name, something that Jews were frequently accused of doing.



Figure 5. Wahrmann as W. M. Börzeviczy in *Borszem Jankó*

Börzeviczy was, on one level, the physical incarnation and the genial symbol of Jewish difference in public life. This idea found iconic representation in the image of Wahrmann/Börzeviczy in ill-fitting and comical Hungarian national costume, which was commonly featured on the pages of *Borszem Jankó*. A particularly famous example depicted Wahrmann and a fellow politician, both wearing national costumes and swords, trying to pass each other in a narrow space. As his companion apologizes to Wahrmann for the nuisance of his sword, Wahrmann responded that his own sword bothered him far more than that of his colleague. The visual focus on the Hungarian national costume helped establish the conceptual links between public life, national culture and historic traditions, which Jews could not enter without appearing ridiculous and inappropriate.

Significantly, however, Börzeviczy was not merely a parody of the Jewish politician in public life. He was also a brilliant analyst and devastating critic of the conditions that defined this role. Börzeviczy's dominant characteristic was his utter freedom from the constraints of tact. Indeed, his self-defined task was to expose and ridicule the contradictions of official political culture that found

its reconciling principle in tactful behavior. Unlike Wahrmann the politician, Börzeviczy the humorist openly acknowledged his Jewish identity and wittily commentated on the paradoxes of Jewish collective existence in Hungary. In one of his most succinct formulations, he defined Hungarian Jewry as plaintiffs in a prolonged paternity suit filed against the Hungarian nation, which refused to acknowledge them as legitimate sons.³⁴

In many respects, Börzeviczy was the mirror image of Wahrmann, making explicit and public what the empirical Wahrmann kept implicit and private. While Wahrmann aspired to make Jewish identity invisible and universal in the public realm, Börzeviczy performed a highly visible and culturally distinct version of the same identity. At times, Börzeviczy’s candor was remarkable, extending to the delicate issue of Wahrmann’s own self-erasure as a Jew. He admitted that his reluctance to engage openly with Jewish issues drew criticism from certain quarters. He added, however, that the opposite course of action would provoke recrimination from the very same quarters. He characterized his decision to withdraw from public activity in the House with the following witty pun: “Up till now, I had a standing in the House; now I have a seating.”³⁵ His irony was particularly trenchant on the question of anti-Semitism, which never failed to provoke him, especially when it involved long-term friends like Franz Liszt, who regularly performed at his home.

That Liszt! I can’t calmly accept his dalliance with anti-Semitism, when he has been invited to so many soirees in so many Jewish salons. To a surprising degree he lacks rhythm [in Hungarian, the word for rhythm is *taktus* and therefore echoes the overcharged word, *tact*. – M. G.], and therefore offends against good tone! (Wird ihm wehtun!)³⁶

The dichotomies encoded within the twin personae of Wahrmann/Börzeviczy were responses to a radically bifurcated political culture, whose official principles were increasingly at odds with its informal values and actual social practices. Already anticipated in the Jewish ambassador joke, the project of Jewish public participation required mental agility, discernment, and, of course, tact. It presupposed the ability to distinguish between the realms of political rhetoric and cultural discourse, between the appropriate venues for expressing Hungarian identification and Jewish difference. Wahrmann, the consummate

34 *Borsszem Jankó*, November 4, 1884.

35 *Ibid.*, October 5, 1879.

36 *Ibid.*, December 4, 1881.

political performer, rarely made the mistake of confusing the discursive territory of the two realms. Only once did the carefully constructed walls between Wahrmann, the politician, and Börzeviczy, the humorist, temporarily break down. The result was an astonishing and ultimately mock-heroic duel between Wahrmann, the discrete parliamentarian; and Istóczy, the flamboyant anti-Semite. The highly publicized social drama provoked by the duel was played out on the streets of Budapest in June 1882, only a decade before Wahrmann's state funeral in 1892. The two events form appropriate bookends for the assessment of Wahrmann's political legacy.

The Duel

The duel was precipitated by a controversial parliamentary debate about Russian-Jewish immigration to Hungary in the wake of massive anti-Jewish pogroms that had broken out in Russia in early 1882. Despite his previous resolution to keep silent, Wahrmann decided in the last minute to speak on the issue after the inflammatory speech of Istóczy, who insisted on connecting the immigration discussion with the status of Hungarian Jews. Wahrmann began his speech with the familiar Jewish parliamentary gesture of refusing to recognize the anti-Semites as debating partners.

A man, who incites to unlimited internal warfare within this house may have the right to such expressions as a representative enjoying the privileges of parliamentary immunity, but he can have no right to claim me as a participant in debate.³⁷

Having rejected political dialogue with anti-Semitism, Wahrmann then proceeded to express his own views as to why mass immigration on the part of Russian-Jews was undesirable. Veering self-consciously away from the specifics of the Jewish question, Wahrmann suggested that the issue was not whether Russian Jews, but whether any foreign group, be they “Russian Jews or Russian nihilists, German Social Democrats or Irish Fenians, Serbians, Romanians, or Saxons,” should be allowed to settle in the country. With this shift of emphasis, Wahrmann succeeded in grounding the debate on questions of utility and national self-interest, rather than on issues of religion or national character. Only at the

37 “Az Istóczy–Wahrmann botrány a képviselőházban.” *Függetlenség*, June 10, 1882.

end did he permit himself to drop the language of pragmatism and to address the House directly through the familiar rhetoric of Hungarian patriotism.

Honorable House! I have no fear of the emergence of a Jewish Question in this country, no matter how much some individuals might agitate for this [...] I trust in the wisdom of this legislative body, in the justice of this administration [...] I trust in the level headedness and in the sense of fair play of the Hungarian people, which will not easily allow itself to be led astray.³⁸

Wahrmann concluded his speech with a rhetorical flourish that seemed to point toward Istóczy. The gesture set in motion a sequence of implausible and melodramatic events that were to culminate in the much-publicized duel between the two deputies. The steps leading to the duel were exhaustively reported in the daily press and had the appearance of inevitability. The overall logic of the confrontation, however, is less apparent, especially in light of Wahrmann’s well-known cautious and skeptical temperament. It appears that Istóczy took offence at Wahrmann’s concluding gesture and immediately left the floor of the House in seeming agitation. Within minutes, two of his friends approached Wahrmann with the demand of satisfaction in the form of a duel for the recently inflicted insult on Istóczy. Reasonable bourgeois that he was, Wahrmann refused the challenge, explaining that his were oratorical gestures not intended for Istóczy personally, and that, in any case, parliamentary immunity would preclude his talk from being construed as a personal affront. After the message was relayed to Istóczy, he decided to confront Wahrmann in person. Overtaking his antagonist in the parliamentary library in the midst of conversation with a group, Istóczy accused Wahrmann of cowardice for refusing to accept the duel. Wahrmann repeated his previous claim that he had not insulted Istóczy and that he was, in any case, not obliged to offer satisfaction for words spoken in Parliament. After an exchange of unflattering epithets, physical violence suddenly erupted, as Istóczy lounged toward Wahrmann in an attempt to slap him. Bystanders intervened just in time to deflect the blow from Wahrmann’s face to the back of his neck.³⁹

This unconventional confrontation in the parliamentary library resulted in an even more unlikely event: a dual between Wahrmann and Istóczy. The

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

Wahrmann–Istóczy affair, as it rapidly came to be known, was played out according to a carefully constructed choreography that took the form of a social drama. It was the anthropologist Victor Turner who coined the phrase “social drama” to refer to certain kinds of collective conflicts or crisis that tend to be acted out in patterns strongly resembling, indeed, anticipating aesthetic drama and theatrical performance. The social drama, as Turner described it, has two distinguishing features that are of particular relevance to the events that erupted in Budapest in the aftermath of the immigration debate on June 8. The first is that it takes place outside the boundaries of normal, institutional social action. It has, to use Turner’s word, “‘liminal’ characteristics since each is a ‘threshold’ (limen) between more or less stable and harmonious phases of social processes.”⁴⁰ The social drama, thus, represents a breach in the public norms and values of a collectivity, exposing precisely those fault lines that underlie existing social consensus. The social drama, to return to Turner, “takes up its menacing stance in the forum or agora itself, and as it were, challenges the representatives of order to grapple with it.”⁴¹ The second characteristic of the social drama is that it is “processually structured”; that is, it unfolds according to a fairly coherent sequence of events or moments that Turner considered inherent in the very nature of human agonistic behavior. Beginning as an infraction in the rules of social norms, the social drama opens up a deeper cleavage in social relations. After attempts to adjudicate the breach fail, the conflict is ritually enacted between the conflicting parties. The social drama ends, Turner claimed, either with the reintegration of the disturbed groups within the community or the recognition that an irreparable breach has occurred that can only be resolved by separating the hostile parties.⁴²

Applying Turner’s model to the Wahrmann–Istóczy conflict, it is clear that a symbolic breach had occurred within the dominant liberal order, which ordinarily kept such conflicts under check and outside the public arena. As was apparent to all participants, the confrontation between Wahrmann and Istóczy was not simply between two individuals, but between Jews and anti-Semites, who enacted their hostility within a public arena outside of liberal institutions. The transformation of the initial breach of parliamentary conventions into

40 Victor Turner, “Social Dramas in Brazilian Umbanda: The Dialectics of Meaning,” in Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 3.

41 Ibid.

42 Victor Turner, “Social Dramas,” in idem, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 71.

generalized social crisis was well under way by Friday afternoon of June 8, when a crowd of four or five hundred people gathered outside Parliament in hopes of finding first-hand information about the rumored conflict between Wahrmann and Istóczy. As excited groups collected throughout the city, on street corners, in coffee houses, and in stores and offices, contradictory versions of the story circulated, especially concerning the crucial issue of who had insulted whom. One popular rumor held that Wahrmann had initiated the provocation and that the House, bribed by the Jews, had supported him. Among the majority of Jews, on the other hand, it was Wahrmann who was perceived as the victim, and fears of anti-Semitic violence, ever present under the surface of liberal society, were flamed into new life.⁴³

The affair rapidly divided the capital, and eventually the nation, into two antagonistic camps, cheering on their respective champions in a ritualized confrontation minutely reported, embroidered upon, and analyzed by the popular press. According to one report, “Every layer of society was feverishly preoccupied with the affair.”⁴⁴ The process of polarization continued over the weekend, which proved unsuitable for the duel for religious reasons: Wahrmann refused to fight on Saturday and Istóczy on Sunday. Each side found dramatic public gestures through which to express its commitment to its cause. Wahrmann’s constituents in the *Lipótváros* planned a torchlight procession with music to show their support for their champion. As one article reported:

In this well-to-do neighborhood, every individual feels himself personally affronted [...] Several members of the younger generation want to ask for personal satisfaction from Istóczy, since they strongly condemn an act that forces a half-blind man to fight a duel. [Wahrmann had very poor eyesight and wore thick glasses. – M. G.] Calmer elements, fearing possibly dangerous consequence, are scarcely able to restrain them.⁴⁵

Istóczy, too, was overwhelmed by gestures of support from all over the country. On Sunday, his apartment was thronged with visitors and inundated with letters and telegrams “commending his true cause under the protection of God.” Typical of the overheated atmosphere was his associate’s formal petition to the prime minister for guards to assure his safety, for rumors were rife that

43 “Az Istóczy–Wahrmann botrány a képviselőházban,” *Függetlenség*, June 10, 1882.

44 “Az Istóczy–Wahrmann féle ügy,” *Függetlenség*, June 11, 1882.

45 “Az Istóczy–Wahrmann botrány a képviselőházban,” *Függetlenség*, June 10, 1882.

Jewish army officers were planning to assassinate Istóczy if Wahrmann should be injured in the duel.⁴⁶

The much-awaited and highly publicized duel was to take place on Monday morning at 6:00 a.m. on the site of the old racetrack at the edge of the city. The antagonists, their seconds, and their respective physicians, were ready at 5:50, and the formalities of the duel were scrupulously played out. Perhaps the most important participants were the representatives of the press, who were present in full force, ready to inform the nation of the antagonists' every move. After the space had been measured out and the pistols filled, one of the seconds undertook the traditional role of attempting to reconcile the parties. Both refused any thought of reconciliation, Istóczy curtly, with the words, "Let's get down to business," Wahrmann, more expansively, with, "After such an insult, there is no room for reconciliation."

At this critical junction, the figure of a mounted police officer suddenly appeared from behind the bushes. He trotted up to the duelers and declared that his mission was to "prevent the enactment of illegal deeds."⁴⁷ (Dueling was technically illegal in Hungary, though in practice it was never interfered with.) This sudden intervention by the liberal government initiated what Turner refers to as the third phase of the social drama: the application of "redressive or remedial procedures" by the collective authority of the community in order to contain the contagion and prevent the crisis from spreading. The liberal government had intervened in the final moment to stop the conflict, but, typically, the mechanisms for redress that were brought into play were only symbolic and entirely ineffectual. Instead of behind-the-scenes negotiations, influence, or pressure, which were well within their means, the liberal authorities chose to intervene through a highly theatrical gesture that could have had no impact on the events.

The police interruption only delayed the duel by a few hours. The participants and their entourages reassembled near the estate of Count Brunswick outside of Budapest to finish what they had started in the morning.

The two shots went off almost simultaneously, and to the question, did anyone get hurt, both parties answered in the negative. At this point, the seconds shook hands with the duelers. The duelers, however, remained cool and distant from each other. Ónódy, Istóczy's second,

46 "A Wahrmann–Istóczy ügy," *Egyetértés*, June 11, 1882.

47 "Istóczy és Wahrmann párbaja: A párbaj meghiúsítása a lóverseny téren," *Függetlenség*, June 12, 1882.

briefly suggested reconciliation, but Wahrmann shook his head and Istóczy said: “Let everything remain as before.”⁴⁸

The two parties drove separately to the nearby town of Ercsi to await the midnight train back to Budapest. Istóczy and his friends spent the intervening hours in a tavern, where they were joined by local intellectuals. They drank wine and sang anti-Semitic ditties to the accompaniment of a Gypsy band. Wahrmann and his party retired to the private home of a coreligionist, where they were greeted by an official delegation of the local Jewish community. The contrast between the patterns of social interaction characteristic of the two groups could not have been more revealing. As readers of these accounts would have been quick to grasp, the duel had ritually enacted not only collective grievances, but also different ways of life, different modes of being Hungarian. Graphically juxtaposed were the traditional habits of the Hungarian gentry on the one side, and the culture of the newly assimilated bourgeoisie on the other.

The social drama, with its collective enactment of breach, crisis, attempted redress, and final resolution, seemed over by Tuesday morning, when editorials scrambled to clarify the implications of what had taken place. In the words of one summary:

The Jewish question, in the sense that it was defined by the movement against Russian immigration, is now over. It began quietly, it rapidly generated public passion, and it ended with pistol shots. After the nerve-racking excitement of the past few days, moods are ready to return to normal.⁴⁹

The assessment that the duel had somehow put to rest the Jewish question, or in any case made it retreat from the public forum to the recesses of private opinion, proved to be a mistaken conclusion. Indeed, the final phase of the social drama did not play out according to the classic pattern suggested by Turner. It brought about neither “the reintegration of the disturbed social groups” nor “the social recognition of irreparable breach between the contending parties.”⁵⁰ What happened, instead, was a radical reinterpretation and transformation of the meaning of the duel itself, accomplished by the humor magazine, *Borszem Jankó*. The week after the confrontation between Wahrmann and Istóczy, it published as its frontispiece a satirical depiction of the recently concluded duel, entitled,

48 “Budától Ercsiig,” *Függetlenség*, June 12, 1882.

49 “A zsidó papság és a zsidóság,” *Függetlenség*, June 14, 1882.

50 Turner, “Social Dramas,” 71.

“The End of the Comedy.” The caricature portrayed Wahrmann and Istóczy holding hands on stage, smoking pistols in hand, taking self-satisfied bows in front of a wildly enthusiastic audience, half of whom were cheering Wahrmann, the other half, Istóczy. Between the two actors on stage was the prompter’s box, conspicuously labeled “Noble Casino,” to symbolize the highly ambiguous role of the Hungarian liberal establishment in the affair.



Figure 6. The Wahrmann–Istóczy duel.

Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, June 18, 1882

By reframing the Wahrmann–Istóczy affair and placing it within the realm of the melodrama, *Borsszem Jankó* trivialized the event and made explicit what seems to have been common knowledge among its contemporary spectators; namely that the duel had been rigged and the guns had been fixed to fire awry, so

that the participants would not sustain injuries. The confrontation that had held the capital spellbound for days was, after all, only a theatrical production that did not need to be taken overly seriously. The mock-heroic image of Wahrmann and Istóczy, united by the professional bonds of actors, though divided by the popular passion of their followers, repudiated the political legitimacy not only of anti-Semitism, but of all ideological interpretations of the Jewish question. The duel, which had briefly threatened to disrupt public life and transform politics into popular action, could once again be returned to its appropriate place: the non-serious realm of humor and parody.⁵¹

The final assessment of the Wahrmann–Istóczy duel came a year after the event, from one of the wittiest novelists and parliamentary reporters of the age, Kálmán Mikszáth, who was famous for his ironic parliamentary vignettes, printed in *Pesti Hírlap*.

Gentlemen, let us not condemn all duels, since there are some that are, by their very nature, convivial affairs, which bring a smile to people's faces, or even cause gales of laughter among those hearing about it. Such was the duel fought by Wahrmann and Istóczy, which needs no detailed description, since its entire text conforms perfectly to the conventions of the classic operetta.⁵²

What had apparently taken place was not a social drama, but a farce, a comic reenactment on the streets and in the popular press, of a dangerous social conflict that had been disallowed in the official forums of political life.

The Possibilities of Jewish Politics in a Liberal State

How are we to assess the long-range implications of this political operetta? How does it fit into the larger problem of the relationship of Jews to the liberal state? Such questions cannot avoid confronting Hannah Arendt's devastating critique of Jewish assimilation in Central Europe, most fully articulated in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, but already anticipated in her Jewish essays of the 1940s. According to Arendt, secular Jews showed dangerous myopia and unwarranted indifference to politics when they failed to oppose anti-Semitism directly. Lacking political traditions or experiences of their own, she contended, Jews placed excessive

51 Frontispiece, *Borszem Jankó*, June 15, 1882.

52 Kálmán Mikszáth, “A hősök sorsa. Karcolat,” *Pesti Hírlap*, March 29, 1883. Cited in *Honszeretet és felekezeti hírség*, 568.

faith in the liberal state that had protected them since emancipation.⁵³ In this respect, even Heine, that most astute observer of the limitations of assimilation, manifested the kind of “worldlessness” commonly displayed by traditional Judaism. His “attitude of amused indifference,” she claimed, was inadequate, “when measured by the standards of political realities.” “When one comes down to earth,” she concluded, “one has to admit that laughter does not kill and that neither slaves nor tyrants are extinguished by mere amusement.”⁵⁴

Arendt’s critique, infused by tragic historical hindsight and an abstract, macro-political perspective, is irrefutable. Yet, it is also historically inaccurate. It fails to take into sufficient account the limited political options available for Jewish political practice within the liberal state. Given the contradictory impulses of Central European liberalism, which simultaneously granted Jews the roles of legal insiders and of cultural outsiders, the possibilities for autonomous Jewish political action were severely circumscribed. Wahrmann was fully aware of these limitations and illustrated their consequences in his famous Jewish ambassador joke. As Jewish ambassador in Budapest, he provided an example of how to wield influence through indirection and how to use humor to confront, and even triumph, over ideology. This practice can hardly be called “worldless” or indifferent to political affairs. It was, on the contrary, highly pragmatic and brilliantly calibrated to the paradoxical realities and possibilities of liberal politics.

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Miklós Konrád

The Social Integration of the Jewish Upper Bourgeoisie in the Hungarian Traditional Elites

A Survey of the Period from the Reform Era to World War I

In the spirit of the principles of liberal nationalism, which dominated Hungarian political life from the Reform Era to the end of World War I, Christian politicians and intellectuals tirelessly emphasized their firm belief that, in addition to acculturating and identifying with the Hungarian nation, the Jewry must also integrate socially into majority Christian society. This call for integration also allotted a task to the Christian members of Hungarian society, namely that they welcome their compatriots into their social circles. The views of contemporaries notwithstanding, according to whom the greatest aspiration of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie was to gain acceptance into the circles of the traditional social elites and their families, this striving was really only characteristic of the second and third generations of upper-class Jewish families. With regards to the last stage of integration, in other words marriage into the families of the traditional elite, with one exception that confirms the rule, this was only possible for Jews if they were willing to convert. Following the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, decades that were more open from the perspective of integration into the social sphere, the traditional elites closed ranks. The National Casino, which had been founded in 1827, accepted its last Jewish member in 1872. Neither the Country Casino that was created in 1883 (it was referred to as the Országos Kaszinó, i.e. the word “nemzeti,” or “national,” was replaced with “országos,” which means national in the more political sense) nor the Park Club (which was created in 1895) ever had a single Jew among their members, though both had many Christian members who had converted from Judaism. This constituted a clear contradiction of the liberal promise of social integration, though at the same time it also indicates that exclusion was not (yet) based on concepts of race.

Keywords: social integration, Hungarian Jews, Jewish conversions, mixed marriages

“What can the Hungarian nation justifiably and rightly expect of the Jews?” Hungarian novelist and public figure Kálmán Mikszáth raised this question in an editorial published in *Szégedi Napló* (Szeged Journal) in October 1880. While Mikszáth placed expectations on the “Jews,” he also did not neglect to write on the obligations of the “Hungarians”:

Thus while the Jewry must do everything it can in order to draw closer, in its education and culture, its social concepts and customs, to educated Hungarian society, Hungarian society must embrace the Jewry and ease and promote its integration.¹

In the spirit of liberal nationalism, which was the dominant political ideology of the period beginning with the Reform Era and ending with World War I, the Christian politicians and intellectuals of the time were far more likely to put emphasis on the obligations of the Jews to acculturate and to cultivate a sentimental attachment to the Hungarian nation. At the same time, the integration of the Jewish inhabitants of the country, who had been emancipated in 1867, clearly depended on the willingness of the majority society to welcome them among their ranks. The program of the liberals of the Reform era, which called for the transformation of Hungary into a bourgeois liberal state, brought with it a call for the removal of the “social dividing walls” (to use the jargon of the time). The destruction of the “dividing walls” that prevented the integration of the Jews whose acculturation was to strengthen the Hungarian ethnic group was part and parcel of this program.

The Christian minority of the Hungarian upper bourgeoisie which began to emerge in the first half of the nineteenth century and by the early twentieth century had grown to include some 800–1000 families, consisted for the most part of German burgher families who had settled in Hungary considerably earlier and entrepreneurs who had come to Hungary in the 1830s and 1840s, mostly from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.² For the Jews, who constituted the majority of this upper bourgeoisie, in case they wished to gain acceptance into a *Hungarian* Christian milieu, this could only be the aristocracy of birth and the upper echelons of the nobility that began in the 1870s to refer to itself as the “gentry” and, later, as the “historical middle class”.³

In this essay I attempt to offer an answer to the question of the actual extent to which these “dividing walls,” i.e. the social obstacles to the integration of upper-class Jews, were (or were not) dismantled. How inclined were members of the traditional elites to come into contact in social circles with members of the Jewish upper class, or to accept Jews into their clubs, homes and families?

1 [Kálmán Mikszáth,] “Istóczy tizenkét röpirata,” *Szegedi Napló*, October 17, 1880, n.p. [1].

2 Péter Hanák, “Magyarország társadalma a századforduló idején,” in *Magyarország története 1890–1918*, ed. idem (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978), 446.

3 By “upper echelons” I mean those persons of noble origin who still owned their (large) estates and/or had obtained high-level positions in the state or county administration.

And to the extent that there was hesitancy or resistance, could it be overcome if a member of the Jewish upper class were to convert?

Historiography has paid little attention to the question of the social integration of the Jewry in Hungary, and the scholarship that has been published on the subject has tended to deal primarily with the wealthier social strata.⁴ At the same time, the absence of a comprehensive survey covering the entire period in question is a clear sign of the lack of research on the subject. Although this would provide a useful means of assessing the extent of social integration, there has been no comprehensive empirical study on Jewish membership in the casinos.

In the first section of this essay, I examine the question of the extent to which members of the Jewish upper bourgeoisie actually sought to gain acceptance into the circles of the traditional elites. I then offer a chronological survey of the period, which spans almost a century, in which I trace the shifting dynamics of acceptance and exclusion. Finally, in part to offer some counterbalance to the indispensable but nonetheless clearly subjective contemporary assessments and later recollections on which I draw in the first two sections, I present the findings of my research on the number of professing or converted Jews who were integrated into the three most prestigious clubs of the traditional elites, the National Casino, the Country Casino, and the Park Club.

Strivings towards Integration

The first question concerns simply the extent to which the striving to gain acceptance into the traditional social elites can be considered characteristic of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie, if indeed it can be considered characteristic at all. According to the almost unanimous opinion of contemporaries, all prosperous Jews craved integration. In the short stories published in the Reform Era, the primary characteristic of the figure of the wealthy Jew, who was almost

4 Of the groundbreaking works, one should mention the following: William O. McCagg, Jr., *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1972); Vera Bácskai, *A vállalkozók előfutárai. Nagykereskedők a reformkori Pesten* (Budapest: Magvető, 1989); Michael K. Silber, “A zsidók társadalmi befogadása Magyarországon a reformkorban. A ‘kaszinók,’” *Századok* 126 (1992): 113–41; György Kövér, *A felhalmozás éve. Társadalom- és gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 2002); Árpád Tóth, “Asszimilációs utak a késő-rendi társadalomban. A zsidóság szerepvállalásáról a reformkori pesti egyesületekben,” in *Léptékváltó társadalomtörténet. Tanulmányok a 60 éves Benda Gyula tiszteletére*, ed. Zsolt K. Horváth, András Lugosi, and Ferenc Sohajda (Budapest: Hermész Kör–Osiris, 2003), 156–85.

portrayed negatively, was still avarice.⁵ This portrayal began to be supplanted in the 1850s and 1860s by the cliché of the nouveau riche Jew who longed to curry the favor of the magnates and looked down on his more modest coreligionists.⁶ From the 1880s on, in the novels of Christian authors, the figure of the wealthy landowning Jewish “new noblemen” who converted to Christianity (or had his children converted) in order to gain acceptance among the aristocratic families for himself or for his children was at times an unsympathetic character, at times a fallible one, but one who was always motivated first and foremost by his desire for integration. This portrayal also represented an implicit criticism of the traditional, biased, hidebound elite that refused to accept wealthy Jews into their circles.⁷ This image did not change substantially in the literature of the turn of the century. In Ferenc Herczeg’s 1903 novel *Andor és András* (Andor and Andrew), the father of one of the protagonists is a genuine self-made business man proud of his successes but who spares no effort to gain acceptance into the aristocratic Trotting Club, “where he has no business being and where they have no desire whatsoever to let him in.”⁸

In the literary works of Jewish authors one finds even more negative depictions of the Jewish upper bourgeoisie. As early as the 1860s, the image of the parvenu was coupled with the contention that this class itself was responsible for anti-Semitism. In the 1866 narrative by Bertalan Ormody, the primary cause of anti-Semitism is still the worship by wealthy Jews of the “idol of money,”⁹ while in Ferenc Molnár’s first novel, published in 1901, it was their yearning to rub shoulders with the aristocracy and the gentry.¹⁰ In other works, for instance a comedy by Ignác Acsády published in 1880 or Ferenc Molnár’s humorous sketches of 1911, the image of wealthy Jews is less negative, but their longing to mix with the Christian elites remains a prominent element of the satire.¹¹ In more ambitious works, such as Tamás Kóbor’s 1911 novel, the old

5 For a comprehensive summary of the image of Jews in the prose of the Reform Era see Anna Szalai, “Bevezető,” in *Házalók, árendások, kocsmárosok, uszorások. Zsidóábrázolás a reformkori prózában*, ed. idem (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 7–97.

6 J. Zs. [Jenő Zsoldos], “Zsidó a magyar regényirodalomban,” in *Zsidó Lexikon*, ed. Péter Ujvári (Budapest: A Zsidó Lexikon kiadása, 1929), 985.

7 Ifj. Kornél Ábrányi, *Régi és új nemesek* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1881); Gergely Csiky, *Az Atlasz család* (Budapest: Franklin, 1890).

8 Ferenc Herczeg, *Andor és András* (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1925), 47–48.

9 Bertalan Ormody, “Zsidó arisztokrácia. Regényes korrajz (Vége),” *Regelő*, July 31, 1866, 68–69.

10 Ferenc Molnár, *Az éhes város* (Budapest: Pesti Szalon Könyvek, 1993), 235–40.

11 Ignác Acsády, *Aranyországban* (Budapest: Weiszmann Testvérek, 1880); Ferenc Molnár, “Disznótor a Lipótvárosban,” in idem, *Hétágú síp. Tréfiák, karcolatok, tárcák* (Budapest: Franklin, 1911), 198–245.

accusation again emerges according to which the snobbishness and cowardice of prosperous Jews was “the only reason for anti-Semitism.”¹²

This accusation found expression in works of non-fiction as well, for instance in the campaign speeches of Vilmos Vázsonyi, the leader of the Democratic Party.¹³ The cliché of the wealthy Jew who sought to worm his way into Christian society was also an important element of the bourgeois radicals’ critique of the Jewish haute bourgeoisie. According to this critique, instead of taking part in the struggle for the democratic transformation of the country, the Jewish upperclass submitted to the wishes of the traditional elite, which it served with servile cowardice in the hopes of winning acceptance into its ranks.¹⁴

For a long time these contemporary assessments were adopted a-critically by Hungarian historians,¹⁵ who could also find confirmation of their views in the thesis of “feudalization,” which was popular for a time in the historiography in the West and which was applied by William McCagg to Jews in Hungary who had obtained titles of nobility.¹⁶ The thesis, according to which the Jewish upper bourgeoisie longed to gain acceptance into the social circles of the magnates and the nobles was first called into question by László Varga. In an essay published in 1983, he persuasively argued that, in contrast with the widely accepted view, marriages of Jews into families that belonged to the traditional elites did not reach “mass proportions.” The vast majority of upper-class Jews who bore noble titles had been ennobled in recognition of the roles they had in fact played in strengthening the economy of the country, and the purchase of estates had been motivated by carefully considered economic interests, not the desire for integration. In Varga’s assessment, the view according to which the Jewish upper bourgeoisie in general longed to rub shoulders with the “traditional ruling class” was “fundamentally” exaggerated.¹⁷ In an essay published a few years later, Viktor Karády was even more emphatic. With its “archaic lifestyle” and dwindling

12 Tamás Kóbor, *Ki a ghebtából*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Franklin, 1911), 191.

13 Vilmos Vázsonyi, *Beszédei és írásai*, vol. 1, ed. Hugó Csergő and József Balassa (Budapest: Országos Vázsonyi-Emlékbizottság, 1927), 296.

14 “Kortörténeti jegyzetek. A mi zsidóink,” *Huszadik Század* 9, no. 2 (1908): 402–03; Oszkár Jászi, “A magyarországi reakció szervezkedése,” *Huszadik Század* 11, no. 1 (1910): 372.

15 Ernő Lakatos, *A magyar politikai vezetőréteg 1848–1918. Társadalomtörténeti tanulmány* (Budapest: Szerző kiadása, 1942), 73. Emma Lederer, *A magyar társadalom kialakulása a honfoglalástól 1918-ig*. (N.p. [Budapest]: Népszava, n. d. [1947]), 169–70.

16 McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*.

17 László Varga, “A hazai nagyburzsoázia történetéből,” *Valóság* 26, no. 3 (1983): 79.

economic influence, the traditional elite “obviously” did not represent a milieu into which the Jewish upper class would integrate. “Remaining in an alliance with this elite was expedient as long as this elite was in power, but ‘assimilation’ into it would have been a suicide attempt.”¹⁸

On the basis of our actual knowledge, one cannot determine the precise extent to which members of the Jewish upper class actually strove to gain acceptance into the social circles and families of the traditional elites. As I have attempted to show, the literature and journalism of the time presented a uniform picture. The cliché of the wealthy Jew craving the company of aristocrats and old noble families is also found in memoirs and recollections. Hilda Bauer, who was somewhat familiar with this social strata because of her contact with the friends and acquaintances of her brother, writer and poet Béla Balázs, made the following claim: “The greatest ambition of the wealthy and distinguished Jewry of the time was to befriend and come into contact with distinguished Christian families, if possible families that belonged to the gentry or the aristocracy.”¹⁹

Other people’s recollections contradict this contention. In the literary memoirs of Anna Lesznai, for instance, her grandfather on her mother’s side, József Deutsch, who acquired Hungarian nobility in 1879, is presented as a merchant who looked with scorn on the ancient nobility and was proud of his bourgeois and Jewish background, as well as the “feinbürgerlich” spirit of his home.²⁰ József Lukács, the father of philosopher György Lukács, also seems in no way to have sought to curry the favor of the traditional elites. When his family moved into a villa on Gellért Hill (a prosperous neighborhood in Budapest) in 1917, one of their neighbors suggested that they pay a visit to countess Margit Bethlen, the wife of count György Bánffy, who lived nearby. According to Mária Lukács, her father firmly dismissed the idea: “My father said he will not fawn over the counts. If by chance they should meet, then fine, but he would not go.”²¹

18 Viktor Karády, “Zsidó identitás és asszimiláció Magyarországon,” (1988) in *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás. Tanulmányok* (N.p. [Budapest]: Cserépfalvi, 1997), 40–41.

19 Hilda Bauer, *Emlékeim. Levelek Lukácshoz* (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézet–Lukács Archívum, 1985), 44.

20 Anna Lesznai, *Kezdetben volt a kert*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1966), 129–30.

21 Erzsébet Vezér, “A mindennapi élet története. Beszélgetés Poppné Lukács Máriaával,” *Kritika* 14, no. 6 (1985): 28.

Marrying into the Traditional Elites

One can make the following claim with reasonable confidence: in the Dualist era, the desire to win acceptance into the circles of the traditional elite was less characteristic of the generation that had acquired significant wealth than it was of their children and grandchildren, members of the second and third generation of upper-class Jews, who had been born into prosperity. This is most evident if one examines trends in marriages. This by no means constituted a break on the part of the younger generations with the efforts or wishes of their parents, since the choice of a spouse among these social strata was less a matter of love than it was a means of strengthening the family's social position, in other words a decision either made by or least approved by the head of the household. In any event, sooner or later, among a significant proportion of upper-class Jewish families, at least one member married into a family belonging to the traditional social elite.²²

As far as we know, these marriages were preceded by the conversion of the Jewish bride or bridegroom with only a single exception, and in this case, too, eventually the Jewish partner converted. Before the law of 1894: XXXI. on the introduction of civil marriage came into effect, baptism was naturally inevitable. Since the law did not permit conversion to the Jewish faith, a Jew could only marry a Christian after having converted. This often took place immediately before the wedding. Ottilia Schosberger, the daughter of Henrik Schosberger and Zsófia Hellmann (neither of whom left the Jewish fold), was baptized on July 1, 1882. The next day, she married Baron Pál Bornemisza.²³

As of October 1, 1895, it was no longer necessary for a Jew to convert in order to marry a Christian in a civil ceremony. The introduction of civil marriage, however, did not bring about any change with regards to the entry of wealthy Jews into the aristocracy and the upper layers of the “historical middle class” through

22 This was the case, for instance, in the following families: the Dirsztay de Dirszta family, the Ullmann de Baranyavár family, the Neuman de Végvár family, the Schosberger de Tornya family, the Groedel de Gyulafalu and Bogdány family, the Kohner de Szászberek family, the Herzog de Csete family, the Wahrmann family, the Madarasy-Beck family, the Hatvany-Deutsch family, the Gutmann de Gelse and Belisce family, and the Ullmann de Erény family. Béla Kempelen, *Magyar zsidó családok*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Makkabi, 1999), 87, 96, 105, 112–13, 131, 134–35, 138, 140; vol. 2, 27, 38, 63–64, 141; vol. 3, 94.

23 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (=MNL OL), Szentistvárvárosi (Lipótvárosi) Roman Catholic parish, baptismal registry, roll A64. On the wedding: “Eljegyzések, esküvők,” *Pesti Napló*, July 3, 1882, evening edition. Excerpt in *Jüdische Delikatessen*. The possession of István Bonyhády Perczel the Elder. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (=OSZK), manuscript collection (=Kt.), Oct. Hung. 730/23, 70.

marriage. With the exception of Melánia Blaskovich de Ebeczk, a member of the illustrious Blaskovich family, not a single man or woman belonging to these social strata and sharing their cultural values married a Jew.²⁴ (As for Melánia Blaskovich, she not only married Hermann Königswarter, who was Jewish, but also acquiesced to the request of her father-in-law, Viennese Baron Moritz von Königswarter, and herself converted to Judaism. After her father-in-law's death, both she and her husband converted to Catholicism.²⁵) For wealthy Jews who hoped to marry into families belonging to these circles, conversion remained even after 1895 a compulsory and self-evident precondition. However, it is important to stress that those who were willing to convert achieved their goal. In contrast with the situation in Germany, in Hungary there were hardly any cases of an upper-class convert to Christianity who, wealth and conversion notwithstanding, was unable to find a spouse belonging to a noble or an aristocratic family.²⁶

Social Mixing: a Chronological Overview

The next question is to what extent the traditional elite was willing to mix with unconverted Jews and accept them into its social circles?

One can speak of social contact (that went beyond professional contexts) between Jews and Gentiles as of the Reform Era in Hungary, the period in which liberal ideas began to gain ground and an already relatively broad layer of entrepreneurial Jews began to emerge. In 1831, August Ellrich, a German from Berlin, published a book on his travels in Hungary. According to Ellrich, while there were many wealthy and “elegant” Jews in Hungary, “one searches in vain among them for high society, badges of honor, or medals and ribbons,” since

24 According to Béla Kempelen, count Lajos Königsegg, who was in dire need of money, also agreed to marry the daughter of a wealthy Jewish mill owner of Arad without asking her to convert. I remain skeptical regarding this story, the account of which includes no dates, as I have found no trace of it in any other sources. See Kempelen, *Magyar zsidó családok*, vol. 1, 141.

25 (H-r.), “Königswarter Móríciz báró,” *Egyenlőség*, November 17, 1893, 4–5; “Kikeresztelkedett milliomos,” *Szentesi Lap*, November 16, 1894, 4; “A nagyváradi püspök és a bécsi Jockey-club,” *Egyenlőség*, December 2, 1894, 10.

26 On the limited chances of German Jewish converts of finding spouses see Werner E. Mosse, “Problems and Limits of Assimilation: Hermann and Paul Wallich 1833–1938,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988): 43–65. In the case of Hungary, one finds in Kempelen's book, in addition to the aforementioned families, several dozen examples for which—unlike the case of count Königsegg—the dates of the weddings are known, as are the names of the children who were born to the couples and the years in which they were born.

“the Hungarian” is unwilling to sit at the same table as a Jew.²⁷ Nonetheless—and this can be regarded as the first sign on the institutional level of increased social openness with regards to Jews—in the 1830s and 1840s many casinos and societies accepted Jews as members. According to Michael Silber, from this perspective, the nobility was more socially open than the traditional *Bürgertum*.²⁸

Beginning in the 1850s and the 1860s, the directorships of share holding companies became one of the major sites of interaction between wealthy Jews and male members of the noble and especially aristocratic families.²⁹ This contact, of course, was confined to a narrow, formal framework, and it is quite possible that some of the aristocrats were not terribly happy about it. In 1855, Imre Vahot, who was striving to promote the social acceptance of acculturated Jews, found himself compelled to remark: “In this perspective, the Hungarian aristocracy, which is fiercely proud of its roots, still shows the greatest antipathy and even scorn for the Jew.”³⁰

In the period that began with the defeat of the 1848 uprising against the Habsburgs and came to an end in the late 1870s, the tendency, nonetheless, is clear: the aristocracy and, even more so, the (more) liberal members of the nobility grew increasingly open to the idea of mixing with Jews. This harmonized with the emergence of more favorable attitudes towards Jews in general. As Dávid Kóhn writes, in the 1850s and 1860s:

The Jews, even if they did not have political rights, [...] enjoyed a better position in the social sphere in Hungary than they ever did later. [...] In many of the cities in the provinces, the distinguished nobility and burghers, who were engaged in passive resistance, did not invite the distinguished officials who had served in the Bach and Schmerling era to the festivities when they were organizing merry gatherings, even if, and indeed particularly if the officials were Hungarians to the core;

27 Cited by László Siklóssy, “A polgári erkölcs,” (1923) in idem, *A régi Budapest erkölse* (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 407–08.

28 According to Silber, with regards to the societies the market towns were more open to Jews than the free royal cities, while in general Pest trailed behind the provinces. According to Árpád Tóth, however, with the exception of the National Casino and the Agricultural Society every significant association in Pest during the Reform Era had Jewish members in its ranks. Indeed, as I note later, one Jew did manage to gain acceptance into the National Casino. Silber, “A zsidók társadalmi befogadása,” 113–41; Tóth, “Asszimilációs utak a késő-rendi társadalomban,” 163–73.

29 Péter Busbach, *Egy viharos emberöltő. Korrajz*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Kilián Frigyes, 1899), 34. Károly Vörös, “Pest-Budától Budapestig 1849–1873,” in *Budapest története a márciusi forradalomtól az őszirózsás forradalomig*, ed. idem (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1978), 225.

30 Imre Vahot, “Parádi fürdő-élet 1855-ben,” *Pesti Napló*, August 6, 1855, n. p. [2].

in contrast, they invited and were glad to welcome the more refined Jews to their parties, and not just the men, but the female members of their families as well.³¹

In the 1860s more and more casinos and societies opened their doors to Jews.³² This philo-Semitic mood found symbolic expression on December 19, 1860, when a “banquet of brotherhood” was held in the European Hotel with some 600 participants,³³ and in the spring of 1867 (not long before the emancipation of the Jews in December of that year), when the so-called Equality Circle was founded. The goal of this Circle, which was created on the initiative of Móric Szentkirályi, the lord mayor of Pest, was to foster amicable relationships between Jews and Christians. Its first president was general György Klapka, who in 1866 had been permitted to return to the country from exile. Ignác Barnay, the secretary of the Israelite Community of Pest, was elected vice president. Soon after having been founded, it had 600 members, 250 of whom were Jewish.³⁴

Contact between Jews and gentiles was not limited to formal, institutional contexts. In 1869, in addition to Anton von Schmerling and Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust, Elek Thaisz, the chief commissioner of police of Pest, and Ferenc Házmán, Buda’s (last) mayor, were all present at the marriage in Vienna of the daughter of Popper Lipót and Henrik Goldberger, who two years earlier had been granted Hungarian nobility. They were joined by lord lieutenants, royal councilors, and “many other important people, without regards to religious difference.”³⁵

The 1870s saw the emergence of a stratum of provincial Jews who, with their wealth, their lifestyle, and sometimes their freshly acquired noble titles, constituted a potential partner for the local elites. In 1872, Mór Moscovitz, who had been ennobled in 1867, purchased an estate in Zemplén County of

31 Dávid Kóhn, *Hatvan év múltán. Visszaemlékezések* (Gyula: Dobay János, 1936), 214–15.

32 “Levelezések,” *Magyar Izraelita*, March 7, 1862, 83; Imre Csetényi, “A hatvanas évek és a zsidóság,” in *Tanulmányok a zsidó tudomány köréből. Dr. Guttmann Mibály emlékére*, ed. Sámuel Löwinger (Budapest: Neuwald Illés, 1946), 103; Edit Kerecsényi, “Nagykanizsa társadalma és egyleti élete 1900 táján,” in *Közlemények Zala megye közgyűjteményeinek kutatásaiból 1984–1985*, ed. Alajos Degré and Imre Halász (Zalaegerszeg: Zala Megyei Levéltár, 1985), 109.

33 Viola [Gyula Vezzerle], *Visszaemlékezések. Korrajz az 1860–61-iki időszakeről* (Nácz: Serédy Géza, 1878), 125–26.

34 Pál Tenczer, “Sváb rabbi jóslata Falk Miksárol,” *Egyenlőség*, June 5, 1898, 3; Zsigmond Groszmann, *A magyar zsidók a XIX. század közepén (1849–1870)* (Budapest: Egyenlőség, 1917), 45.

35 “Levelezések,” *Izraelita Közlöny*, May 14, 1869, 180.

some 4,000 “hold,” or roughly 2,300 hectares. His son, Géza Moscovitz, Anna Lesznai’s father, who enjoyed horseback riding and hunting, settled here. The local aristocratic families and propertied noblemen accepted him into their social circles, the families often rubbed elbows.³⁶ According to the autobiography of Vilmos Vázsonyi’s wife, her father, Jakab Schwartz, a landowner from Mátészalka, “had close friendships with the most influential upper-class families,” in part because, since he was the district president of the Liberal Party, the preparations for the elections were held in his home.³⁷

As far as the political center was concerned, in addition to sharing gossip in the hallways of parliament, some Jewish representatives had friendly relationships with members of the traditional political elite. In the club of the Liberal Party, Károly Sváb, a Jewish man who had been elected to parliament in 1875 and who in 1885 was nominated member of the Upper House for life, was regularly the fourth at Kálmán Tisza’s tarot card table, alongside István Nedeczky and Mór Jókai.³⁸

According to contemporaries, anti-Semitism, which began to gain ground in the beginning of the 1880s, found manifestation in efforts to hamper the social integration of Jews. The acquisition of ancient estates by Jews, Ferenc Pulszky wrote in 1880, gave rise to increasing antipathy towards these new estate owners, even among members of the gentry that still owned their estates:

We vilify the Jews if they obtain wealth, only rarely do we let them socialize with us, and then we are angered if they leave the country, which indeed gave them civil equality, but only rarely social equality. [...] And if they remain in the country and bind their interests to the soil of the homeland, purchase livestock, and farm the land as we do, or better than we do, we do not love that either, we do not socialize with them as we do with other neighbors, and even if we don’t say it, we still think it: a Jew is still a Jew.³⁹

According to the weekly periodical *Egyenlőség* (Equality), which played an important role in the life of the Neolog Jewish community from the moment

36 Erzsébet Vezér, *Lesznai Anna élete* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1979), 9–12.

37 Vilmosné Vázsonyi, *Az én uram* (Budapest: Genius, n.d. [1931]), 8.

38 Tamás Vécsey, *Tisza Kálmán* (Celldömölk: Dinkgreve Nándor, 1931), 132–33. The *Zsidó Lexikon* mistakenly identifies Károly Sváb as a convert. In fact, he remained a Jew all his life. See “Sváb Károly halála,” *Egyenlőség*, August 6, 1911, 7–8.

39 Ferenc Pulszky, “A zsidókról,” *Pesti Napló*, July 25, 1880, n.p. [1].

of its founding in 1882, the first palpable sign of anti-Semitism was precisely the sudden halt of social integration.⁴⁰ In 1883, one author, who looked back nostalgically on the 1870s, wrote the following:

One of the basic preconditions of social integration is mutual informal contact. The first vile outgrowth of the current perverted tendency was precisely the termination of this informal contact. At the beginning of the 1870s, how many mixed women's associations were there, Jews were accepted as members in the casinos, in various circles. In social circles, at balls, etc. the most beautiful harmony prevailed. [...] Today we see everywhere a certain coldness, capricious moods, motions from all sides for the elimination of Jews from the casinos. Jews are left out of elite balls all over the country, they are never asked to serve as organizers.⁴¹

Other authors, however, felt that political anti-Semitism hardly did anything to worsen the already deplorable situation. According to the anonymous author of a pamphlet published in the middle of the 1880s:

Hatred and distrust of Jews always existed, it was just latent—in public life and social relations, however, it always found form. [...] The difference between the state of affairs today and the state of affairs earlier is simply that what before was latent or only manifest in social relations today is openly proclaimed.⁴²

The case of Mór Wahrmann, a banker and the first Jewish member of Hungarian parliament, clearly illustrates that the situation was more complex than this might suggest. In 1883, all of Budapest, as it were, was present for the wedding of his daughter, Renée Wahrmann, and Izidor Krausz de Megyer in the synagogue in Dohány Street. The guests included minister of finance Gyula Szapáry, former minister of finance Kálmán Széll, and lord mayor Károly Ráth.⁴³ Many important figures of public life were frequent guests in Wahrmann's home as well, the press regularly reported on his Thursday salons, particularly if the guests on a given occasion were unusually prominent. In February, 1881, for

40 For more on the Neolog-Orthodox split which came about in the wake of the Jewish Congress of 1868–1869, see Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* (Hanover–London: Brandeis University Press, 1998).

41 Iván Horváth, "A zsidók s a magyar társadalom," *Egyenlőség*, February 18, 1883, 3–4.

42 Egy zsidó, *A zsidókérdés* (Budapest: Wilckens és Waidl, n.d. [1884–85]), 3–4.

43 Andor Kellér, *Mayer Wolf fia. Wahrmann Mór életregénye* (N.p. [Budapest]: Hungária, n.d. [1941]), 42.

instance, in addition to composer Ferenc Liszt, poet and novelist Pál Gyulai, and literary historian Zsolt Beöthy, several influential members of the political elite were also among Wahrmann's guests, including Gyula Szapáry, Frigyes Podmaniczky, Albert Apponyi and Kálmán Széll, who also brought his wife (and this detail is not irrelevant).⁴⁴ His guests, however, were not nearly so hospitable. As an anonymous author who was familiar with "Budapest society" (i.e. the Christian elite of the capital) wrote in 1886, "the aristocrats are happy to go to [Wahrmann's] lunches and evenings, but extending an invitation to him is not really on the agenda."⁴⁵

In the first half of the 1890s, Christian authors tended to write about how signs of anti-Semitism, while gradually disappearing from political life, continued to find manifestation in social life, and to discourse on the isolation and exclusion of the "Lipótváros," the central district of Budapest the name of which was used as a synonym for the Jewish upper bourgeoisie.⁴⁶ In contrast, from the end of the 1880s articles in the Jewish press claimed to have observed mild improvements. With "patriotic joy," the author of an article published in *Egyenlőség* ushering in 1889 made the following claim:

Ostentatious exclusiveness is beginning to disappear from social life as well. [...] While in the so-called civilized states, the knights of darkness have not yet put down their arms, here the open battle has ended, the open attacks have fallen silent.⁴⁷

In 1896, the 1,000th anniversary of the arrival of the Hungarian tribes in the Carpathian Basin and the year that followed significant reforms in ecclesiastical policy, Ödön Gerő, a journalist who was active in Jewish community life as well, wrote with confidence:

Here live the children of chance, there the favorites of good fortune.
Here they begin as barons, there barony is the final goal. The differences

44 "Szalon," *Pesti Napló*, February 11, 1881, evening edition. Excerpt in *Jüdische Delikatessen*. The possession of István Bonyhády Perczel the Elder. OSZK Kt. Oct. Hung. 730/9, 81.

45 *A budapesti társaság* (Budapest: Pallas, 1886), 452.

46 Ferenc Pulszky, "Májusi liberalizmus," *Pesti Hírlap*, May 26, 1892, 2. Rutilus [Szigetvári Iván], "A mi szabadelvűségünk," *Élet*, April 1, 1894, 238–42.

47 Antroposz, "Visszapillantás," *Egyenlőség*, January 6, 1889, 1.

are huge, but the great storm that is brewing, the rumbles of which one can already hear, will herd them together.⁴⁸

However, in the same year Miksa Szabolcsi, the editor-in-chief of *Egyenlőség*, wrote of new obstacles:

Particularly this year, our Christian brothers are taking heed to ensure that no Jew dances, at least not *with them*. Since the Tiszaeszlár plague [a blood libel that sparked anti-Semitic agitation across Hungary in the first half of the 1880s], there have never been as many Jew-free balls in Budapest as there were this year. [...] Abhorrence of the Jew is spreading again.⁴⁹

Seven years later, Miklós Zay wrote an essay on the social position of Jews. He made no mention of any chronological break, but his recollections confirm Szabolcsi's assessment:

In 1897, I was president of the first of the great balls of the capital, and when it came time to see to the invitations, I was shocked to hear that not a single Jewish family was on the list of names. For a while I protested, but the members of the organizing committee affirmed over and over again that the group that was attending the ball would not come if we were to invite Jews. I personally ascertained the veracity of this statement.⁵⁰

According to Zay, the antipathy towards Jews had not passed at the time he wrote his essay: "they accept someone obligingly in a social circle until they learn he is a Jew, but relations grow chilly as soon as the truth comes out." Nonetheless, he remained cautiously optimistic for the future.⁵¹ Influenced by the anti-Semitism that, as of the end of the 1890s, was becoming increasingly prevalent, the articles in *Egyenlőség* were in contrast increasingly pessimistic. By the end of the century the journal had definitely come to represent a different

48 Ödön Gerő, "Budapest fiziognómiája," in *A mulató Budapest*, ed. Henrik Lenkei (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1896), 49. The so-called church laws of 1894 and 1895 introduced civil marriage and civil registries, addressed the question of the religious confession of children of denominationally mixed marriages. They also guaranteed the free practice of all religions and declared the equality of Jewish religion with Christian religions.

49 Miksa Szabolcsi, "Két irány," *Egyenlőség*, February 14, 1896, 6–7.

50 Miklós Zay, "Zsidók a társadalomban," *Huszadik Század* 4, no. 2 (1903): 962.

51 *Ibid.*, 949.

standpoint. In 1900, Ádám Lipcsey, one of the Christian authors (and also the child of a noble family), made the warning:

Let us not willfully close our eyes to the clear facts of experience, and let us admit the sad truth, that so-called ‘social anti-Semitism’ is present today in more meaningful and more general proportions than when, in the good old Istóczy days, this form of idiocy aspired to obtain political role and rank.⁵²

Until 1914, the writings in *Egyenlőség* that touched on the question of the social acceptance of the Jewish elite showed none of the earlier optimism. On the contrary, they were increasingly bitter. At the beginning of 1902 it came to light that the organizing committee (led by Sándor Wekerle) of the lawyers ball, which was regarded as one of the most elegant carnival balls, had not included a single Jew on its list of 1,500 people. According to *Egyenlőség*, this was a symptom of a general trend:

We note it in part simply to rub it under the noses, should the occasion arise, of the doubting Thomases who wish to ignore the shameful spread of the canker of social anti-Semitism, which is much more dangerous than official anti-Semitism.⁵³

Six months later the weekly was even more emphatic in its phrasing:

It is an indisputable fact that the Jews—and exceptions do not disprove the rule—day by day, and in particularly more recently, are losing ground. And this loss of ground is especially noticeable in the social sphere. [...] The Jew cannot gain position in society, in so-called Christian society, which either looks down on him or loathes him.⁵⁴

The authors of these kinds of statements did not care much for nuance. Thus it is not clear which social stratum was more closed to the Jewish haute bourgeoisie, the aristocracy or the stratum that by the turn of the century thought of itself as the “historical middle class,” but which was referred to by contemporaries as the “gentry.” As far as the world of the magnates was concerned, the aforementioned Géza Moscovitz had good relationships with

52 Ádám Lipcsey, “Az idegesek,” *Egyenlőség*, April 1, 1900, 1.

53 “Hazug demokrácia,” *Egyenlőség*, January 26, 1902, 10.

54 Br. J., “A zsidóság és a társadalom,” *Egyenlőség*, August 3, 1902, 2–3.

several aristocratic families.⁵⁵ However, the charismatic landowner may well have been merely an exception that confirmed the rule. Moreover, if one believes his daughter's recollections, some aristocrats accepted his invitations to lunch only reluctantly because they had to confer with him on issues pertaining to the affairs of the county.⁵⁶

Most magnates did not even go this far. When Albert Edward, prince of Wales and from 1901 until his death in 1910 king of the United Kingdom, spent time in Hungary in the 1890s, he stayed for a time in the home of a Jewish banker. His host organized a hunting expedition in his honor, to which the prince invited numerous guests. "Miklós Pálffy, my step-mother's brother, was one of the people invited," Mihály Károlyi recalls, "but he declined the invitation, saying that he would not set foot in the house of a Jew."⁵⁷ In 1901, Ferenc Molnár contended that indebted barons who, in their extreme need, "sold themselves to philo-Semitism [...] sank deeper in the eyes of their former social circles than the countesses who ended up in the Orpheum [a kind of music hall]."⁵⁸ Two years later, Ferenc Herczeg made a similar claim: "A real baron who is not impoverished and yet nonetheless socializes with rich Jews is in and of itself a suspicious phenomenon."⁵⁹

If some aristocrats were at times willing to grace the homes of a Jew with their presence, only very rarely was a Jew ever invited into their homes, as is clear from the writings printed in *Szalon Újság* (Salon News), which was published between 1900 and 1913. One of the goals of the periodical, which was intended "exclusively for the aristocracy," was to give an "exhaustive" account of the "inner life of the aristocracy" and the "life in the salons."⁶⁰ In the list of names of the people who were invited to weddings, evening gatherings, and receptions between 1900 and 1913 one finds few converted Jews or descendants of converted Jews, only a dozen or so in the course of the entire thirteen years. This was nonetheless significantly more than the number of unbaptized Jews, since in fact there was only one Jew among the names, Géza Moscovitz, who was present at the wedding of prince János Liechtenstein and countess Maricza Andrassy in 1906.⁶¹

55 Lajos Hatvany, *Levelei*, ed. Lajosné Hatvany and István Rozsics (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1985), 285.

56 Lesznai, *Kezdetben volt a kert*, vol. 1, 148.

57 Mihály Károlyi, *Hit, illúziók nélkül* (Budapest: Magvető és Szépirodalmi, 1977), 38.

58 Molnár, *Az éhes város*, 285–86.

59 Herczeg, *Andor és András*, 48.

60 "A „Szalon Újság”-ról. Még néhány tájékoztató szó," *Szalon Újság*, December, 1900, 1.

61 "Andrassy–Liechtenstein nász," *Szalon Újság*, September 15, 1906, 6.

A few people's recollections suggest that the upper circles of the "historical middle class" were somewhat more open, at least in some provincial cities, such as Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania). While according to Mrs. Dezső Fehér, a childhood friend of Adél (Léda) Brüll, "this was a rare bridging of classes even in Várad," in the 1890s

the lovely Adél Brüll and her parents—our circles ascertained with a mix of amazement and envy—was accepted in Várad by the "upper-class society." Adél and her parents are invited to grand, exclusive carnival parties: the Museum Ball, the Carpathian Ball, the Bachelors' Ball, and the Casino and Officers' ball.⁶²

True, in 1901 not one of the roughly forty Jewish lawyers in the city was included among the organizers of the lawyers ball in Nagyvárad,⁶³ but in his characterization of the city at the beginning of the 1910s Ernő Ligeti too emphasized the openness of the Christian elite:

His despotic disposition notwithstanding, Ferenc Miskolczi, the strict lord lieutenant of the county, about whom people were saying that he had had "everything deleted from the body of law that was not valid in Bihar [the county in which the city of Nagyvárad was found]," did not hesitate to sit down in the Royal to play cards with Samu Kepes or other Jews."⁶⁴

The question is further complicated by the fact that in the upper layers of Hungarian society (as indeed in turn-of-the-century Hungarian society in general), the "dividing walls" were not simply fault lines between Jews and Christians. In addition to the fact that there were relatively impermeable walls between the aristocrats and the nobility and indeed within the aristocracy and the nobility,⁶⁵ there was an aversion not only to Jews but more generally to anyone

62 Zsófia Dénes, *Akkor a hársak épp szerettek...* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), 108.

63 Endre Ady, "Napló. Pecsétek és egyebek," (1901) in idem, *Összes prózai művei*, vol. 1, ed. Gyula Földessy (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 414.

64 Ernő Ligeti, "Emőd Tamás," in *Ararát. Magyar zsidó évkönyv az 1944. évre*, ed. Aladár Komlós (Budapest: Országos Izr. Leányárvaház, 1944), 59.

65 *A budapesti társaság*, 417; Győző Concha, "A társadalomról," *Budapesti Szemle* 82 (1895): 352; Gábor Lajos Russay, *Szobrász gyógyfürdő* (Ungvár: Lévai Mór, 1902), 84; Tamás Dobszay and Zoltán Fónagy, "Magyarország társadalmi a 19. század második felében," in *Magyarország története a 19. században*, ed. András Gergely (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 436.

of bourgeois descent.⁶⁶ When in the 1890s Jenő Rákosi and Ferenc Herczeg (who like Rákosi was of bourgeois Swabian extraction) expressed their regret that some layers of Budapest society, layers which in their view had been called upon to unite, were in fact not uniting, in their denotation of the different layers they broke this society up into overlapping social, professional, and religious categories. As Jenő Rákosi wrote in 1893,

Considering the various professions, society is separated into castes in Budapest. The leaders of the individual castes come into contact with one another and sometimes one is in the social circle of another, but the layers themselves hardly come into contact with one another. [...] There is no salon in which all of Budapest would feel at home. The world of writers and artists lives separately from the rest, the aristocracy lives separately, the prominent Jewry lives separately, the middle class and the people with official ranks live separately.⁶⁷

Three years later Herczeg wrote on the world, or rather the worlds, of the parties in Pest:

The process of integration has failed. [...] There are as many parties as there are groups of people who isolate themselves from one another. There are parties for magnates, parties for the gentry, parties for residents of Lipótváros, parties for the bourgeois (the latter two do not overlap entirely), parties for artists, and lots of other parties. Each of these groups has its own separate intellectual world, separate merrymaking and socializing habits, and even separate language.⁶⁸

The question arises, did their religious status constitute any additional disadvantage, beyond the disadvantages they already faced because of their bourgeois extraction and their trades, for wealthy Jews who wished to gain acceptance into the social circles of the aristocracy or the upper echelons of the “historical middle class” and hoped that their social equality with these strata would find expression in formal manifestations of acceptance, beyond mere

66 *A budapesti társaság*, 451; “Gentry,” *Országos Gentry-Közöny*, June 2, 1889, 1. Győző Münstermann, *A középosztály önmédelem* (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert, 1904), 16; Mihályné Károlyi, *Együtt a forradalomban* (Budapest: Európa, 1978), 133.

67 Jenő Rákosi, “Budapest városrészei,” in *Az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia irásiban és képben*, vol. 9 (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Állami Nyomda, 1893), 191–92.

68 Ferencz Herczeg, “Zsúrok és zsúr-látogatók,” in *A mulató Budapest*, ed. Henrik Lenkei (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1896), 117.

socializing in casual contexts such as horse raises, pubs, and similar locales. For their contemporaries, the answer was clear. As Zay wrote,

Over the course of the years, considerable riches have accumulated in the hands of the Hungarian Jews. They have purchased livestock and estates, innumerable urban buildings have been constructed with their money, and this rise in finance has been accompanied by the desire for a rise in society. Above and beyond all is, there is only one path to further ascent for the wealthy and distinguished Jew: abandon his fathers' faith and have himself baptized.⁶⁹

A decade later Sándor Bródy wrote a very pithy encapsulation of the situation of the upper-class Jew: "He has nowhere to go, and if he moves, at most he leaves himself behind."⁷⁰

Jews and Converts from Judaism in the Social Circles of the Traditional Elite

With regards to membership in the National Casino and the Country Casino, into which candidates were co-opted by Casino members, the disadvantage of being Jewish was indisputable. The National Casino, called Pest Casino until 1830, had been founded by István Széchenyi in 1827. The Country Casino was established in 1883 at the initiative of Arisztid Dessewffy, the secretary of the house of representatives. At the time of its foundation the National Casino had 45 members, the Country Casino 352. The number of members of the National Casino grew to 750 by the end of the nineteenth century, while the Country Casino reached almost 2,000 by the beginning of the 1910s. According to the regulations of each, belonging to the Jewish faith was not an obstacle to membership.

On the occasion of the assembly of the National Casino on June 10, 1827, Széchenyi stated the goal of the club:

In our homeland too there should be a place for an assembly of the distinguished, where leading, illustrious and well-educated, intelligent and sensible men from all classes of society could meet with one another either to engage in amicable conversation or to read various political newspapers and useful agricultural, scholarly, and artistic

69 Zay, "Zsidók a társadalomban," 960.

70 Sándor Bródy, "Tímár Liza," (1914) in idem, *Színház* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1964), 392.

monthly writings, and also amuse themselves appropriately in their empty hours.⁷¹

Thus, as Gábor Gyáni has noted, when the National Casino was created Széchenyi himself thought not so much of “the separation of the social layers as he did of their mingling within certain borders.”⁷² This intention found expression in the fifth paragraph of the first detailed regulation, the regulation of 1878, which specified the conditions of membership:

Any upright, independent man who is refined in his conduct and of an unblemished reputation can be a member of the Casino if he is elected with the necessary majority according to the manner prescribed below. Neither political party sympathies nor class difference can be decisive at the time of admission or expulsion.⁷³

With regards to the Country Casino, in its press release the committee in charge of the work in preparation for its foundation made the following statement:

The goal [of the institution] is to create a center for contact between members of the Hungarian middle class which, in addition to providing a site for socializing, will also serve to promote reflection that will further public interests and the exchange of ideas and nurture a sentiment of unity in order to help realize common interests.⁷⁴

The first statutes of 1883 dropped the term “middle class” in response to the anxieties of the aristocratic members and defined the casino as a social club of “the educated classes of Hungarian society,” but the phrase returned

71 *A Nemzeti Casinó szabályai és tagjainak névsora. 1901* (Budapest: Franklin, 1902), 1. Henceforth I refer to the yearbooks of the Casino, which were first published in 1828 and which changed titles several times (I have consulted them up to 1918), with the title *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve*.

72 Gábor Gyáni, “Magyarország társadalomtörténete a Horthy-korban,” in *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*, ed. Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), 230–31.

73 *A nemzeti kaszinó évkönyve 1878*, 56–57. Until 1878, the yearbooks of the National Casino were tight-lipped on the question of eligibility. One finds the following note in the yearbook of 1829: “Birth or religion is not to be taken into consideration.” This specification is found only in the yearbook from this year. According to the yearbook from 1830, the members of the Casino “must be men of noble conduct.” One year later the phrase was “illustrious noble conduct.” In 1834, it was switched to “upright, noble conduct.” See *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1829*, 41. *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1830*, 41. *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1831*, 43. *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1834*, 55.

74 Béla Novák, “Fővárosi kaszinók a 19. században,” *Budapesti Negyed* 12 (2004): 90–114, accessed May 25, 2014, <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00003/00033/novak.html>.

in 1889. The modified regulations defined membership as consisting of people who belonged to the middle class, both “intellectually” and on the basis of their “positions of wealth.” According to the founding document, “any independent upright, man who is refined in his conduct, patriotic, and of an unblemished reputation and past” could be a member.⁷⁵

Contemporaries tended to refer to the National Casino as the Magnates Casino and the Country Casino as the Gentry Casino. They considered each a place for gatherings of members of the respective social strata. In the case of the National Casino, the term did not actually apply to all of the members. According to historian Beáta Nagy, in the period beginning with the foundation of the Casino and ending in 1941, “at least half [of the members at any given time] had titles as princes, counts, or barons, and more than two-thirds of them were counts.”⁷⁶ In other words, almost half did not belong to the aristocracy. According to Gabriella Eőry, in 1883 and 1913, 44.8 percent and then 52.4 percent of the members of the Country Casino had been state, municipal, county or judicial officials. In 1883, 20.5 percent and in 1913 14.9 percent was landowning, 25.7 percent and then 17.8 percent was comprised of lawyers or other people belonging to the intelligentsia, 2.8 percent and then 6.9 percent worked in industry, trade, or banking.⁷⁷

In the National Casino, as soon as 1829, Széchenyi proposed to the general assembly that Jews be allowed to seek membership. His proposal had the support of only five other members, including Miklós Wesselényi, while almost fifty people voted against it, and it seems not solely out of antipathy towards the Jews. As one of the people who voted against the proposal explained, “it is not possible, among us, to draw closer to the Jews, for experience has shown that the magnates do not even wish to draw closer to the nobility or the burghers.”⁷⁸ In 1832, the Casino rejected the application for membership submitted by Mózes Ullmann, who had converted some seven years earlier and went by the Christian name János Mór, and in 1837 it rejected the application of the yet unbaptized

75 Gabriella Eőry, “Az Országos Kaszinó és a középosztály,” in *Zsombékok. Középosztályok és iskoláztatás Magyarországon a 19. század elejétől a 20. század közepéig. Társadalomtörténeti tanulmányok*, ed. György Kövér (Budapest: Századvég, 2006), 322, 324.

76 Beáta Nagy, “Az elit társasélete a klubok, kaszinók keretében,” in *Társadalomtörténeti módszerek és forrástípusok*, ed. László Á. Varga, vol. 1 of *Rendi társadalom – Polgári társadalom* (Salgótarján: Nógrád Megyei Levéltár, 1987), 69.

77 Eőry, “Az Országos Kaszinó,” 338.

78 István Széchenyi, *Naplói*, vol. 3, (1826–1830), ed. Gyula Vizsota (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1932), LV, 318.

Sámuel Wodianer.⁷⁹ In the course of the 1840s, however, the National Casino accepted in its ranks four upper-class Jewish converts and one Jewish doctor: Sámuel Wodianer in 1841 (who now as a convert was successful in his application for membership), Ferenc Weisz Bernát in 1844, Albert Wodianer the Elder (son of Sámuel Wodianer) in 1845, Bernát Ullmann in 1847, and finally, as the first Jewish member of the institution, Mór Moscovitz in 1848.⁸⁰ Moscovitz, who died a Jew,⁸¹ had become the family doctor and confidant of Gyula Andrássy the Elder in the 1830s.⁸² He unquestionably had Andrássy to thank for his acceptance into the Casino. His singular position is illustrated by the fact that, while in the course of the following eleven years six more converted Jews were accepted as members by the National Casino (two members of the Wodianer family, two members of the Koppély family, which in 1867 changed its name to Harkányi, and two members of the Ullmann family, which in 1867 changed its name to Szitányi), it was not until 1860 that another Jew was made a member of the Casino, Ignác Hirschler, an ophthalmologist who between 1861 and 1863 served as president of the Israelite Community of Pest.⁸³ Hirschler's election, which clearly was not made independently of the awakening of political life in Hungary, meant the beginning of a new peculiarly liberal era in the life of the National Casino. Between 1860 and 1872, another eight Jewish men were made members of the National Casino.⁸⁴ Considering the antecedents and what followed, this is striking even if the number of baptized Jews who have been admitted during this period remained slightly superior, ten altogether. What the father began, the son involuntarily brought to completion: following the election of Géza Moscovitz in 1872, the Casino only accepted converted Jews or their descendants, a total of fifteen people by 1918.⁸⁵ In 1913, with the death of Géza Moscovitz, the National Casino, which over the course of the years had accepted

79 István Széchenyi, *Naplói*, vol. 4, (1830–1836), ed. Gyula Vizsota (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1934), 241. István Széchenyi, *Naplói*, vol. 5, (1836–1843), ed. Gyula Vizsota (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1937), 122.

80 *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1841*, 54; *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1844*, 55; *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1845*, 55; *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1847*, 53; *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1848*, 34.

81 OSZK, gyászjelentések, FM8/35797/344: Zempléni Moscovitz Mór.

82 Vezér, *Leszénai Anna élete*, 9–10; Groszmann, *A magyar zsidók*, 46.

83 *A Nemzeti Kaszinó évkönyve 1860*, 15.

84 The eight Jewish members, with the dates of their election in parentheses, were: Jakab Lányi (1861), Henrik Lévay (1862), Soma Rothfeld (1867), Hermann Todesco (1870), Miksa Brüll (1870), Frigyes Schey (1870), Mór Wahrman (1870), and Géza Moscovitz (1872).

85 With regards to converts I took only their father's side of the family into consideration.

ten professing Jews and 35 converted Jews or descendants of converted Jews, became, from the perspective of denominational belonging, entirely “Jew-free.”

In the case of the Country Casino, the situation is much simpler. As critics of the institution noted,⁸⁶ the Casino never once accepted a single Jew as a member. It did accept converted Jews and descendants of converted Jews, however. At the end of 1883, the Casino had 632 members. Politically, the club was very heterogeneous, including among its members fervent liberals, like Dezső Szilágyi and Sándor Kozma, on the one hand and no less fervent anti-Semites, like Géza Ónody and Iván Simonyi, on the other. There were at least eight converts or people of Jewish descent among them.⁸⁷ In 1913, which was to prove the last year of peace in the Dualist Era, of the 2,036 members of the Casino, about 36 were of Jewish descent.⁸⁸

It is worth taking a moment to examine, alongside the National Casino and the Country Casino, the third most important social organization of the elites of the capital city, the Park Club, and its policies and practices with regards to the acceptance Jewish members. Unlike the two casinos, not only was the Club open to women, women actually enjoyed decision-making power equal to that of male members. Decisions regarding the acceptance of female members were made exclusively by the women’s committee.⁸⁹ The founding assembly of the Park Club was held on January 15, 1893 and the sumptuously furnished club opened its doors in April 1895.⁹⁰ The founder, baron Béla Atzél, was driven by the desire to create a forum in which the aristocracy and the wealthier, more refined families of the nobility would intermingle.⁹¹ It is possible that initially he had intended to admit professing Jews to the club. According to popular opinion, he was not fond of Jews, but he himself always denied this.⁹² In 1899, he gave up his position as co-director in the Country Casino because his fellow

86 Mór Sztarmári, *Közszellemünk fogatkozásai* (Budapest: Werbőczy, 1898), 24; Zay, “Zsidók a társadalomban,” 962; Gyula Vigyázó, *A magyar zsidóság és a keresztény társadalom* (N.p.: Szerző kiadása, 1908), 15–16.

87 *Az Országos Kaszinó évi jelentése az 1883-ik évről* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1884).

88 *Az Országos Kaszinó évkönyve 1913* (Budapest: n.p., 1914).

89 In 1900, a women’s section of the Country Casino was established, but the representatives of the two genders did not come into contact with one another in the club. The men’s directorate made the decisions regarding the admittance of women. The women’s section was dissolved in 1908. See Beáta Nagy, “Az asszonyoknak egy szalónt kellett teremtenünk.” *Nők és klubélet a századforduló Budapestjén*,” in *Nők a modernizálódó társadalomban*, ed. Gábor Gyáni and Beáta Nagy (Debrecen: Csokonai, n.d. [2006]), 240–53.

90 “Park-Club,” *Szalon Újság*, April 30, 1905, 5–6.

91 Pál Hoitsy, *Régi magyar alakok. A letűnt nemzedék férfiai* (Budapest: Légrády Testvérek, n.d. [1923]), 69.

92 Mór Sztarmári, “Báró Atzél Béla,” *Egyenlőség*, April 1, 1900, 3–4.

members had rejected the application (which enjoyed his support) of the later converted but then still unbaptized Arthur Egyedi, a factory owner and member of the national assembly.⁹³

According to the 1893 draft of its statutes, the Park Club was established in order to provide “a pleasant center for contact between the refined classes of Hungarian society.”⁹⁴ The text in the first yearbook, which was published in 1900, was essentially the same. According to the 1911 yearbook, the mission of the club was the following:

To create a pleasant center for contact between the refined classes of Hungarian society which, in addition to providing a site for socializing, will also serve to promote educational goals and goals that are in the public interests, and also promote the exchange of ideas, encourage various kinds of sports, and nurture a sentiment of unity.⁹⁵

In the early years, Atzél was successful in his endeavor. According to an account published in *Az Újság* (The News) in 1910, “the very best of the aristocracy and the nobility filled [the Club’s] rooms.” Following his death, the situation slowly changed:

Today the Park Club is exclusively a club of aristocrats in which there are only a few scattered members of the nobility who, however, have cut themselves off entirely from their own circles and therefore can no longer be regarded as belonging to this strata.⁹⁶

According to the recollections of Pál Hoitsy, Atzél allowed “one or two refined Jewish people and many converts of Jewish descent” into the Park Club.⁹⁷ In fact, only the second part of this contention is accurate. In 1900 and 1910, the club had at least 20 converts or people of Jewish descent among its members, but in 1900 it had not a single professing Jew and in 1914 it had only one, if indeed it can be considered relevant, from the perspective of this inquiry,

93 Ibid., 4.

94 *A „Park-Club” alapszabályai*. N.p., [Budapest], 1893. OSZK Plakát- és Kisnyomtatványtár, Kny. D 3. 350.

95 *A Park Club évkönyve 1911* (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor, 1912), 51.

96 “A klubélet Budapesten,” *Az Újság*, December 25, 1910, 130–31.

97 Hoitsy, *Régi magyar alakok*, 69–70.

that as of 1907 the club had a member of the Viennese Rothschild family, baron Alfonso Rothschild, among its members.⁹⁸

* * *

While in some periods—more so in the 1860s and 1870s and less so at the turn of the century—to be unconverted was not an obstacle for upper-class Jews to develop social contacts, good neighborly relations, or even friendships with members of the traditional social elites, belonging to the Jewish faith utterly excluded real social integration that went beyond occasional social contacts dictated to some extent by liberal political etiquette. Considering that—with one exception that only confirmed the rule—neither the aristocracy nor the elite of the “historical middle class” entered into marriages with unbaptized Jews, and keeping in mind the reluctance of the National Casino and the refusal by the Country Casino and the Park Club to accept Jewish members, one can reach the following conclusion: though even conversion did not ensure acceptance into these layers of Hungarian society, it represented an inescapable precondition of institutional-symbolic and structural integration. This constituted a contradiction of the liberal promise of acceptance. At the same time, the fact that the clubs and families that closed themselves off to professing Jews were open to converts does indicate that the practices of exclusion were not (yet) based on principles of race.

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98 *A Park Club évkönyve 1900* (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor, 1901); *A Park Club évkönyve 1914* (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor, 1915).

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Frank Henschel

Religions and the Nation in Kassa before World War I

The paper aims to evaluate the role of religion in the everyday life of a multilingual town in the former Hungarian Kingdom in the second half of the long nineteenth century. It focuses in particular on the adaptation to and adoption of nationalist discourse and practice in religious communities. Religion as traditional and nation as modern ideological concept and symbolic order competed against each other for influence in society. However, religious representatives and nationalist activists also worked together in mutual initiatives. The main goal of the Hungarian nationalist program was linguistic homogenization, i.e. the Magyarization of society, and churches were assigned a special role in this project. They provided the possibility of gaining mass attention and could serve for mass inducement. At the same time, church institutions and services were spaces of everyday multilingual practice in mixed lingual areas. In the end, different confessional communities in Kassa (German: Kaschau; today Košice, Slovakia)¹ showed different strategies. The Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, due to the resistance from the majority of believers or church clerks (who protested against Hungarian-only services), remained multilingual up to World War I. Other communities transformed themselves quite smoothly from multilingual to Hungarian-only and therefore “patriotic” or “loyal” communities, e.g. the Jewish Reform (Neolog) Community or the Local Greek Catholics, whereas the Calvinists had always regarded themselves as the true “Magyar Denomination.” In general, the churches always played a vital role in the social and cultural life of the town, in school and educational systems, in associations, or in the culture of memory. But many questions and discussions of the era were linked to nationalist requirements and objectives which concerned the church representatives.

Keywords: confessional community, church, multilingual town, Kassa/Košice/Kaschau, Magyarization, nationalism

1 It would be appropriate, given the perspective of the article, to use all three forms of the city’s name consistently in order to emphasize its multiethnic and multilingual character in the past (and actually also in the present). But for easier reading, I will restrict to the official Hungarian name from the period under discussion, knowing that it wasn’t a “Magyar” city in the nineteenth century (nor was it a purely “Slovak” or “German” one). For personal names I will also use the most popular form in the sources, the Hungarian one, although a German or Slovak form often existed as well.

*The Nineteenth Century:
Age of Confession or Age of Nation?*

For a long time, the nineteenth century was primarily regarded as the age of emerging industrialization and the rise of the nation state, whereas the significance of religion was marginalized, since secularization seemed to have succeeded. Religion was considered a mere pre-modern, traditional factor of the ancient régime, and religious belief was said to have been replaced by the *modern* belief in the nation as a rational type of collective organization. Theorists of nationalism tended to exclusively tie *nation* and *modernity* to the progress of *secularity*.²

In 1995 Dieter Langewiesche, in an elucidating review on the international historiography of nationalism, still ascertained a certain “blindness on confession.”³ The historiography of East-Central Europe also widely neglected the religious factor in studies of nationalism and national movements.⁴ The relevance of religion within modern societies was reconsidered in general. Calling into question the abovementioned hegemonic narrative of the nineteenth century, Olaf Blaschke claimed that at least for Germany it is better described as a “second confessional age,” emphasizing the high relevance of church and religion in different domains of society.⁵ In his monumental *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Jürgen Osterhammel confirmed this assessment from a global perspective.⁶

As a result, the late nineteenth century has to be regarded as both an age of the nation and an age of religion. But how can we describe the relationship between religion and nation(alism)? Instead of simply opposing religion and nation, Hartmut Lehmann analyzed them in a more complex and dialectic

2 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 138; Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1962).

3 Dieter Langewiesche, “Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven,” *Neue Politische Literatur* 40 (1995): 216.

4 Hans-Christian Maner and Martin Schulze Wessel, “Einführung,” in *Religion im Nationalstaat zwischen den Weltkriegen 1918–1939: Polen, Tschechoslowakei, Ungarn, Rumänien*, ed. Hans-Christian Maner and Martin Schulze Wessel (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 7–12.

5 Olaf Blaschke, “Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Zweites Konfessionelles Zeitalter?” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 38–75.

6 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 2011), 1239.

context. Neither was religion unaffected by the rise of the new national semantics, nor did nationalism simply replace it. In fact, the development can be better described as mutual adaptation, as a “secularization of religion and consecration of the nation.”⁷ Martin Schulze Wessel refined the concept towards a sophisticated approach of mutual “nationalization of religion and consecration of nation.” Instead of contending that nationalism marginalized or replaced religion, he encouraged a focus on “the processes of displacement, hybridization and synthetization of religion and nationalism.”⁸

Nationalists, in East-Central Europe and elsewhere, used functions and forms of expression of religion for propaganda and mass mobilization, and religious representatives and institutions had to and often wanted to adapt to nationalist ideas in order to compete for authority, influence and resources.⁹ The churches remained a very important, if not the most important sphere, especially in small and middle towns, where people of nearly all social classes took part in religious life. This is why nationalists attached considerable importance to these institutions, since in doing so they were able to reach broader parts of the local society. I therefore would like to offer a detailed study of the attitude of the six religious communities of Kassa towards the Hungarian national idea during the period that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and lasted until the outbreak of World War I. Since the length of this article is limited, I won't be able to make more than a few observations about local practices of the “consecration of the nation,” but I do take into account “the diverse manners in which religious and national practice overlapped and interrelated, which led rather to mutual amplification, not supersession of religion by nation.”¹⁰

7 Hartmut Lehmann, “Die Säkularisierung der Religion und die Sakralisierung der Nation im 20. Jahrhundert: Varianten einer komplementären Relation,” in *Religion im Nationalstaat*, 13–27.

8 Martin Schulze Wessel, “Die Nationalisierung der Religion und die Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa,” in *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, ed. Martin Schulze Wessel (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag, 2006), 9.

9 Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche, “Einleitung,” in *Nation und Religion in Europa: Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (Frankfurt am Main–New York: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2004), 11–23.

10 Joachim v. Puttkamer, “Nationalismus in Ostmitteleuropa: Eine Zwischenbilanz,” *Zeitenblicke* 6, no. 2 (2007): 27, accessed June 23, 2014, http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2007/2/puttkamer/index_html.

“Nation,” “Ethnicity” and the nationality question in the Nineteenth-century Hungarian Kingdom

With the Compromise of 1867, Hungary became a nearly independent, autonomous state within the Austro–Hungarian Dual Monarchy.¹¹ In addition to its confessional heterogeneity, it was one of the most multilingual and multinational states in Europe. The titular people, the “Magyars,” formed a relative majority of 54.5 percent within the state only just before World War I according to the 1910 census. The fear of the demise of “Magyars” and their language and the attempt to build a modern nation-state led to the emergence of a strong Magyar nationalism. Nationalists propagated the Magyarization of the country, i.e. the linguistic homogenization and assimilation of the “nationalities” or “national minorities.” The most populous nationalities in Hungary were the Germans, the Romanians and Slovaks. With the nationality law, which was passed in 1868, everyone was indeed allowed to use his or her mother tongue when addressing lower levels of administration. However, the status of Hungarian as the official language was unquestioned, as was the principle of the “national unity” of the country. This was a clear denial of collective rights for “non-Magyars” and more or less a compulsion to assimilate into the Hungarian nation. This pressure also led to resistance in the form of separate national movements within the kingdom. Magyar nationalism and national movements among the minorities in Hungary are therefore important aspects of the complex “national question” in Hungary.¹²

This brief overview shouldn’t offer a misleading portrayal of the character of “nationality.” It is clearly not an objective and stable feature of individuals or groups, but has to be understood as a highly constructed product of the discourses and practices of nationalist activists, who claimed to speak for a

11 Agnes Deak, *From Habsburg Neo-Absolutism to the Compromise: 1849–1867* (Bradenton: East European Monographs, 2008).

12 Robert J. W. Evans, “Der ungarische Nationalismus im internationalen Vergleich,” in *Nationalismen in Europa: West- und Osteuropa im Vergleich*, ed. Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Jörn Leonhard (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verl., 2001), 291–305; Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the crowd in liberal Hungary, 1848–1914* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000); Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2008), 431–80; Szarka, László, ed., *Hungary and the Hungarian Minorities: Trends in the Past and in Our Time* (Highland Lakes, New Jersey: Atlantic Research and Publications Inc., 2004).

specific “national” or “ethnic” group.¹³ According to Rogers Brubaker, both “Nation” and “Ethnicity” are specific interpretative sets or prisms, “a way of making sense of the social world,” just slightly differing regarding the founding categories. The basic misconception is that “Nation” is an inclusive, liberal, tolerant, and modern concept, whereas “Ethnicity” is an exclusive, repressive and primordial one. Both are highly intertwined, since every national idea, may it be liberal and tolerant as the Hungarian one was in some respects, bears ethnicized borders that can be used for the demarcation of “them” and “us.”¹⁴ Taking this into account, I will also avoid the ascription of national group identity to an unspecific collective in Kassa, e.g. talking about “the Slovaks,” “the Germans,” “the Ruthenes” or “the Magyars” of the town, since this would be a retrospective ethnicization of the past. Were I to use such terms, I would be taking for granted constant, unchanging ethnic or national groups in history.¹⁵

Regarding the relationship between nation and religion in Hungary, the “nationality question” did not arise in a secularized environment, although the Hungarian political elite followed an agenda of strict liberalism.¹⁶ Nonetheless, as Árpád von Klimó has pointed out, the century between 1848 and 1948 can be characterized as a “confessional age.”¹⁷ Religion mattered in Hungary, but the relationship between religion and the nation was a complex one. Since there was no single denomination that could be connected with the nation (as was the case in France, Spain and Britain), every church had to position itself individually

13 Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the language frontiers of imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006); Rogers Brubaker *Ethnicität ohne Gruppen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., 2007) first published Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004).

14 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997); Rogers Brubaker, “The Macnichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction between ‘Civic’ and ‘Ethnic’ Nationalism,” in *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesi et al. (Chur: Rüegger, 1999), 55–71; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008), 15.

15 Jeremy King, “The Nationalization of Eastern Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity, and Beyond,” in *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield (West Lafayette: Purdue Univ. Press, 2001), 112–52.

16 István Diószegi, “Die Liberalen am Steuer: Der Ausbau des bürgerlichen Staatssystems in Ungarn im letzten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich: dreissig Beiträge*, ed. Dieter Langewiesche (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 484–98; András Gergely, “Der ungarische Adel und der Liberalismus im Vormärz,” in *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich: dreissig Beiträge*, 458–83.

17 Árpád von Klimó, “Ein »konfessionelles Zeitalter« Ungarns (1848–1948),” in *Religion und Nation: Katholizismen im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Urs Altermatt and Franziska Metzger (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 216.

with regard to nationalist programs. My analysis of a single city will uncover how different religious communities dealt with the national idea.

The question is if and how the Hungarian national idea and practice were adapted by churches in Kassa. Did they remain multi-lingual, “non-national” spaces, did they support Magyarization, or, in contrast, did they provide the foundation for the emerging minority nationalism of “Slovaks” or “Germans.”¹⁸

I venture answers to these questions in this article. I provide a short introduction to the history, structure, staff and affairs of the six local communities: Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Orthodox Jews and Neolog (Reform) Jews. How were they regarded by nationalist activists? What conflicts arose due to the fulfilling or failing of nationalist claims? Did church representatives engage in nationalist programs and campaigns? Did the communities take measures to meet the expectations of nationalist activists, and if so, what were these measures, and what expectations were they trying to meet?

Religion and Nation in Kassa

Kassa was (and actually is) characterized by an outstanding diversity of religions, which mirrored the profound linguistic diversity (see Table 1). Roman Catholicism remained the dominant confession over time, but the smaller communities consolidated and even gained new members. Between 1880 and 1910, the percentage of inhabitants of the city that followed the Roman Catholic Church declined from 70 percent to 63 percent. In contrast, the percentage of the population that was Greek Catholic increased from 6.5 to 8 percent, Calvinists from 4 to 8 percent, and the percentage of citizens of (one of the) Jewish Confession(s) expanded from 11 to 15 percent. Only the Lutheran Church lost a respectable share in the population – from nearly 8 down to 5.5 percent. This shift in the ranking of churches was—in comparison with other Hungarian cities of the same size, like Székesfehérvár, Pécs, Győr and Miskolc—a unique feature of Kassa.¹⁹

18 There are numerous studies of multiethnic East-Central European cities, but only two of them focus in detail on religious communities: Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer* (Göttingen–Bielefeld: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Iris Engemann, *Die Slowakisierung Bratislavas: Universität, Theater und Kulturgemeinden 1918–1948* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012).

19 Ernő Deák, *Das Städtewesen der Länder der ungarischen Krone (1780–1918)*, vol. 2/A, *Königliche Freistädte – Munizipalstädte 2*. (Vienna: Verl. der Österr. Akad. der Wiss., 1989), 38, 62, 80, 124, 164.

Year Language	1857		1880		1890		1900		1910	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hungarian	2,500	20.1	10,387	39.8	14,421	49.9	25,996	63.8	33,350	75.4
Slovak	4,379	36.7	10,674	40.9	9,713	33.6	9,244	23.1	6,547	14.8
German	4,200	35.2	4,358	16.7	3,891	13.5	3,446	8.6	3,189	7.2
Inhabitants in total	11,944	100	26,097	100	28,884	100	40,102	100	44,211	100

Table 1. Inhabitants and mother tongues in Kassa 1857–1910²⁰

Catholics between Panslavism and Magyarization

The two Catholic denominations of Kassa—Roman and Greek—constituted an absolute majority. In Hungary the bishop of Esztergom as entitled Prince-Primate controlled the dioceses, abbeys and other church institutions. He also was in charge of the Greek Catholics, who in the Union of Uzhorod (1646) had accepted the pope as head of the church but adhered to their orthodox rites and liturgy.²¹

Although the Greek Catholic community could be viewed as something a bit exotic in Kassa, they actually looked back on a long local tradition as well as a contemporary atmosphere of tolerance regarding their religious culture and practice. As early as the late fifteenth century, even before the official Union, Christian Orthodox believers lived in Kassa and its surroundings.²² Some historians equate the Greek Catholic belief with the ethnic group of Ruthenians, an eastern Slavonic people living in Transylvania, Galicia and the Carpatho-Ukraine, a region east of Kassa. Their belief and the use of Old Church Slavonic as the language of liturgy distinguished them from other denominations, but the idea that they saw themselves as a special ethnic group is questionable.²³ At

20 Data taken from: Michal Potemra, *Politický život v Košiciach v rokoch 1848–1900*, vol. 2 (Košice: Štátna Vedecká Knižnica, 1983), 520; Pavol Šalamon, “Demografický vývoj Košíc v Rokoch 1848–1870 I,” *Slovenská Archivistika* 26, no. 1 (1991): 56–77; Pavol Šalamon, “Demografický vývoj Košíc v Rokoch 1870–1918 II,” *Slovenská Archivistika* 26, no. 2 (1991): 44–61.

21 Emanuel Turczynski, “Orthodoxe und Unierte,” in *Die Konfessionen*, ed. Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, vol. 4 of *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918* (Vienna: Verl. d. Österr. Akad. d. Wiss., 1995), 399–478.

22 The following information is taken from Gabriel Szeghy and Peter Jambor, *Košické gréckokatolíci: Dejiny farnosti v rokoch 1797–1950* (Košice: Gréckokatolícky farský úrad, 2007).

23 For an affirmative approach of Ruthenian nationality see Paul R. Magocsi, and Ivan Pop, *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (Toronto, Ont.: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2002). More critical of that Wolfdieter

the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Greek Catholics of Kassa were subordinated to the eparchie (Greek Catholic diocese) of Eperjes (today Prešov, Slovakia). They lacked an administration and chapel of their own, but the Roman Catholic bishop of Kassa allowed them to use the Franciscan Monastery in the city center. Nevertheless, representatives of the faith, specifically the chaplain Matej Bräuer (1817–71),²⁴ a teacher at secondary school and city councilor, continued to push for an upgrade of the Greek Catholic community to an autonomous parish. His involvement in local schooling and politics already indicates the integration of Greek Catholics in Kassa. Bräuer's successor Julius Viszlocky (1832–1907) finally succeeded in collecting thousands of Gulden for the erection of a Greek Catholic Church, which was finished in 1901.²⁵ The fact that the lion's share of the 40,000 Gulden project was contributed by people of other confessions in Kassa and the whole country confirms the contention that the Greek Catholic Church was seen as an integral part of the local society.

Although even in the new chapel the old liturgy in the Slavonic language was used, the community didn't come under fire from nationalists. An occasion for Greek Catholics to demonstrate their national loyalty came in 1896, the year of the Hungarian "Millennium."²⁶ Chaplain Viszloczky arranged a festival service and gave a patriotic speech in Hungarian, which had to be translated for the audience. Ten years later, on the occasion of the reburial of Prince Ferencz Rákóczi II in Kassa,²⁷ the press praised Viszloczky for organizing a mass service in the Greek Catholic chapel in Hungarian, which no longer needed to be translated. This, in the eyes of Hungarian nationalists, demonstrated the efforts of the community to assimilate linguistically and represented an example of extraordinary patriotism.²⁸

The Greek Catholic leaders encouraged the national assimilation of their believers. The last step was taken by the Bishop of Eperjes' eparchie Miklós

Bihl, "Die Ruthenen," in *Die Völker des Reichs*, vol. 2, ed. Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, vol. 3.2 of *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918* (Vienna: Verl. d. Österr. Akad. d. Wiss., 1980), 555–84.

24 All biographical data is, except as noted otherwise, taken from: Mária Mihóková, *Slovník košických osobností: 1848–1918* (Košice: Štátna Vedecká Knižnica, 1995).

25 The history of the church construction in: Szeghy and Jambor, *Košickí gréckokatolíci*, 79–110.

26 Thomas Barcsay, "The 1896 Millennial Festivities in Hungary: An Exercise in Patriotic and Dynastic Propaganda," in *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Karin Friedrich (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2000), 187–211.

27 On the Rákóczi-Cult in Košice see Frank Henschel, *Vereinswesen und Erinnerungskultur in Kaschau / Košice / Kassa zwischen Nationalismus und stadtbürgerlichem Pragmatismus (1867–1918)*, Working Paper Series der Research Academy Leipzig 12. (Leipzig: Leipziger Univ.-Verl., 2013).

28 "Isteni tisztelet a hazáért a görög-katolikus templomban," *Napló*, March 27, 1906, 2.

Csoma (1863–1922), who pushed for the comprehensive Magyarization of the community. In 1909, the bond between the Greek Catholic church and the Hungarian nation became irresolvable. A country-wide congregation met in Kassa and decided to abolish the Old Church Slavonic language from all church services in favor of Hungarian. This, according to Bishop Csoma, was an expression of love and loyalty to the nation, which was given the same value as the love to Christ.²⁹

Thus, the Greek Catholic community of Kassa seemed to have adapted quite smoothly to the Hungarian national idea. This followed an integrative strategy. By breaking with the character of *strangers* and strengthening the support for their administrative autonomy, the Greek Catholic priests and bishops tried conspicuously to adapt to the ruling national concept of the united Hungarian state-nation by switching languages and showing patriotism.

In contrast, the negotiation of the relationship between religion and nation in the Roman Catholic community reveals much more ambivalence and conflict. In general, as research on Catholicism and nationalism indicated, there was an elementary difficulty of harmonizing the transnational, ultramontane character of the papal church with nationalist demands for nation-centered loyalty.³⁰ In the special case of Hungary the tight bond of Roman Catholicism and the Habsburg emperors always provoked strong anti-Catholic resentments among Hungarian nationalists, although most Hungarians were actually Catholics.³¹

As of 1804, Kassa was a diocesan town. The share of Roman Catholic believers among the city's population decreased, but the church held the dominant position within the urban society. In addition to the bishops, several Roman Catholic representatives played a vital role in various institutions. The chaplain Endre Kozora, for example, was elected head-solicitor of the city under the 34 year-long leadership of mayor Tivadar Münster and thus one of the most influential people within the magistrate. The bishops and many Roman Catholic officials were institutionally and personally involved in diverse activities related to Magyarization. Thus the church itself wasn't a target of nationalist attacks, but the

29 Pál Szarvady, "A kassai görögyszertartásu r. katolikusok szervezkedése," *Abauj-Kassai Közöny*, April 22, 1909, 4–5.

30 Urs Altermatt, "Katholizismus und Nation: Vier Modelle in europäisch-vergleichender Perspektive," in *Religion und Nation: Katholizismen im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Urs Altermatt and Franziska Metzger (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 15–33.

31 Ernst Bruckmüller, "Österreich: Eine ‚katholische‘ Nation?" in *Religion und Nation: Katholizismen im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 69–93; Moritz Csáky, "Die römisch-katholische Kirche in Ungarn," in *Die Konfessionen*, 285–89.

local order of Dominicans was due to its language practice. In particular, József Timkó (1843–99), the editor-in-chief of the most nationalist weekly, *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, who was yearlong assemblyman and—not unimportantly—a Lutheran, used his public roles to agitate against their alleged “Panslavism.” Timkó argued that the Dominicans were spreading Slovak nationalism by holding church services in Slovak and using the language in elementary schools. He demanded the formation of a committee that would investigate the activities of the order. The idea was supported even by Roman Catholics like the theologian and subsequent school inspector Márton Mártonffy (1848–1917), who published a plea for the national mission of the Roman Catholic Church. According to him, the Church had the duty to magyarize the non-Hungarian “nationalities” among its believers by introducing Hungarian services and patriotic sermons.³²

The targets among the Dominicans were the priests Anton Dominik Rašovský (1815–94) and Hyacinth Vlačil (1857–92). They were accused of being “fanatic panslavists,”³³ because they ordered Slovak-speaking prayer books, which was regarded as an attempt to “slovakize” the city.³⁴ Strangely enough, accusations were even interchangeable. In 1895, the slightly less nationalist newspaper *Felsőmagyarország* called the Dominicans a “cancer” because the order ostensibly had submitted some documents in German to the financial board of Kassa. Now, the friars undoubtedly were “Germanizators.”³⁵

After several years of recurring attacks, the head of the order, Father Gergely, submitted a long letter to the press, in which he explained his standpoint to the nation and defended the practices of his priests. According to him, the order already limited Slovak-speaking services to the level that was still necessary. The main services had been held in Hungarian for years. But since there were still a lot of Slovak-speaking believers, the order couldn’t put a complete end to services in Slovak. However, Gergely assured the public, everyone was committed to use all means to encourage patriotism and the use of the Hungarian language.³⁶ So, in the end, nationalist activists forced the order to issue a statement regarding their position towards the nation.

32 Márton Mártonffy, “A domonkosok és a magyarosodás ügye,” *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, November 27, 1884, 1.

33 “A tiszteletreméltó Domonkos atyákról,” *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, August 14, 1890, 3.

34 “Tótosító dominikánusok,” *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, September 4, 1890, 2.

35 “Csakazért is!” *Felsőmagyarország*, January 17, 1895, 3.

36 “A domonkosok és a hitélet magyarsága,” *Felsőmagyarország*, July 20, 1902, 4–5.

The concentration on the Dominicans should not lead to a misunderstanding of the practice with regards to language in other Roman Catholic churches of Kassa: the Dome of the Holy Elisabeth—the biggest cathedral in the region—, the Michael-Chapel, the Premonstratensian-Abbey, the Franciscan-Abbey and the Ursuline-Abbey—not to mention the numerous smaller chapels in the city’s periphery. The Roman Catholic bishops and priests of Kassa in general had to be aware of the linguistic diversity of their community. Even in the Dome, Slovak-speaking services were provided until World War I. Priests mostly had to master at least two languages, which again was regarded as scandalous in the Hungarian nationalist press.³⁷

For the common believers, language use in church had little to do with the demonstration of national loyalty. Language, rather, was a tool with which to serve individual needs for religious guidance. This was without a doubt best fulfilled in one’s mother tongue or a common language, which in many cases wasn’t Hungarian, even if people understood or spoke it in other situations. Ignoring the desire of the believers to at least pray and confess in the language of their choice also led to open conflict. In more than one case, some of the congregations stubbornly and resolutely insisted on the services being held in Slovak and even interrupted the priests and started a fray.³⁸ To classify such a spontaneous event as nationally motivated would be a misleading conclusion. This wasn’t an expression of a specific national consciousness, but a demand for appropriate language use as usual.

Taking this into account, it’s hardly surprising that the Fathers of the Dominican order were not the only people who were accused of not fulfilling their national duties. The bishops had to cope with attacks in the press too, due to the fact that church services continued to be held in the three main languages of the city, German, Slovak and Hungarian. The newspaper *Kassai Hírlap* argued that 98 percent of the city’s population was able at least to understand Hungarian, so the author asked why bishop Zsigmond Bubics (1821–1907, bishop 1886–1907) allowed priests to use several languages, even though he in general was an advocate of Magyarization.³⁹ Bubics, for example, even tried to influence Greek

37 “Bonyodalmak a plébánosi állás betöltése körül,” *Abauj-Kassai Közöny*, April 5, 1913, 1.

38 (Dr. H.) [Ignác Hohenauer,], “A magyar nyelv,” *Felsőmagyarország*, October 25, 1903, 1–2; “Slowaken gegen ungarischen Gottesdienst,” *Kaschauer Zeitung*, January 1, 1904, 1.

39 “Tót és német nyelv a kassai templomokban,” *Kassai Hírlap*, December 3, 1904, 1–2.

Catholics who had emigrated to the United States of America by sending priests who would re-Magyarize or de-Americanize them.⁴⁰

In fact every bishop—whether we are speaking of Bubics’ predecessor Constantin Schuster (1817–99, bishop 1877–86) or his successor Ágoston Fischer-Colbrie (1863–1925, bishop 1907–25)—was engaged in associations and campaigns which served to propagate Hungarian national identity, language and culture. In doing so, they always were flanked by other Roman Catholic officials like Menyhért Takács. The vicar of the Premonstratensian order served for a long time as head of the Közművelődési Egyesület (Society of Public Education), the main instrument of Magyarization in Kassa, which was under auspices of the bishops and the *főispán*, the governor of the Abaúj-Torna district, the capital of which was Kassa.

The main engagement of Roman Catholic officials in nationalist affairs didn’t take place during church services, but rather on occasions that were part of the public culture of memory. Every event of “national” importance, e.g. the anniversary of the Revolution of 1848, the “Hungarian Millennium” in 1896, or the cult of Ferenc Rákóczi II, was celebrated in the Dome of St. Elisabeth with huge services. The “nationalization of religion and consecration of nation” was most obvious on these festivities. Roman Catholicism and the “nation” were at least temporarily bound together in the performance and staging of national collective memory.⁴¹ In general, the Roman Catholic community remained multilingual, and for most believers, the church was still a rather non-national marked sphere of everyday life.

Protestants and Ethnic Segregation

The Protestant communities of Lutherans and Calvinists differed remarkably in their adaptation to Hungarian national idea. The latter had already been generally analyzed as bearing the self-image of being the true “Magyar confession,” since they had always used Hungarian and had fostered myths of struggling for the best of the nation since the sixteenth century.⁴² The Hungarian Lutherans, in contrast, used various strategies. Some felt as exceptional as the Calvinists in

40 “Amerikai pánszlávok a kassai gör. kath. egyház ellen,” *Kassai Hírlap*, June 29, 1905, 2.

41 I’d like to refer to the publication in which I analyze parts of the local culture of memory of Kassa in detail: Henschel, *Vereinswesen und Erinnerungskultur*.

42 Árpád von Klimó, *Nation, Konfession, Geschichte: Zur nationalen Geschichtskultur Ungarns im europäischen Kontext (1860–1948)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 55–79.

respect of their ethno-national quality as “Magyars.” German-speaking Lutherans, on the one hand, fostered a state-centered patriotism, which acknowledged multilingualism and multiethnicity. Some Slovak-speaking communities, on the other, developed a separate national idea, based on the strong ties between the lower Lutheran clergy and the Slovak speakers of the community.⁴³

As far as the Calvinists of Kassa were concerned, the above statement was true. They cultivated an image of themselves as the national elite, which was expressed, for example, by the construction of the highest spire in the city in 1895, measuring 40 meters. The censuses—though the results should be interpreted critically—indicated a rate of 98 percent of Calvinists in Kassa who identified themselves as “Magyars.” According to a local Calvinist chronicle, the community was proud that it always used the Hungarian language in church and was the strongest supporter if not the founder of the “Kuruc” movement, a series of anti-Habsburg rebellions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led by princes like the prominent members of the Rákóczi family.⁴⁴ Ironically, the Calvinists of Kassa were not willing to tear down their church in favor of the construction of a statue of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II.⁴⁵ However, all in all nationalist ideology was deeply integrated into religious practice, the more so as many Calvinist officials held positions in magyarizing institutions like the Közművelődési Egyesület. But the confessional elitist and nationalist attitude of Calvinists did not lead to total segregation from other communities. Together with the Lutherans they organized several cultural events in the Grand Hotel Schalkház, which were also joined by Catholic or Jewish personalities.⁴⁶

Whereas Calvinists represented themselves as *the* Magyar confession, Lutherans had to deal with the same situation as the Roman Catholics. The community was multilingual, since speakers of Hungarian, German and Slovak were among the believers. Using their administrative autonomy,⁴⁷ the Lutheran church found its own solutions to the situation.

In mid-nineteenth-century Kassa two communities existed that were separated along linguistic borders. Contemporaries, however, obviously tried to

43 Juliane Brandt, “Konfessionelle und nationale Identität in Ungarn: Die protestantischen Kirchen,” in *Religion im Nationalstaat zwischen den Weltkriegen 1918–1939*, 31–71.

44 Lajos Szabó, *Kassai kálvinista krónika 1644–1944* (Kassa: Wiko, 1944).

45 Archiv Mesta Košic (= AMK), Fond Magistratus (= FM), II/5252 1914, kart. 2281, Lajos Körmendy-Ékes, *A Rákóczi-szobor elhelyezése*, September 25, 1912.

46 “A Protestáns-estély,” *Felsőmagyarország*, March 15, 1910, 4.

47 Friedrich Gottas, “Die Geschichte des Protestantismus in der Habsburgermonarchie,” in *Die Konfessionen*, 495–543.

avoid the impression of ethno-national segregation, since they simply named the German-Hungarian the “First” and the Slovak the “Second” community. Both shared one church in the city center. But it cannot be assumed that national arguments did not play an important role. Since the Slovak-speakers formed the overwhelming majority within the whole Lutheran church in Kassa compared to German- or Hungarian-speakers, the unification of the latter two in the 1840s can be interpreted as an attempt to form a block against a formidable “Slovak” hegemony. It was presumably expected that German-speaking Lutherans would soon magyarize themselves. Afterwards, a powerful “Magyar community” could more easily absorb the “Slovak” one by arranging a second unification. But up to the end of the nineteenth century German remained the predominant language even in the “First” community. Because of this, *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny* published a plea to all Lutherans asking them to support Hungarian-language church services, which often were poorly attended.⁴⁸

The second (“Slovak”) community nevertheless worked steadily and despite the tense situation nearly undisturbed. Up to the late 1880s, it even ran a Slovak-speaking elementary school, which later fell victim to the Magyarization of the school system.⁴⁹ After the turn of the century, the question of language became virulent again. The “German-Hungarian” community felt strong enough to promote a merger. A roundtable was created by the lawyer Géza Benczur (1843–1908) and priest János Csikó for the “German–Hungarian” community, and the teacher János Kresz (1843–1912) and priest István Homola (1864–1952) for the “Slovak” community. These four representatives decided to merge the two communities, which in the end was supposed to result in the abolition of all non-Hungarian church services.⁵⁰ But the Lutheran believers themselves had to be asked for approval in separate assemblies. Despite a plea of Kresz to his Slovak-speaking believers to show “national morals,” they refused the unification.⁵¹ Services in Slovak and German remained untouched until World War I.

To understand the complexity of the case, one should note that it wasn’t only the program of Magyarization that led to negotiations for unification. The financial problems of the Lutheran church at the time had led to a cut-

48 “A fővárosi lapok,” *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, January 8, 1880, 3.

49 Joachim v. Puttkamer, *Schulalltag und nationale Integration in Ungarn: Slowaken, Rumänen und Siebenbürger Sachsen in der Auseinandersetzung mit der ungarischen Staatsidee 1867–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003).

50 “Kassai evangélikusok egyesülése: Nincs több német és tót egyház,” *Felsőmagyarország*, May 13, 1903, 3–4.

51 Cs-y, “A kassai két evangélikus egyház egyesítési ügye,” *Felsőmagyarország*, October 7, 1904, 2–3.

back in staff.⁵² Therefore it would have saved a lot of money to recruit just one or two priests with knowledge of Hungarian instead of three or four with knowledge of different languages. Furthermore, church officials hoped to gain financial support from the city's magistrate with which to maintain the Lutheran elementary school in exchange for formally magyarizing the community.

In the end, the unification of the “German–Hungarian” and “Slovak” community never happened. Both communities refused to vote in its favor. The Slovak-speaking believers—despite the insistent plea of Kresz—feared the abolishment of Slovak-speaking church services. The “German–Hungarian” community also stopped all negotiations because the representatives feared a “Slovak” majority in the church institutions—although there never was a Slovak-national movement based on the Lutheran church in the region.⁵³

Schism and Assimilation: the Local Jewry

Jews were in a historical sense the “youngest” religious group in Hungary, since their immigration increased just around the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. They came from all over Europe and the Monarchy to Hungary, since in 1840 nearly every legal restriction for the settlement of Jews was banned in the law XXIX/1840. Full equality was only legalized in 1896, when the Judaism was granted the same legal status as Christian denominations. However, as Viktor Karády has described, Jewish immigration to Hungary was promoted by an implicit “Assimilatory Contract.” This contract included the grant of full civil rights and protection against discrimination or anti-Semitic violence in exchange for linguistic and national assimilation to Magyardom. Jews were regarded as the missing percentage that would help to lift the share of “Magyars” in Hungary from a relative to an absolute majority compared to the national minorities.⁵⁴

52 “Die Vereinigung der beiden Kassaer evang. Kirchen,” *Kaschauer Zeitung*, May 14, 1903, July 4, 1903, July 9, 1903.

53 “Az egyházak egyesítése,” *Kassai Hírlap*, July 22, 1905, 3.

54 Viktor Karády, *Juden in Ungarn: Historische Identitätsmuster und Identitätsstrategien* (Leipzig: Simon-Dubnow-Inst. für Jüdische Geschichte u. Kultur, 1998); Viktor Karády, “Elitenbildung im multiethnischen und multikonfessionellen Nationalstaat: Ungarn in der Doppelmonarchie 1867–1918,” in *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts: Akteure, Arenen, Aushandlungsprozesse*, eds. Karsten Holste, Dietlind Hüchtker and Michael G. Müller (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 63–81.

Other historians have therefore characterized Jewish strategies of assimilation in Hungary as “Magyar–Jewish Symbiosis.”⁵⁵

Jews had lived in Kassa since the fifteenth century, but the consolidation of the local Jewish community dates back to 1844, when Abraham Seelenfreund was elected rabbi. The first prayer room was situated in Harang-út (today Zvonárska) on the brink of the city center, but it soon provided too little space for the rapidly growing community. In 1867, they erected one of the country’s biggest synagogues in the Old Town, but soon the emerging schism in Hungarian Jewry affected the community in Kassa, too. At the Jewish Congress in Pest in 1869, Jewish Orthodoxy separated from Reform-Jewry (called “Neologs”), which sought to modernize the religion in theory and practice and voted for further secularization towards an ethno-national assimilation.⁵⁶

The Neolog-community in Kassa was soon a clear majority within the Jewish community. In 1899, 2,500 males were declared members of the reform community, in contrast to just 1,600 of the orthodox.⁵⁷ From the 1870s onwards, the Orthodoxy tried desperately to achieve its interests, be it a separate cemetery for orthodox funeral rites or a separate synagogue. Even after Markus Hirsch, a Budapest Rabbi who was sent by Minister of Culture József Eötvös to mediate the conflict, attested full congruence between the new contested synagogue and religious rules, local Orthodoxy refused to use it.⁵⁸ However, bit by bit Orthodoxy lost ground, since a socio-economic, demographic and religious change took place, as Sándor Márai, the great “biographer” of fin-de-siècle Kassa, describes in his memoirs.⁵⁹

55 Rolf Fischer, *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn: 1867–1939; die Zerstörung der magyarisch-jüdischen Symbiose* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988); Peter Haber, “Ungarische Assimilationsstrategien,” in *Jüdische Identität und Nation: Fallbeispiele aus Mitteleuropa*, ed. Peter Haber, Erik Petry, and Daniel Wildmann (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 3–6. The importance of Jews for the Hungarian political establishment rapidly diminished after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, because they were no longer needed as a surrogate of the modern bourgeoisie and allies against the national minorities. Vera Ránki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999); Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2006).

56 Wolfdieter Bihl, “Die Juden,” in *Die Völker des Reichs*, 880–948.

57 Alajos Klekner, “Vallási élet,” in *A Kassai Egyetem: Emlékkönyv*, ed. Kassa szab. kir. város tanférfaai (Kassa: Kassa szab. kir. város tanférfaai, 1901), 137–48.

58 Emanuel Enten, “Zur Geschichte der Juden in Košice (Kaschau),” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakei* 2, no. 4 (1932): 279–91.

59 Sándor Márai, *Bekenntnisse eines Bürgers: Erinnerungen* (Munich: Piper, 2000), 12.

The consequence of the ongoing modernization of Jewry in Kassa was a changing self-relation towards the Hungarian national idea, but assimilation did not change everything immediately. Up to the turn of the century, multilingualism in the communities, whether the orthodox or the neolog, was an unquestioned practice. The Jewish elementary school taught Hebrew and German; most Jewish associations, e.g. the Charity Club of Godparents, used German in their meetings and for written correspondence, educated Jews in general used German and Hungarian equally.⁶⁰ Therefore, more than once the liberal-nationalist press, in a strange phalanx with the conservative Catholic press, attacked local Jewry for using German in public or within community life.⁶¹

There was no climate of permanent Anti-Semitism, but there was remarkable pressure to assimilate to the “Magyar” majority. This pressure, in connection with a desire for definite acceptance on behalf of Jewish representatives, led to a final decision. In 1904, the Jewish neolog community decided to magyarize itself. The respected physicians József Spatz and Elek Neuwirth submitted a proposal which stipulated the exclusive use of Hungarian for church services, correspondence and meetings. Violation of the stipulation was threatened with sanctions. The Jewish elementary school had already switched from German to Hungarian as the language of instruction. Furthermore, every member should be obliged to join the “Közművelődési Egyesület,” the main instrument of local Magyarization.⁶²

This was not the first expression of strategic assimilation within the Jewry of Kassa, but it was a remarkable one, since it affected all community members. Ten years earlier, the wealthier among them had already founded the “Kassai Társaskör” to promote Magyarization within the Jewish upper class.⁶³

There were also remarkable individual actors who can be described as national activists. One of them was the lawyer Sámú Fényes (1863 as Feuerlicht–1937), who founded the “Sovinista Egyesület” in 1901, which introduced strong nationalist semantics into the field of local economy.⁶⁴ In his fight for general suffrage, Fényes emphasized its importance for the regions in Hungary, where

60 AMK, FM, Archive Materials on Košice Jewry 1888, I/7, kart. 1701.

61 “Germanizáló rabbi,” *Abauj-Kassai Közlöny*, September 10, 1891, 2; “A magyarosodás tengelyakasztói városunkban,” *Felvidéki Ujság*, June 18, 1908, 1.

62 “Patriotischer Antrag,” *Kaschauer Zeitung*, June 2, 1904, 2; “Terjed a magyarosodás: Egy hazafias indítvány,” *Felsőmagyarország*, May 31, 1904, 3.

63 AMK, FM VII/32-b 1888, kart. 1897, “A kassai társaskör alapszabályai,” Kassa, June 5, 1893.

64 Dr. M. I. [Mitzger Imre], “Sovinista egyesület,” *Felsőmagyarország*, April 24, 1901, 1.

according to him the system of voting at the time privileged the leaders of nationality movements, like Slovak or Romanian priests.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The question I have sought to address in this essay concerns how the six religious communities in multilingual Kassa positioned themselves with regards to the Hungarian national idea during the age of Austro–Hungarian Dualism. National activists claimed supremacy for the Hungarian language, demanded individual and collective assimilation of non-Hungarian “nationalities,” and regarded the use of other languages as a sign of a lack of national loyalty or an attempt to cultivate a separatist national idea. One can venture the conclusion that no religious community remained unaffected by nationalist demands and claims, but the scope of Magyarization was quite different from denomination to denomination. The small community of Calvinists regarded itself as an originally and essentially “Magyar” denomination. They did not have to find a new way to adapt to the national idea, but strengthened their symbolic affiliation.

The other communities had to cope with the challenges of Magyarization in a more complex way. They all looked back on long traditions of multilingualism and an institutionalized system of church services in different languages. Quite often, even the language of church administration was not Hungarian, but was at least in part German/Hebrew (Jews), German/Slovak (Lutherans), Old Church Slavonic (Greek Catholics) or Latin (Roman Catholics). All denominations were confronted with demands for Magyarization, but in different ways.

The most complex case was the Roman Catholic Church. It represented the overwhelming majority of people in Kassa, but therefore had to manage the widest diversity of mother or colloquial languages. It was under steady surveillance by national activists, even more so because Catholicism was seen as something in opposition to the mostly Protestant national-liberal political elite. Thus, the officials tried to demonstrate loyalty to the nation. Bishops, priests and other representatives were engaged in several local nationalist institutions. They were involved in Hungarian nationalist memory culture and promoted the “consecration of the nation.” They tried to increase the number of church services in Hungarian, but linguistic homogenization failed because churchgoers

65 “Egy szép beszédéről,” *Kassai Hírlap*, September 10, 1905, 1–2.

also stood up against Magyarization, since it affected the very private practice of praying.

The Lutheran church was confronted with the same problems, since their community was trilingual and until the mid-nineteenth century separated into three entities. After unification, a German–Hungarian and a Slovak community coexisted, but until World War I the leaders of both communities tried to enforce a final merger which in their eyes would lead to financial savings and Magyarization. This goal was not attained and a Slovak-speaking Lutheran community existed up until 1914, but never was a protagonist in a local or regional Slovak national movement.

Jews and Greek Catholics used different strategies. Both communities had a status of subtle “strangeness.” The Greek Catholics were a local particularity and had no country-wide church structure, but rather were subordinated to the Roman Catholic diocese until they were assigned an autonomous eparchy in Eperjes. Despite their “Slavic” background, they had little problem with local Hungarian nationalism and adapted to the Hungarian national idea by pushing forward linguistic Magyarization and ideologically avowing the fatherland. The bishops and priests had chosen an assimilative strategy to integrate their communities. They were able to avoid hostilities by replacing the Old Slavonic church language with Hungarian. They even generated support for the strengthening of their institutional autonomy.

The Jewry of Kassa, as the sole non-Christian community, was assigned a different status of strangeness. But here as in the whole country the mechanism of the “assimilatory contract” took effect. The schism of Hungarian Jews into Orthodox and Neologs led to remarkable confessional conflict. Both competed for hegemony within the local community, but Neologs soon became the majority and thus their concept of national assimilation prevailed. Some turned into dedicated national activists, but it took until the first decade of the twentieth century to magyarize the community officially. Until then, and this is an important difference from the Greek Catholics, the Jews weren’t immune against attacks from the liberal nationalist or the conservative Catholic press, since many used the German language in business, public and private. But by World War I, the public, school and church life of the Neolog community was widely magyarized.

I have attempted to present the complex entanglements of religion and nation in a specific local context. Neither was there a simple replacement of religion by nation, nor was there complete immunization of multilingual, non-

nationalist traditions in churches. Rather, there was mutual interaction that can be described as a local form of “nationalization of religion” and “consecration of the nation.”

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Martin Jemelka

Religious Life in an Industrial Town

The Example of Ostrava, 1850–1950*

In the first half of the twentieth century, Ostrava (Moravian Ostrava, Greater Ostrava), as the center of the Ostravian industrial area (with a high concentration of plants that use coal, iron, and steel and were involved in the chemical industry in the nineteenth century), was not only an important center of Austria–Hungary and then Czechoslovakia, but also served as an important center of modern religious life in the Czech lands. Between the two world wars, the Ostravian area was the center of the Czechoslovak atheistic movement, the National Czechoslovak Hussite Church, and the Middle-European spiritualistic movement. In this essay, which is based on records and statistic materials from Ostrava City Archive and other Czech archives, will map religious life of Moravian Ostrava in relation to two social groups, the working class and the middle class of both the Czech and the German speaking populations, including German speaking people of Jewish origin. The second observed phenomenon, proselytism, will be described based on Books of religious conversions of the Roman Catholic Parish Office from 1854 to 1920. I consider the frequency of conversions between individual confessions, the most frequent reasons given for conversion, mixed marriages within working class and middle class environments, and Jewish converts to Roman Catholicism.

Keywords: religious life, industrial town, atheistic movement, national church, spiritualistic movement, proselytism, Ostrava, 1850–1950

There is a stereotype prevalent in the Czech and Central European historical scholarship in connection with a territory of temporal Ostrava and the Ostrava industrial area according to which they were the most important centers of the coal and iron industries of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and Republic of Czechoslovakia.¹ However, to mention Ostrava and the Ostrava industrial agglomeration² as an important center of modern Czech, Czechoslovak and even

* This study was written within the scope of grant project no. 13-28086C “Historical process of modernization (on the basis of the example of Austrian Silesia)” of the Czech Science Foundation.

1 Karel Jiřík et al., *Dějiny Ostravy* (Ostrava: Archiv města Ostravy, 1993), 7–10; Blažena Przybylová et al., *Ostrava: historie / kultura / lidé* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2013), 7–8.

2 Milan Myška, “K vymezení ostravské průmyslové oblasti,” *Český lid* 53 (1966): 121–33; Olga Skalníková, “Problém Ostravska jako průmyslové oblasti (příspěvek ke studiu vytváření novodobé etnografické oblasti),” *Český lid* 60 (1973): 358–65. The Ostrava industrial area developed without regard to state, administrative,

Central European religious and spiritual history may sound a bit sensationalist.³ Nevertheless, Ostrava and Ostravsko underwent before and after World War I a dynamic economic, social and religious development that resulted in the emergence of interwar Ostrava as a center of the atheist movement, one of the Czechoslovak centers of the National-Catholic Czechoslovak Church,⁴ and local spiritualists who changed Ostravsko into a Central European spiritualistic movement.⁵

The following text is devoted to collective (institutional) and individual actors of the religious and confessional development of the region of Ostrava in 1850–1950 on the basis of the example of Moravian Ostrava. First, I consider the two traditional institutions of that process, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church (the Evangelical Church of Augsburg) and the local Jewish community. The second part of the text is devoted to new institutional actors. They entered the religious life of the region and the whole state after World War I. The motivation for the establishment varied. The Czechoslovak Church used reformed Catholicism. The Association of Social Democratic Atheists was based on a scientific world view. The religious views of spiritualists were outside of the frames of institutional confessions. An analytical part of the text is addressed to inter-confessional mobility, conversions between individual

ethnic or ethnographic borders as an industrial region with an extreme concentration of industrial plants and workers' colonies, and without a connection to an older industrial tradition. The core of the Ostrava industrial area became the communities of Moravian and Polish (Silesian) Ostrava, Vítkovice, Petřvald and Karviná, and within the industrial area two settlement agglomerations emerged, Moravian (Greater) Ostrava and Fryštát (Karviná).

3 Martin Jemelka, "K náboženskému životu v Moravské Ostravě (1854–1920)," *Acta Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Ostraviensis, Historica* 15 (2008): 41–63; Martin Jemelka, "Proselytismus jako modernizační fenomén (na příkladu Moravské Ostravy v letech 1850–1920)," in *Město a městská společnost v procesu modernizace 1740–1918*, ed. Pavel Kladiwa, and Aleš Zářický (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě, 2009), 168–78, 376–77, 393; Martin Jemelka, "Sociálnědemokratické bezvěrecké hnutí na meziválečném Ostravsku," *Ostrava: sborník k dějinám Ostravy a Ostravska*, 26 (2012): 135–65; Martin Jemelka, "The Social Democratic Atheist Movement in Interwar Ostravsko," in *Secularization and the Working Class: The Czech Lands and Central Europe in the 19th Century*, ed. Lukáš Fasora, Jiří Hanuš, and Jiří Malíř (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, Pickwick Publications, 2011), 174–92; Martin Jemelka, "Židovský proselytismus jako modernizační fenomén (na příkladu Moravské Ostravy v letech 1854–1920)," in *Židé a Morava XVI.: sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska 11. listopadu 2009*, ed. Petr Pálka (Kroměříž: Muzeum Kroměřížska, 2010), 75–88.

4 Antonín Barcuch, "Počátky církve československé (husitské) v Radvanicích," *Těšínsko* 48, no. 3 (2005): 20–23.

5 Martin Pilař, "Blouznivci a spiritisté v Ostravě," in *Bílá kniha: 17 příběhů z ostravské kulturní historie*, ed. Ivo Kaleta et al. (Ostrava: Statutární město Ostrava, 2009), 169–70.

confessions (with particular focus on conversions between Jews and Roman Catholics), and mixed marriages (which were the main reasons for conversions).

Traditional Actors in Religious Life in Terms of Industrial Cities

Up to the proclamation of the December Constitution in 1867, Moravian Ostrava kept the character of a homogenous town by confession, with clear domination of leading Roman Catholics. From the 1850s, however, the Roman Catholic town had to absorb Jewish immigrants from traditional Moravian Jewish centers and North-Eastern Hungary (Trencsén), and Lutherans from near Těšín Silesia. Up to January 1, 1907, a parish office of Moravian Ostrava provided the diocese and four other villages with 65,839 inhabitants (1900)⁶ and belonged to the deanery of Místek. The medieval church of Saint Wenceslas was the parish church up to the year 1890. Between the two world wars, the redemptorist convent for pastoral duties of the Eastern Catholics Rite emerged. It was then the newly built parish and dean Church of the Divine Saviour, with a capacity of 4,000 people, that was the second largest Roman Catholic church in Moravia, first consecrated in the year 1889.⁷

In Roman Catholic churches services had been held in Czech for a long time, but as of the 1880s attempts were made to preach in German as well, and in Moravian Ostrava Polish missionaries from the area of today's Poland, who led the missions for the Catholics from Silesia and Galicia, also held services in Polish. The last decade of the nineteenth century brought the enforcement of bilingual sermons in the main church, which was a great wish of the urban congregation. So already at the end of the century the linguistic or national part of the congregation played an important role in local religious life.

In addition to Czech, German and Polish nationalists from the municipal council and members of the nationally conscious working class, another opponent to Roman Catholicism emerged around the year 1900, and not only in Ostrava. This new opponent was the socialistically oriented industrial working class. The workers of rural origin were confronted, in the difficult conditions of Ostravian agglomeration, with the harshness of the reality of the industrial region and severed from traditional agricultural society. Paradoxically, the vast majority of Ostravian clergy of the second half of the nineteenth century and

6 Jiřík et al., *Dějiny Ostravy*, 670–71.

7 Libuše Cimalová and Karel Jiřík, *Farní úřady římsko-katolické církve na území města Ostravy: sdružený inventář (1609–1950)* (Ostrava: Archiv města Ostravy, 1963), 10; Jiřík et al., *Dějiny Ostravy*, 526, 536, 562, 614.

the first third of the twentieth originally came from the country.⁸ Priests who were not yet Roman Catholic were able, with some exceptions,⁹ to react around 1900 to the pastoral challenges of an industrial town and society, (matrimonial law and coexistence, birthrate regulation, political activities of labor.) The lack of social empathy, which can be excused by the rural origin of Ostravian clergy and its conservative value horizon, played a key role in the process of secularization, or at least in its interpretive narrative. This reality is retrospectively verified by the success of the Ostravian Salesian mission from the 1930s, which settled in Salesian oratory between two biggest Ostravian working class settlements of Hlubina a Šalomoun mines (approximately 5,000 inhabitants),¹⁰ and a role of socially empathic Roman Catholic priests in the collective memory of Ostravian working class.¹¹

Between the two world wars, Ostravian Roman Catholic priests opposed not only the organized working class and its political (The Czechoslovak Social-Democratic Labour Party, The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) and worldview organizations (physical training and atheist social-democratic and communist organizations), but also the growing influence of the Church of Czech Brethren and the National-Catholic Czechoslovak Church, which grew from the postwar nationalist and pro-reformed ferment of Czecho(slovak) Roman Catholic clergy. During World War II, the majority of Ostravian priests managed to avoid any direct confrontation with the Nazi regime, but P. Štěpán Trochta (1905–74, 1969 cardinal “in pectore”), a cofounder of the Ostravian Salesian, work did not escape its attention.¹² However, the open confrontation

8 More Lukáš Vaculík, *Dějiny římskokatolického děkanství v Moravské Ostravě (1948–1989)* (Ostrava: Katedra historie Filozofické fakulty Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě, rukopis diplomové práce, vedoucí diplomové práce PhDr. Martin Jemelka, Ph.D., 2011), 104–10. We come across members of the Catholic clergy with proletarian origins only after World War II, when state socialism, at least in the 1950s, was supported by many priests of working class origin.

9 Petr Přebinda, “Působení kněze a pozdějšího slavného orientalisty Aloise Musila v Moravské Ostravě (1891–1895),” *Ostrava: příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* 26 (2012): 190–230. For example a legendary Biblicist, orientalist and traveler Alois Musil (1868–1944), who worked as a curator in Moravian Ostrava in 1891–95.

10 Martin Jemelka, *Na Šalomouně: společnost a každodenní život v největší moravskoostravské hornické kolonii (1870–1950)* (Ostrava: Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě, 2008), 128–33.

11 “After Karas the other vicar from Heřmanice came to the Roman rectory, Václav Petr. He was the son of a peasant. When he came to us, he was a young, handsome man. He was frank, open-minded, he loved children, he was a priest, a democrat. He spoke openly with everyone, whether you were a member of the other church or not in a church at all. He came here in about 1935 and he was liked by everyone.” Ludmila Turecká, “Kronika,” in *Lidé z kolonií vyprávějí své dějiny*, ed. Martin Jemelka (Ostrava: Repronis, 2009), 124.

12 Jemelka, *Na Šalomouně*, 132.

with the regime was about to break at the end of the 1940s, when the era of state socialism began.¹³

Whilst the Christians who spoke Czech had the support of Roman Catholic priests in Ostrava, the local Lutheran Protestants were put under the intensive pressure of German speakers. They disappeared from Moravian Ostrava in the first half of the eighteenth century, but they were supported to come back after the Patent of Tolerance (1781) and the emancipation after 1848. Because of the insatiable demand for manpower in the following decades, at the height of industrialization the Lutherans from Těšínsko and Prussian Silesia began to arrive. The religious situation of Ostravian Lutherans was complicated by the resistance of the Catholic clergy, which through the municipal council interfered in the religious duties of Evangelical Christians. The local Lutherans nevertheless used the protection of coreligionists among the clerks of Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway, who extorted permission to perform religious services in workshops and railway depots and also the protection of some influential industrialists and German members of the municipal council headed by mayor Dr. Gustav Fiedler (1849–1936). The first step towards the public emancipation of Ostravian Lutherans was the foundation of their cemetery and chapel (1862). In 1871, the first Protestant vicar was named. The independent Protestant community with its own rectory, with a congregation that numbered 1,456 souls, was formed in Moravian Ostrava only in 1875. The construction of a rectory was begun in 1901, and on October 22, 1905 the cornerstone of Moravian-Ostravian Lutheran Church was laid (Christuskirche). It was opened with the strong support of Prussian Gustav Adolf Foundation in 1907.

While the Roman Catholic diocese was consistently bilingual with a predominantly Slavic element, the Lutheran community in Moravian Ostrava was completely dominated by Germans.¹⁴ Only at the end of World War I and with the establishment of the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren, which also had the support of the new Czechoslovak elite, headed by president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), there were significant linguistic and social-professional changes among Ostravian Protestants who called for a declaration of Hussite and Brethren Czech statehood. While the newly established national Church of Czech Protestant Brethren (constituted in December 1918) only addressed

13 More Vojtěch Vlček, *Perzekuce mužských řádů a kongregací komunistickým režimem 1948–1964* (Olomouc: Maticе cyrilometodějská, 2004).

14 *Die evangelische Gemeinde in Mährisch Ostrau* (Mährisch Ostrau: n.p., 1905; Miroslav Kroček, “Z místopisu staré Moravské Ostravy,” *Ostrava: sborník příspěvků k dějinám a výstavbě města* 14 (1987): 238, 246.

believers in Czech, the Protestant Church of Augsburg, which shared the Christ's church together with Czech Brethern, brought together mainly German and Polish speaking Ostravian Protestants who got no support from the Nazi occupation administration. After 1948 they had to go into internal exile.

The Protestant Church of Augsburg became a home for German and Polish speaking Protestant Ostravians after 1918, but before World War I even Ostravian Jews who had converted to Christianity either for personal or professional reasons sought refuge there. Up to 1860, the town of Moravian Ostrava managed to protect its right to prohibit Jews from settling in the town, so in the 1850s Jews first settled in the neighboring Polish-Silesian settlement of Zámostí. In the following decade they were able to move to Moravian Ostrava itself. In 1860, a Jewish Iconic Association for Moravian and Polish Ostrava (*Židovský kultovní spolek pro Moravskou a Polskou Ostravu*), which belonged to Těšín Jewish community, had already formed, but the Ostravian Israelites did not form their own religious community until February 9, 1875. After the cholera epidemic in 1873 the number of Jewish immigrants on both banks of the Ostravice River temporarily fell, but the following migration waves in the 1880s and 1890s brought a great number of poor Galician Hasidic Jews. The newly established Jewish religious community for Moravian and Polish Ostrava and the surroundings (*Židovská náboženská obec pro Moravskou a Polskou Ostravu a okolí*, 1873) included, in addition to the neighboring villages, the towns of Frýdek-Místek and Bohumín. The original chapel in Zámostí was replaced by the Reform Synagoge in Pittler Street (1879), and even seven years earlier the local Jews had begun to bury their deceased in the cemetery in Říšská Street next to the Municipal central cemetery. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Moravian-Ostravian Jewish religious community boasted numerous groups, such as a women's society, a choir, a crafts association, and scholarly and charitable foundations, as well as their own County House (1901) and organizationa physical education organization named Turnverein Bar Kochba (1899). The first rabbi of Moravian Ostrava was Samuel Friedmann (1875–90), who commuted to Ostrava from Těšín. His successors were Dr. Bernard Zimmels (1890–93), a native of Sankt-Pölten native, and Dr. Jakob Spira (1894–1942). The long-time chairman of the Jewish religious community was Markus Strassmann (1875–1903), an entrepreneur in brewing, who was followed by Dr. Alois Hilf (1903–34).¹⁵

15 Jiří Fiedler, *Židovské památky v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague: Sefer, 1992): 117–18; Jaroslav Klenovský, *Židovské památky Ostravy* (Brno–Ostrava: Moravskoslezské nakladatelství, 1997–1998), 4–12.

After World War I, like the Czech or Czechoslovak Jewry in general, the Ostravian Jewry found itself at a crossroads, compelled to decide whether to acculturate in the conditions of a new Czechoslovak state in which Czech and Slovak were the prevailing languages or to remain among the more than three-million German speaking inhabitants of the newly formed state. Only a few of Ostravian Jews used the opportunity to register as Jewish in interwar censuses of in 1921 and 1930.¹⁶ Together with the threat of the approaching invasion of Nazi Germany into the territory of Czechoslovakia, the flow of Jews seeking the exile in Palestine, the USA or Shanghai grew.¹⁷ About 8,000 Ostravian Jews who remained in the territory of the Czech lands even after the foundation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia died in the Nazi extermination camps, and only 200 Ostravian Jews came back to Ostrava in 1945. The restoration of the religious life of the Jewish community in Ostrava after 1948, however, was in the hands of the Jews from other Czechoslovak towns, since, apart from a few individuals, the Jews who had survived went abroad in 1945–1948.

Up to the foundation of the independent Czechoslovak state (October 28, 1918), the religious rituals of the followers of other faiths (Helvetic, Old Catholic and Orthodox) were limited in Ostrava and the surrounding industrial villages to isolated visits of the clergymen, occasional visits to the nearest rectory, or giving confession. (For example the Catholics of Byzantine-Slavic Rite had to attend Roman Catholic services before they gained their own parish, which was provided for them as of 1927 by the redemptorists in Saint Wenceslas Church in Moravian Ostrava). Together with the foundation of the new Czechoslovak state, the diocese of the confessions that were only rarely represented before 1918 in Moravian Ostrava or had been newly established (The Czech Brethern Church, Baptists etc.) came into being. Nevertheless between the two world wars Greater Ostrava and the surrounding villages became important centers of the the Czechoslovak Church, Social-Democratic and Communist atheistic movement and spiritualism.

16 The interwar Greater Ostrava was more than the center of conservative Jewry or an important destination for the Czechoslovak reform-oriented Jews. It was the center for secularized Czechoslovaks of Jewish origin for whom Greater Ostrava, with its agile Zionist organizations, was a training ground and a transfer station on the way to Palestine, as it was described by Ivan Olbracht in his works (a novella *O smutných očích Hany Karadžičové* of the trilogy *Golet v údolí* from the year 1937).

17 Mečislav Borák, *Transport do tmy: první deportace evropských Židů* (Ostrava: Moravskoslezský den, 1994), 31–52, 67–116.

Confession	1880		1890		1900		1910		1921		1930	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Without confession	–	–	–	–	16	0.05	–	–	2214	5.3	4236	9.2
Czechoslovak	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	843	2.0	3257	6.7
Evangelical	403	3.0	684	3.6	881	2.9	1322	3.6	2119	5.1	2586	5.6
Israelite	724	5.4	1356	7.0	3272	10.9	4133	11.2	4969	11.9	5205	11.3
Roman Catholic	12,319	91.6	17,188	89.3	25,931	86.1	31,219	85.0	31,398	75.2	30,408	66.7
other/not stated	2	0.01	15	0.1	15	0.05	80	0.2	222	0.5	193	0.4
Total	13,448	100	19,243	100	30,115	100	36,754	100	41,765	100	45,885	100

Table 1. The Confessions of Moravian Ostrava Citizens in 1880–1930¹⁸

Ostrava as a New Center of Interwar Spiritual Life

Immediately after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic (October 28, 1918), in its industrial center three new institutional actors entered interwar religious life. They were the Czechoslovak Church, the Association of Social Democratic Atheists and a spiritual organization called the Brotherhood. These new players in both regional and national religious histories had several common denominators. They included Czech nationalism, hostility to the Roman Catholic Church, enthusiasm for modern science, support of women's emancipation, identical ethical imperatives (the struggle against alcoholism and opposition to smoking), and open attentiveness towards new mass media (radio, slides). With a few exceptions, the activities of all three groups targeted only Czech-speaking

18 Sources of Table 1: *Special-Orts-Repertorium von Mähren. Band X., Mähren* (Vienna: K. K. Statistischen Central-Commission, 1885), 90; *Special-Orts-Repertorium von Mähren. Neubearbeitung auf Grund der Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1890* (Vienna: K. K. Statistischen Zentral Kommission, 1893), 117; *Gemeindelexikon von Mähren. Bearbeitet auf Grund der Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1900* (Vienna: K. K. Statistischen Zentral Kommission, 1906), 120; *Statistický lexikon obcí na Moravě a ve Slezsku. Úřední seznam míst podle zákona ze dne 14. dubna 1920, čís. 266 Sb. zák. a nař* (Prague: Vydán Ministerstvem vnitra a Státním úřadem statistickým na základě výsledků sčítání lidu z 15. února, 1921, 1924), 97; *Statistický lexikon obcí v zemi Moravskoslezské. Úřední seznam míst podle zákona ze dne 14. dubna 1920, čís. 266 Sb. zák. a nař* (Prague: Vydán Ministerstvem vnitra a Státním úřadem statistickým na základě výsledků sčítání lidu ze dne 1. prosince, 1930, 1935), 92.

inhabitants. However they were widely shared both by working class people and by state employees. The postwar liberalization of religious life helped them freely articulate their political rights and share cultural patterns.

The Czechoslovak Church

The important role of national and social fights in the spiritual and religious history of the Czech lands in the first third of the twentieth century can be illustrated by the adversities faced by the National-Catholic Czechoslovak Church (*Církev československá*) (since 1971, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, *Církev československá husitská*). It rose within the two years between 1918 and 1920 from the unfulfilled requirements of the reform-oriented, modern Union of the Catholic Clergy (*Jednota katolického duchovenstva*), from the conditions of national rise around the establishment of Czechoslovak Republic, and from the resistance of a significant part of the Czech by nation clergy and believers to the aristocratic Roman Catholic hierarchy of German and Hungarian nationalities. The radical wing of the Union, the Catholic clergy organization, which had never been officially accepted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, held a Congress of the reform priests in Prague, which on January 8, 1920 declared the foundation of the new Czechoslovak Church, which was legalized by the state on September 15, 1920. While the Czechoslovak Church, under patriarch Karel Farský (1924–27), officially declared itself an heir to the Hussite tradition and aimed to return to the early church principles, in reality it introduced the Czech national language as a liturgical language and, even before the official establishment of the church, it abolished celibacy. As early as 1921, 5.23 percent of the Czechoslovak population joined the church, and apart from the so-called Orthodox crisis (1924), which led a part of the clergy and believers (mainly in Moravia) to support the Serbian Orthodox Church¹⁹ (*srbská pravoslavná církev*), the percentage of believers grew to 7.3 percent in 1930, and to 10.6 percent in 1950. In March 1939 the Czechoslovak Church was disbanded in Slovakia

19 Pavel Marek and Volodymyr Bureha, *Pravoslavní v Československu v letech 1918–1942* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2008); Jaroslav Šuvarský, *Biskup Gorazd* (Prague: Metropolitná rada Pravoslávnej cirkvi v ČSSR, 1979). Moravian native Matěj Pavlík (1879–1942) was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1902. After serving in some Moravian parishes (during World War I among others as a padre in the military and mental hospital in Kroměříž), he was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1920 for holding the Catholic liturgy in Czech. In the nascent Czechoslovak Church, he promoted an Orthodox orientation, and after he had separated from its members he was ordained a bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church. As bishop Gorazd of Prague, he established fourteen Orthodox churches in

and Carpathian Ruthenia and it survived the Protectorate years as the Czecho-Moravian Church (*Církev českomoravská*). The Protectorate period, which was marred by the collaboration of the hierarchs, was followed after 1945 by a period of open cooperation with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, even before the beginning of state socialism (1948).²⁰

Immediately after the end of World War I, in the atmosphere of the Czech-Polish border controversy about Těšínsko and in the climate of postwar existential reflection on the events of the war, the industrial Ostravsko (Region of Ostrava), headed by (Polish) Silesian and Moravian Ostrava, with surrounding urban and rural villages became the center of the forming Czechoslovak Church. On January 15, 1920, a week after the church constituent congress, a religious community of the Czechoslovak Church formed in Radvanice in Silesia as the first one in the republic. Two years later, it became the seat of the Moravian-Silesian diocese, headed by the bishop Ferdinand Stibor (1869–1956), originally a Roman Catholic priest who in 1908 became the first vicar in the newly established parish in Radvanice, which had predominantly a working class population. The immediate confrontation with complicated social, political and national reality put him on the side of Czech inhabitants of working class origin, and he was thus in conflict with the German authorities and Roman Catholic hierarchy. The marriage with the parson's cook in 1920 made the births of his two sons (one in 1910, the other in 1920) legal, and it became the first step towards his public affiliation declaration of the newly formed Czechoslovak Church, of which he was a signatory in January 1920. As of 1923, he served as a bishop, and in 1942–45—after the death of patriarch Gustav Adolf Procházka—even a land administrator.²¹ Stibor's lifelong popularity—as demonstrated by the crowds that attended his funeral—was a sign of recognition among the people of his profound social empathy and the emphasis he placed on Christian social practice in the difficult postwar times in a socially, politically and nationally heterogeneous region.

the Czech lands and became the main representative of Czech interwar Orthodoxy. He was shot to death in September 1942 in the Prague Orthodox Cathedral for sheltering the deputy Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich's assassins. He was canonized as a martyr by the Orthodox Church in 1987.

20 Radoslav Daněk, "Tagliaferro Jan," in *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy*, 10, ed. Lumír Dokoupil, and Milan Myška (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě, 1998), 146–48; Pavel Marek, *Církevní krize na počátku první Československé republiky (1918–1924)* (Brno: L. Marek, 2005), 212–13.

21 Jaroslav Pleskot, "Stibor Ferdinand," in *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy*, 9, ed. Lumír Dokoupil and Milan Myška (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita v Ostravě, 1997), 100.

After Radvanice, Heřmanice, Michálkovice and Silesian Ostrava, in 1920–23 chapels of the the Czechoslovak Church were established in twelve parts of today's Ostrava, where up to the year 1934 the same number of Hussite chapels were built. However, at least in Radvanice and Michálkovice the establishment of the chapels and the temporary occupation of the Roman Catholic churches were dramatic, involving the police, organs of state administration, and the courts:²²

Just after the end of a political fight for Těšínsko and after the plebiscitary storms there appeared new nuisances, now the religious ones. [...] The vicar in Radvanice Ferdinand Stibor started to perform the speeches about the needs to establish the Czechoslovak Church in Michálkovice. [...] At the meeting of the local council in April 1920, the seizure of the Roman Catholic Church was negotiated because there was a majority of Czechoslovaks, and both Catholic and Czechoslovak worships were to be held. The Catholics could not give in without the church being taken from them by force. [...] After the negotiation with the representatives of both sides, the government bodies ordered that the church be handed up by a specific date. There was nothing else for the Czechoslovaks to do but to build their own church.²³

The success of the Czechoslovak Church among the Ostravian working class can be shown with numbers: in 1921 the members of the Czechoslovak Church was constituted 10.2 percent of the population, and by 1930 this number had grown to 15.8, while in the whole republic it was 5.2 percent in 1921 and 7.3 percent in 1930.²⁴ But one could also cite recollections of inhabitants from working class settlements:

In the class and in the settlement there were many Protestants and kids from the Czechoslovak Church, which was the largest, after the Catholic Church. Out of thirty kids in the class, there were ten who did not attend the religious education: three were atheists, two Protestants and the rest were from the Czechoslovak Church.²⁵

22 Jířík et al., *Dějiny Ostravy*, 498, 519, 526, 531, 547, 568, 593, 599.

23 Turecká, "Kronika," 121. Ludmila Turecká (1907–2005) described the situation in Michálkovice (today Ostrava-Michálkovice). She grew up in a Czecho-Polish Galician miner family in a miners' settlement.

24 Jemelka, "Sociálnědemokratické," 163–64.

25 Milík Gaj, "Všecko mělo smysl a jedno zapadalo do druhého," in *Lidé z kolonií vyprávějí své dějiny*, ed. Martin Jemelka (Ostrava: Repronis, 2009), 271.

Social-Democratic Atheistic Movement

Atheism became the most important opponent of the Christian religions in the territory of interwar Ostrava. Before World War I, it was promoted by Social Democracy and occasionally by Free Thought. In the interwar period atheism was propagated by the Association of Social Democratic Atheists and by the competitive Federation of Communist Cultural Units or by the Union of Proletarian Atheists. The first postwar census from February 16, 1921 indicated the significance of the tendency among inhabitants of Ostrava towards atheism. In the region of Moravian Ostrava, there were 81.5 people out of 1000 without faith (in Moravia this figure was 18.4 people and in the Czech Silesia it was only 14), which is unambiguously the highest rate in Moravia. The figure for Brno (land capital) was 40.8 and for Silesia (the region of Frýdek-venkov including Silesian Ostrava) it was 46.0.²⁶ Nine years later, the rate of people without faith was 11.1 out of 100 inhabitants in the region of Moravian Ostrava, 7.5 in the region of Frýdek (including Silesian Ostrava), 6.6 in the political region of Brno, and 5.0 in the political region of Fryštát.²⁷

Unambiguously the largest atheistic organizations in the region was the Union of Czech Atheists (*Sdružení českých bezvěrců*, 1919), the Union of Social Democratic Atheists (*Sdružení sociálnědemokratických bezvěrců*, 1919), and as of 1933 the Union of Socialist Free Thinkers (*Unie socialistických svobodných myslitelů*), one of the most powerful non-political and non-physically educational organizations of interwar Ostravsko.²⁸ The development of organized atheistic movement in Ostravsko, which benefitted from failure to translate Christian principles into social doctrine and from the anti-Catholic approach of the socially oriented working class majority, was allowed by the independent Czechoslovak state, and a postwar liberal social life was able to develop that followed the amended law about the right of association from November 15, 1867.²⁹ The postwar development of the atheist organizations in Ostravsko was not so much determined by prewar activities of Free Thought. This was mainly because of civilization and value changes in society after World War I. The Czechoslovak

26 *Statistický lexikon obcí v Republice Československé: úřední seznam míst podle zákona ze dne 14. dubna 1920 čís. 266 Sb. zák. a nař., II – Morava a Slezsko* (Prague: Nakladatelství Státního úřadu statistického, 1924), tabulka IIA, XIX–XXII.

27 *Statistický lexikon obcí v Republice Československé, Místní obce, osady a jejich části v Zemi moravskoslezské* (Prague: Nakladatelství Státního úřadu statistického, 1934), XX–XXII.

28 Jemelka, "The Social Democratic."

29 Jemelka, "K náboženskému životu," 41.

state had its war experiences, anti-clerical propaganda of a socialistic press, and anti-Catholic ideology. As of 1924, the Ostravian Social-Democratic atheists were affiliated with the Atheists' International and together with three other Czechoslovak atheist organizations (the Federation of Communist Cultural Units, Bund der proletarischen Freidenker, the Socialist Atheists in Most), they counted some 35,000 paying members by the mid-1920s.³⁰

An initial step towards founding the first Czechoslovak atheist organization was the establishment of *Volné slovo* [Free Word], a periodical which, according to the subheading of its first edition (which came out in Přívoz on March 1, 1919), “defended and promoted the interests of Czech atheists” and used the slogan according to which “*a Czech man cannot be a man of Rome.*”³¹ In the first half of the 1920s, the Ostravian Social-Democratic atheists were agile in establishing of local organizations, in addition to leaving legally and officially the Church. They promoted the secularization of schools and funerals in the newly built (Feb. 1, 1925) crematorium in Ostrava.³² They mainly used common activities, such as slide lectures and theater performances, to fight the opponents among the communist atheists and the priests of the Czechoslovak Church, which was labelled “the old fiddle under a new firm.”³³ Ostravian atheists demonstrated for freedom of conscience (1925) and secular education (1935). They also held ceremonies, such as the unveiling of a monument to the Spanish agnostic Francesco Ferrer (1935). However, the key period for the unification process of the Czechoslovak atheist movement was 1932, when the Union of Socialist Free Thinkers (Unie socialistických svobodných myslitelů) was established. In the district of Moravian-Silesia 68 local branches were established in 1933.³⁴ Before the clouds began to gather over the Ostravian atheist Union in 1938–39, they had problems with memberships waning (1925: 7,516 members, 1937: 3,500 members), out of which only a small fraction stayed in the successor to the organization, the Educational Union (Osvětový svaz, November 20, 1938).³⁵ The last issue of *Volné slovo* was edited on October 1, 1939. The activities of

30 AMO OMA, *Volné slovo*, 7, 11. 9. 1925, č. 34, s. 1: Mohutná protiklerikální manifestace v M. Ostravě.

31 Ibid., 1, 1. 3. 1919, č. 1, s. 1. [Enhancement – M. J.]

32 Ibid., 7, 1925, č. 3, s. 6 a č. 4, s. 3–4.

33 Ibid., 1, 1. 10. 1919, č. 15, s. 3.

34 AMO OMA, Fond Spolky na území města Ostravy, Župní výbor Unie socialistických svobodných myslitelů, Stanovy Unie socialistických svobodných myslitelů (přírůstkové č. 216, karton č. 1, evidenční číslo 1).

35 AMO OMA, *Volné slovo*, 20, 1. 12. 1938, č. 12, s. 1.

The Educational Union were brought to an end in 1940 and two years after the Reinhard Heydrich assassination (June 4, 1942) it ceased to exist.

Spiritualism

Lesser Ostravsko was not only the Moravian-Silesian center of the National-Catholic Czechoslovak Church and the midpoint of the Czechoslovak atheistic movement, in its history the spiritual movement played an important role with its Czechoslovak and Central European center in Radvanice in Silesia (today's Ostrava-Radvanice), with the spiritual association Brotherhood (Bratrství) (1914), and with its Association house and periodicals entitled *Spiritistická revue* [Spiritual Revue] (1920–38), *Československá revue psychická* [The Czechoslovak Psychic Revue] (1938–40), and *Psychická revue* [The Psychic Revue] (1946–49). Radvanice and Silesian Ostrava³⁶—where the roots of spiritualism dated back only to the last decade of the nineteenth century (the miners' settlement of Zárubek) and the beginnings of an organized spiritual movement up to the time of the association of Brotherhood—formed (apart from the Protectorate period up to the liquidation of Brotherhood in the early 1950s) the midpoint of the Czechoslovak spiritual movement. In interwar period, the latter had almost 200,000 followers and supporters, agnostics as well as denominationally organized Christians.³⁷

Whilst the spiritualists and the occult devotees are connected in the Czech lands consistently with the Czech Krkonoše and Jizerské mountains, the Ostravian spiritual tradition was essentially forgotten. Both Czech and Ostravian spiritualists read the spiritual literature of German origin, and this connected them, but the multi-cultural background of Ostravsko, with its Czech, German and Polish languages and international contacts in the interwar period (at least with the spiritualist circles in Vienna) separated them. Ostravsko bore witness to the birth of a specific spiritual culture and spirituality connecting the Czech tradition of Anti-Catholic individual religiosity with rational moral imperatives on the one hand with the Polish exalted rural religiosity on the other, which was also influenced by the major Jewish Hasidic community in the south of today's Poland, which neighbors Ostravsko and is to the northeast of the Czech Republic.

36 In fiction, see for example Ota Filip, *Nanebevstoupení Lojzka Lapáčka ze Slezské Ostravy* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1994).

37 Jiřík et al., *Dějiny Ostravy*, 568; Pilař, "Blouznivci," 169–70.

In northern and northeastern Bohemia the central person of spiritualism was Karel Sezemský (1860–1936) and his periodical *Posel zúbrobní* and *Edice Spirit*. In Ostravsko the same role went to Jan Rösner, an editor of the *Spiritistická revue* [Spiritual Revue] and a front person of the Brotherhood. *Spiritistická revue* was addressed to those interested in somnambulism, magnetism, levitation, occultism, metaphysics, predictive power, telepathy, suggestion, phrenology, hypnotism, graphology, astrology, abstinence, non-smoking, morals and psychology:

Spiritualism is not about faith, it asks for study and research. Spiritualism works for intellectual and emotional purification, it leads mankind towards brotherhood, and it lessens social differences [...]. Spiritualism does not agree with clergy or religious dogmas, however it teaches the religion of tolerance.³⁸

These official spiritual documents were referring ecclesiastically to the Old and New Testament tradition, as well as to Ancient Egyptian and East-Asian religious traditions. While in the Czech spiritual regions, in addition to reading the spiritual texts, the mediumistic paintings played an important role, in the Association house in Radvanice theater performances were in the focus (one-act plays on spiritual topics), together with the contemporary classical music of the composers who were respected by spiritualists (Leoš Janáček).

While the members of the spiritual association of Brotherhood were organized in three hierarchical stages and only abstinent non-smokers and vegetarians could become proper members, the charismatic spiritualism and its practices (raising a spirit of deceased) met with an enthusiastic response among the Ostravian working class, mainly among working class women, who had never lived in the shadow of aggressive social agnostics.

Grandma prayed secretly, but only when grandpa was not at home. Once grandpa was not at home, I came home from school and I was passing two or three women in the hall. Grandma sent me away and did not explain to me who those women were. When I had come back from the aunt's place or somewhere grandma was in tears, her eyes were really weepy. The women were apparently the spiritualists who would go around the settlement and who raised spirits of deceased. They were in the bedroom and had raised my mom, who had talked to

³⁸ Pilař, “Blouznivci,” 169–70.

my grandma. My mom apparently knew that I studied well and that she was in purgatory and that we were to pray for her to get into heaven.³⁹

While in the interwar period the Ostravian spiritualists could rely on their own organized membership base and on numerous supporters in culturally and denominationally heterogeneous working class background, in the period of the Bohemian and Moravian Protectorate and later on after the disbanding of the Brotherhood in 1950 (in other words during the times of liquidation of the association life after February 1948), Ostravian spiritualism fell into isolation, persecution and in the end into oblivion. Spiritualism plays only a tiny role in collective memory, mainly with reference to the moment when the Association house of Brotherhood in Radvanice was expropriated after 1950.

Proselytism and Mixed Marriages as Modern Phenomena

Collective (institutional) actors in the religious life of Moravská Ostrava, both traditional and new ones, communicated with one another in public spaces via cultural and political entities and community life. In the city, the population of which was growing, schools and cemeteries proved especially neuralgic points of confessional coexistence. In the era of modernization and emerging civil society, individual actors became bearers of denominational mobility, the main manifestation of the conversions between different confessions. As the population grew, the number of conversions increased. Conversion ceased to be rare, and pragmatic reasons for the change of religion (usually a marriage) gave way to philosophical and political reasons. The study of denominational mobility is limited by methodological constraints, corresponding to the intimate nature of conscious confessional affiliation. The following section shows, within the limits set by the types of available sources, changes in the correlation of Roman Catholic denomination and other confessions. The most intimate area of research is the analysis of mixed marriages that were and still remain a conflicting point of inter-confessional dialogue.

39 Jaroslava Houžvová, “V naší havířské rodině v životě nepadlo sprosté slovo” in *Lidé z kolonií vyprávějí své dějiny*, ed. Martin Jemelka (Ostrava: Repronis, 2009), 239.

Changes in confession

The primary source of this section of my inquiry is *Kniha o změnách vyznání* (1854–1920) [The Book of Conversions (1854–1920)], held in Ostrava City Archive,⁴⁰ which reflects Moravian Ostrava in the period of the transformation from a serf town with traditional society to an industrial center of the Austrian state to an administrative, industrial and cultural metropolis of the infant Czechoslovak state. *Kniha o změnách vyznání* was formed as an official book into which the priests in the frame of the parish region recorded the reported changes of confession, in other words people who converted to the Catholic Church of Roman Rite and instances of people who left this Church. With 863 records, *Kniha o změnách vyznání* includes some columns that were meticulously filled in up to World War I, when the book recordings became schematic because of a change of conditions in the society and because of mass conversation from Roman Catholicism. After 1920, conversions to Catholicism and instances of people who left the Catholic Church had to be registered in different books.⁴¹

The first column contained data about the date of converting to or leaving the Roman Catholic faith, the certificate identification of the district office which had to be informed about the changes even after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, and identification about ordination permission to enter the Catholic Church. The second column contained the information about the name, age, address and the birthplace of the registered person, as well as the names and marital status of his or her parents. The other column concerned the act of converting to or leaving the Church, and the original and new confessions are included. The penultimate column gives the name of the priest who led the catechization, and accepted the confession with a witness (frequently it was only a sacristan) or baptized the convert, in the company of the godfathers. The last column contained reasons for the change in confession (this column was often filled in schematically or even contained conflicting information).

Kniha o změnách vyznání begins in the year 1854 with the data about three converting female Protestants of the Augsburg Confession (in the source there is no information about the conversion of a Protestant of Helvite Confession)

40 AMO, Fond Římsko-katolický farní úřad Moravská Ostrava, *Kniha o změnách vyznání* (1854–1920), inv. č. 73.

41 AMO, Fond Římsko-katolický farní úřad Moravská Ostrava, *Kniha vystouplých z církve* (1920–1922), *Kniha vystouplých z církve* (1923–1930), *Kniha vystouplých z církve* (1931–1952), *Kniha přijatých do církve* (1922–1938), *Kniha přijatých do církve* (1939–1947), inv. č. 74–78.

who converted to Catholicism in order to be able to marry a Catholic. Up until 1920, 97 Lutheran males and 159 Lutheran females converted and became members of the Roman Catholic Church. The wave of Lutheran conversions to Catholicism culminated in 1897–99, 1901, and 1905. From 1906 on, a permanent decrease of conversions among Protestants can be seen, because they could already support an agile clergy administration with a new church. The main reason for Lutherans' conversion to Catholicism was marriage, mainly the marriage of Lutheran girls from nearby villages who married local Catholics and worked in Moravian Ostrava as workers, day laborers, charwomen and laundresses. Among men, miners were the largest group (17.5 percent of all converting Lutherans), then workers, metallurgical workers and day laborers. While among the converting Lutherans there was not a single convert with a so-called liberal profession, among the Catholics converting to Lutherans this situation was quite the reverse.

The most numerous group was formed by Roman Catholic believers who converted to the Augsburg confession. There are only twenty entries up to 1898, but from 1899, when more people left the Roman Catholic Church in Moravian Ostrava than entered it, there were several such people every year. The wave of conversions from Catholicism to Protestantism culminated in the years 1901, 1909 and 1919. While among the Protestants, women dominated, in the reverse direction men outnumbered women (in a proportion of 144:126). If among the female Catholics who converted to the Augsburg confession there were mainly housekeepers, charwomen, cooks and single girls as future brides, among new male followers of the Augsburg confession there were, in addition to workers, also members of liberal professions (an editor, sons of the pharmacist and the mayor, etc.). The reason for their conversions could have been “frenzied German nationalism,” the movement “Los vom Rom,” “Romhetze” or “furor teutonicus.” The local Lutheran community thus grew not only by its own reproduction but also by a linguistically, nationally and culturally German oriented movement which was supported by women from the local notables. For example, in 1903 the factory owner Karel Elbertzhagen's granddaughter Alice Elisabeth Koberová, converted. Her mother Božena Elbertzhagenová, who was the wife of an entrepreneur who belonged to a Protestant confession, converted in 1910, and Ida Fiedlerová converted in 1904 (she was the daughter of a Moravian-Ostravian sugar refinery owner and the wife of advocate and burgomaster Dr. Gustav Fiedler, who was mayor in 1901–18). The reason for her conversion was recorded as “indifferentism and modern movement.”

The third largest group was formed by people who left the Catholic Church and did not join another confession: there were 299 such cases in the period that began in 1854 and ended in 1920. The first “renegade” was Konrád Kubala, who at first left the Catholic Church in 1882 but five years later, presumably because of a marriage, entered its ranks again. In the *Knize změň vyžňání* the Catholic Church withdrawals and subsequent agnosticism can be found only from 1900. Men outnumbered women among those who left the Catholic Church and did not join another confession (170:59), and the number of withdrawals rose rapidly after the foundation of the newly independent state—up to 1918 inclusive there were 117 believers who left the Catholic Church and did not join another denomination, and in the last two years (1918–20) it was just 112 believers. Before the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic the withdrawals culminated in 1909 and 1913–14. Allegedly, the main reason were “agitation against Rome” (around 1900), “spiritualism” (1905, 1907) and only then such influences as “socialist thought, social movements, democratic socialism and frenzied socialism.” In 1911 Dr. Mořic Kohn, advocate, left the Roman Catholic Church. His example may suggest the fragility of the attachment of a Jewish proselyte to the new religion. Eight years later, a town mayor Jan Prokeř (mayor in 1925–35) did the same thing. The reasons for withdrawals might have been just personal ones, for example a bad experience with pastoral duties or with an individual priest. So in 1908, a twenty-year-old student left the Catholic Church and the priest recorded the reason simply as the “student’s stupidity and vindictiveness.”

Kniba o změňách vyžňání also provides data about sporadic conversions between the Catholic Church and other confessions than the Augsburg confession. In 1882, the twenty-four-year old native from Moravian-Ostrava who dwelt in Galician Czernowice converted because of a marriage to Catholicism of the Eastern Rite—the conversion had only an administrative character, not a dogmatic one. The conversion of a single girl in 1918, who converted to Judaism, is also rare. The Jewish wedding was a presumable reason for a nineteen-year-old girl’s conversion, though together with the other seven girls—during the period under investigation—she did not specify the confession she was adopting. The conversions of three men Catholicism (1905–06, 1919) for which the priests recorded “Romhetze” and “the renegade’s agitation work” as the reasons for the conversions were also rarities. World War I, which turned Moravian Ostrava into a military town, might have attracted four men of Orthodox confession from the Eastern parts of the

monarchy to have found their partners there and then to have accepted their Catholic confession.

The specific group is formed by about twenty people who as agnostics entered the Catholic Church in 1887–1919. There are people among them who stated the traditional reason (marriage) for entering the Catholic Church, but there was also a primary school teacher (25 years old) and a municipal clerk (27 years old) for whom the reason for entering the Catholic Church could have been evoked by the pressure from their employer. In 1903, a non-practicing Jew named Gisela Munková, the daughter of Viennese innkeeper Josef Krippel, converted to Catholicism, and after a civil wedding in 1894 so did the wife of Moravian-Ostravian notary Dr. Richard Munk. In 1854–1920, 862 people entered or left the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church in Moravian Ostrava. Before 1918, this happened primarily mainly due to a marriage with a member of the Lutheran Confession. In 1899, for the first time more people left the Roman Catholic Church than entered it. While transfers between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches had the character of social advancement, Jewish conversions were, up to the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, a manifestation of the decision assimilate completely with the majority society.

Jewish proselytism

The last two cases have brought me to the specific group of people of Jewish confession whose decision to convert to Catholicism, even after the emancipation of the Jew of the Monarchy (1867), was one further step towards their full assimilation with the majority Christian (Catholic) society. The oldest recordings⁴² about two female Jews' decisions to convert to Catholicism in the presence of Roman Catholic Church priests from Moravian Ostrava are from 1870 and 1873. The other sporadic recordings appear in the 1880s, however from 1890 several people converted annually, with the exceptions of the years 1893, 1900, 1905, 1908–10 and 1919. Almost one-third of the entries about Jews who converted to Catholicism come from the last decade of my research (1911–20). The largest number of people converted in 1906, 1915 and 1920. The vast majority of Jewish proselytes in the period in question were females (43 women compared to only 15 men) who converted to Catholicism almost exclusively for

42 Blažena Przybylová, “Projednávání přestupu židovky Rachel Tausk na katolickou víru magistrátem Moravské Ostravy v roce 1831,” *Ostrava: příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* 26 (2012): 328–35.

the sake of marriage (seventeen of them explicitly stated that they were single, only three were married). The average age (24.8 years) corresponds with this. Professionally, most of them were cooks, charwomen, rentiers, or around the years of World War I also clerks.

While marriage remained the main reason for conversions among female converts in the period, the men's situation was not so clear. In addition to two people for whom profession is not specified, there were eight manual laborers, a locksmith, a fitter or a stable-boy and two sales agents among the male converts, as well as three members of liberal professions—a doctor at the municipal hospital, a physical education teacher at a secondary school and a manager of the municipal power station. For these men, conversion could have been a precondition for social advancement. The fact is that the priests in principle did not mention the reason for conversions men, unlike in the case of female converts. The possible success of conversions and the fact that the majority society accepted proselytes is proven by the fact that in the *Knize o změnách vyznání* I have found three (maybe four) cases in which both sisters converted: thus marriage was a common fate for sisters Marie Josefa and Antonie Tereza Perlová (1870, 1882), Vanda and Terezie Geradová (1911, 1913), and three sisters Marta, Kamila and Flora Wulkanová (1917, 1918, 1918) and maybe also sisters Olga and Hermína Bergová (1911, 1913).

After the foundation of the independent Czechoslovak state and after the liberalization of Czechoslovak society, conversion to Catholicism lost its power for Jews, and they basically disappeared from Ostravian religious life in the second half of 1920s and first half of the 1930s.⁴³ They appeared again only in the second half of 1930s, as Nazi ideology was gaining ground to the west and the threat of German occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic was ever more imminent.

Mixed marriages

Marriage was the most frequent reason for religious conversion in 1854–1920, but after 1900 national and political reasons came to play increasingly important roles. In spite of the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth-century inter-confessional marriages attracted attention and were causes of many family conflicts, marriages that were confessional mixed do not belong

43 Jemelka, “Židovský proselytismus,” 187–213.

to the frequent topics of the Czech historiography or historic demography.⁴⁴ While proselytism and changes of religion were widely accepted after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in the times of political and social liberalization, at the beginning of the twentieth century changes in religion and inter-confessional marriages were a phenomenon peculiar almost exclusively to the middle or upper classes. For example, one can consult a statistical survey of 376 Christian household owners with 2,174 citizens (7.2 percent of all present inhabitants) of the town center of Moravian Ostrava who lived in 1900 on the territory of two main Moravian-Ostravian squares—the Main Square (Marktplatz) and Rynek (Franz-Joseph-Platz)—and ten adjacent streets in the town center.⁴⁵ While the lesser central Rynek was mainly inhabited by Jewish merchants, craftsmen and members of liberal professions, the Main Square and newly built Johanny Avenue was home to the majority of Moravian-Ostravian atheists, who still were quite rare.⁴⁶ Four out of sixteen atheists of Moravian Ostrava lived in this part of the town, forming 0.05 percent of the population of Moravian Ostrava in 1900. Out of 248 married couples at the end of 1900, there were thirteen inter-confessional couples (5 percent), eleven of which were Protestant-Catholic, one of which was Jewish-Protestant, and one of which was Jewish-Catholic. The majority was formed by a Catholic man and a Lutheran woman from near Těšinsko or from Lutheran regions of Moravia, Galicia and Rhineland. Usually they had gotten married only after having come to Moravian Ostrava. Thus inter-confessional marriages had strong ties with a new dwelling in a dynamically changing industrial center that was affected by the largest immigration wave in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The town was flooded by single young men, and with the growing wave in marriages the rate of inter-confessional marriages also rose, and that happened despite the existing social and administrative barriers. Without meticulous study of the records of the church registry office, it is not possible to prove precisely if the marriages were of a socially exogenous character or not, but they seem to be registered

44 About the retrospective and contemporary context of the problem, see for example: Walter Schöpsdau, *Konfessionsverschiedene Ehe: Ein Handbuch. Kommentar und Dokumente zu Seelsorge, Theologie und Recht der Kirchen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Beate Bayer, *Konfessionsverbindende Ehe: Impulse für Paare und Seelsorger* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1991); Uwe Begerhause, *Die konfessionsverbindende Ehe als Lehr- und Lernprozess* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 2001).

45 Martin Jemelka, *Křesťanské domácnosti centra Moravské Ostravy roku 1900: ke srovnání jejich biologických, kulturních a socioprofesionálních charakteristik se zvláštním zřetelem k ženské populaci* (Ostrava: Katedra historie Filozofické fakulty Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě, rukopis diplomové práce, 2002), 1, 10.

46 *Ibid.*, 17.

within the frame of identical social groups. Even today, Christian Churches pay attention to the religious education of the children of an inter-confessional married couple, and this issue is still a key point of Christian ecumenicalism. In Moravian Ostrava at the end of the nineteenth century it was the fathers who made decisions about the child's religion, as evidenced by the fact that there was only one case in which the children were recorded as belonging to either the father's or the mother's confession, depending on the gender of the child in question.⁴⁷

The example of the family of Dr. Gustav Fiedler, one of the wealthiest inter-confessional families in the community, is worth citing. He was a Protestant, the mayor of Moravian Ostrava (1901–18), and a local politician. In 1919, he served as a member of a delegation demanding, on the basis of the example of Gdansk, that Ostrava be withdrawn from the Czechoslovak state and be a multinational region subordinated to the League of Nations. Fiedler as a Protestant—with his wife Ida as a Catholic (born Goldová, she was a native Jew) and their only son as a Protestant—dwelt in the luxurious newly constructed residential house at no. 1083 of Johanny Avenue. He was a leader in the Lutheran community, and he represented Ostravian German nationalists. Also in his case the connection between Lutheranism and aggressive German nationalism was significant.⁴⁸

In the case of a couple both members of which had a working class background, a difference in confessional belonging was more a cultural barrier than a social one. The progressive prevalence of inter-confessional marriages among members of the lower classes can be demonstrated with reference to the following examples from the working class environment. In 1890, in the largest Moravian-Ostravian workers' settlement of the Šalomoun mine, there were 1,632 inhabitants and 218 married couples, out of which only four were inter-confessional (all four were Protestant-Catholic). Children were recorded in accordance with their fathers' or their mothers' confessions, depending on gender. In 1910, when 2,094 inhabitants and 330 married couples lived in Šalomouna, only one marriage was mixed (Protestant-Catholic). Twenty years later, this community, the largest Moravian-Ostravian workers' settlement, was inhabited by 2,078 people and 336 married couples, out of which twenty were mixed (6 percent). Half of the mixed marriages were formed by a couple consisting of an atheist man and a Catholic woman when a child's future confession was a

47 Ibid., 64–67.

48 Ibid., 70–71.

decision shared equally by parents. Three couples were between members of the Czech Brethern Church and atheists. Two couples were relationships between male atheists and female members of the Czechoslovak Church, and another five couples were marriages between members of the Roman or Greek Catholic Church on the one hand and members of Protestant, Czech Brethern or Czechoslovak Churches on the other. While the growing number of inter-confessional marriages proves the modernization and liberalization of the working class and the liberalization of matrimonial law, the available data does not prove that the children's membership to either their mothers' or their fathers' confessions was strictly ruled or dominated by the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁹

Conclusion

In 1890–1950, the villages in the center of today's Ostrava underwent great economic, social, demographic and cultural changes. The town completely changed its urban profile, and habits and attitudes in the at times confrontational environment of an industrial town and region also changed.⁵⁰ The tendency to base identity on denominational belonging was gradually waning as other factors gained prominence in the social life of a nationally, linguistically, and religiously diverse industrial town undergoing relatively rapid change. Moreover, given the absence of traditional rural society and the pressures of atheist attitudes and increasingly prevalent anti-Catholicism (which was also linked to Czech nationalism), confessional belonging came to be seen increasingly as a private matter, making conversion less socially problematic and at the same time also less of a precondition of acceptance or social advancement (for instance for Jews). Catholicism stopped being the dominant confession, and in 1900 the town was affected by waves of conversions to Lutheran Protestantism under the influence of German national propaganda (*Kulturkampf*). Already before the war, people had begun leaving the Church under the influence of agnosticism,

49 AMO OMA, Fond Okresní úřad Moravská Ostrava, Sčítání obyvatelstva 31. 12. 1910, Moravská Ostrava (karton č. 88, 91, 92, 95, 97, 103–05); Národní archiv Praha, Fond Státní úřad statistický I – sčítání obyvatelstva v roce 1930, Moravská Ostrava (karton č. 9016 – sčítací obvody č. 62, 63; karton č. 9018 – sčítací obvod 66); Státní okresní archiv Frýdek-Místek, Fond Okresní úřad Místek, Sčítání obyvatel 31. 12. 1890, Moravská Ostrava (inv. č. 1039, mikrofilmy č. 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13); Jemelka, *Na Šalomouně*, 88–89.

50 Martin Jemelka, “The Ostrava Industrial Agglomeration in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Where the Urban Countryside met the Rural Town,” in *Mastery and Lost Illusions: Space and Time in the Modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Stanislav Holubec, and Joachim von Puttkamer (Europas Osten im 20. Jahrhundert 5) (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 71–98.

and the declared reasons for change of confession shifted from purely pragmatic (marriage, work) to ideological (socialism, German nationalism, free thinking, atheism). World War I, the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, and foundation of the Czech Brethern Church and the Czechoslovak Church are usually considered breaking points in the religious life of Czech citizens. In Ostrava, however, 1899 can be regarded as a breaking point. More people left the Roman Catholic Church in Moravian Ostrava in 1899 than entered it.

The geopolitical position of Ostrava on the border of the historical lands of Moravia and Silesia, on the borders of state formations (in 1742–1920 and 1938–45 Ostrava was a border town), and on the borders of linguistic and ethnological regions (Lutheran Těšínsko, the Catholic northeast of Moravia, the closeness of Protestant centers in German Silesia, the economic pull of Ostrava for Jewish immigrants from Galicia, Moravia and Hungary) predestined the town to play the role of a social, national and cultural melting pot and a pioneer in the modernization of religious life, giving its religious heterogeneity. The anonymous environment of industrial Ostrava severed immigrants from their traditional and family relationships and confronted their religious and ideological orientation with the socially, culturally and nationally precarious conditions of modern industrial society. The most visible signs of these processes can be seen in marriages that were mixed by confession (though they were socially more endogenous than exogenous in the period) and the growing influence of atheism. Before World War I, conversion to Catholicism played a particularly important role for Jewish immigrants because it meant a step towards full assimilation. However, this strategy lost its meaning after the foundation of the new state. Before the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, inter-confessional marriages in Moravian Ostrava were peculiar to the middle and upper classes. In the working class milieu, they were more frequent only after the liberalization of religious life after 1918. In the pre-war middle class environment, fathers decided about the confessional belonging of children. In the working class environment, children were usually equally recorded according to the denominational affiliation of their parents, on the basis of gender.

Precairous social and national conditions, sharply socially stratified local society, and the explosive postwar development of Ostrava, which became an important administrative and cultural center of the region and which played down the importance of the traditional centers of Opava and Těšín, all made Ostrava a center of religious and spiritual life, at least in the sphere of atheism, spiritualism and the mass operation of the Czechoslovak Church. All three spheres

were connected by resistance to traditional Catholicism and the support of the infant modern Czechoslovak state, with its Hussite and Hus ideology.⁵¹ Whilst during the First Republic, atheists, spiritualists and the Czechoslovak Church believers competed against one another, during World War II they had to face together the decline or even illegality of their systems of faith, as they lost their Czechoslovak identity and were under the tightening control of Protectorate and Nazi authorities. After World War II, under state socialism they had to go the ways of ideological canonization (agnosticism), instrumentalization in the service of communist propaganda (the Czechoslovak Church), or a proscription, which led to elimination from collective memory (spiritualism).

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51 Andrea Hudáková, “Spiritistický pohřeb: sonda do praxe slezských spiritistů,” *Dingir* 3 (2011): 92–93.

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BOOK REVIEWS

A reformáció nyelve. Tanulmányok a magyarországi reformáció első negyedszázadának vizsgálata alapján. (Humanizmus és reformáció 34) [“Language of the Reformation. Essays Based on the Study of the First Twenty-five Years of the Hungarian Reformation (Humanism and Reformation 34)”]. By Zoltán Csepregi. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2013. 558 pp.

In the mid-1990s, in the introduction to his monograph entitled *Mezőváros és Reformáció* (“Market Town and Reformation”) historian Ferenc Szakály complains of the lack of sources that is generally considered characteristic of the early Reformation: “It is as if there were a curse on the first decades of the Reformation.”¹ Anyone who takes Zoltán Csepregi’s book in hand will soon realize that the curse has been lifted. A professor at the Institute for Church History of the Lutheran University, Budapest, Csepregi has provided the community of historians and scholars of theology with a sensitive, detailed, and complex analysis of the early phases of the urban Reformation in Hungary. In doing so, he has filled a gap in the historiography on the Reformation that had begun to seem enduring. He endeavored first and foremost to write a history of the early Reformation on the basis of a reassessment of the theological traditions of church-history. Perhaps the most innovative feature of his inquiry is his emphasis not on events, but rather on uses of language. This fundamentally new approach is possible in part because of a significant expansion of the sources on which he draws, by which I am referring not only to the discovery of new sources in Slovakia and Germany, but also—a more basic solution to the frequently mentioned lack of sources—to rereadings, recontextualizations, and reinterpretations of sources that were discovered and published long ago, sources that have been used and in some cases perhaps even forgotten by several generations. However, only a scholar armed with wide-ranging knowledge and strong theological armor could successfully discern in the sources the contexts and meanings that lie beneath the layers of meaning that have accumulated over time. Fortunately, Csepregi comes well-prepared.

1 Ferenc Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez* [Market-town and Reformation. Studies on Early Hungarian Embourgeoisement], *Humanizmus és Reformáció* 23 (Budapest: Balassi, 1995), 16.

The story, which is divided into fourteen chapters, takes place in the territories of the swath of cities from Sopron in the west to Brassó (today Braşov in Romania) in the east. The fourth chapter, which examines the royal court and primarily the faith of Mary, Queen of Hungary, is also tied to this stretch of urban communities by the affiliations and links of the court preachers. Csepregi offers an overview of the manifestations of the Reformation in language from the first statements in support of Reformation ideas up to the national assembly of 1548. Only the fifth chapter, which is devoted to George the Pious, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1484–1543), breaks the narrative of the urban Reformation. It presents the Reformation on the Gyula estates of the margrave as a “rural event.” The reason for the inclusion of this chapter probably lies in the discoveries Csepregi made in the Nuremberg State Archive, though this also enabled him to compare the role the key figures of the German and Hungarian Reformation played as church patrons in Hungary and Silesia.

While the religious and social history of the Reformation have long been separate, rival fields of inquiry, the cultural history of the Reformation, which began to gain ground in the 1980s, has persuasively demonstrated the close interaction of ideas and social practices.² Csepregi merges these two approaches, but not by adopting historical anthropology, an approach that has become common in Anglo-Saxon historiography. He uses several different methods in his nuanced inquiry, including thorough philological analysis, the history of concepts, detailed reconstructions of historical events, biography, the reconstruction of social networks, historical theology, and institutional history. He is thoroughly familiar with the German historiography of the Reformation, and he begins his book, which starts with a concise overview of the historiography, with a reference to Gerhard Müller, the Lutheran historian of theology. The author’s close links to German historiography cannot justify though that the overview of the East-European historiography of the Reformation published in the centennial issue of the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* fails to mention Csepregi’s work, (most of which has been published in German as well) in spite of the fact that his contributions to the field could easily be compared with those of Alex Ryrie (for instance).³

2 I am thinking first and foremost of the work of Robert Scribner, Natalie Zemon Davis and David Warren Sabean.

3 Maria Craciun, “Centre or Periphery? The Reformation in Romanian and Hungarian Historiography, 1945–2008,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 100 (2009): 175–92.

The unity of the work, its subtitle (which refers explicitly to essays, not a monograph) and the many shorter chapters and subtopics notwithstanding, is palpable in two logically executed endeavors. First and foremost, the chapters are bound together into a coherent whole by the postmodern approach, which makes language itself the primary object of study (as indeed is indicated by the title of the book). This constitutes an acknowledgment of the fact that, like theological views, the use of language mirrors shifts in religious identity.⁴ The adoption of this approach is itself perhaps Csepregi's most original accomplishment. Furthermore, in his inquiry it does not become a self-referential game, but rather retains its exterior referentiality: the analysis of the use of language of contemporary agents as a factor in identity formation serves as a tool with which the historian can orient himself or herself in the tangle of ideas, movements, and denominations. This means, to be specific, that he manages to identify the circle of people who identified with the ideas of the evangelical movement (a circle that until now had seemed impossible to circumscribe) by identifying the elements of their shared language, thereby providing a tool with which to systematize the jumble of late medieval reformers, Humanists, and evangelical preachers.

This approach itself is not new, but until now no one has thought to use it in the study of the early Reformation in Hungary. Csepregi uses philological methods, for instance minute intertextual analysis, to discern interconnections between the sources, for example in his discussion of a letter written by Bartholomeus Francfordinus Pannonius in 1522, which constitutes the first example of the use of a new kind of language in Hungary, though Csepregi convincingly argues that his style is more a representation of Humanist linguistic practice than it is of Reformation ideas. Csepregi also demonstrates how traditional criticism of the Church cherished by observant Franciscan circles intermingled with Luther's new ideas in the views revealed during the inquest against alleged heretics in the city of Sopron in 1524. In his reading, the rebellious miners of the mining town revolt in 1525 used Saint Paul's apostolic greeting (*gratiam et pacem*) as a means of identification within the evangelical movement, similarly to their co-religionists in Germany. Such careful reading of texts enables Csepregi to make the claim, with justified confidence and for the first time in Hungarian historiography,

4 According to Csepregi, the use of the term "language event" (*Sprachereignis*), originally a notion introduced by Ernst Fuchs, began to spread in historical theology in the wake of Gerhard Ebeling's (1912–2001) lectures on Luther. Gerhard Ebeling, *Luthers Seelsorge: Theologie in der Vielfalt der Lebenssituationen an seinen Briefen dargestellt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997).

that the Reformation exerted a significant influence on the pre-Mohács (1526) German speaking communities in Hungary (Chapter II, “Hit által győztek meg országokat”: a szavak hatalma [“By Faith They Moved Nations”: The Power of Words]).

Alongside Csepregi’s focus on the linguistic events that accompanied the spread of the ideas of the Reformation, the methodological program of the urban Reformation also gives unity to his inquiry. The reader might well be prompted to ask why Hungarian historiography on the Reformation (which where other topics are concerned is often spry and agile⁵) is some 40 years behind when it comes to the study of the urban Reformation.⁶ The explanation for this may lie in the fact that Hungary was a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country, in which, broadly speaking, cities had German speaking populations, while market towns were inhabited by Hungarians. As a result, in the 1950s, the social history of the Reformation focused on market towns, which were enfranchised settlements that earned livelihoods through long-distance trade and assumed the functions of cities in regions without “real” cities. According to the narrative of the “market town Reformation,” the Reformation among the Hungarian population was the achievement of the “peasant burghers” of market towns, who brought—along with their cattle—new ideas and books into the country.⁷

One of the fundamental questions of the international (and therefore Hungarian) social history of the Reformation concerns who the agents of religious change actually were. Was it the clergy or the laity that made decisions regarding the proper teachings and the path to follow? One of the indisputable virtues of the paradigm of the market town Reformation (which Csepregi justifiably throws into question) is that it put emphasis not on celebrated preachers or their aristocratic patrons, but rather on the common man. Csepregi approaches the question of the complex relationship between pastor, community, and landlord from several perspectives. First, he writes several fascinating case studies on the reception of new teachings in the urban setting, the most interesting of which is perhaps the one on the city of Lőcse (today Levoča in Slovakia), in which

5 As Csepregi notes in his introduction, the international program of the “rural reformation” was formulated in the 1990s. See for example C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society. The Parishes of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, 1528–1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Hungarian historian Katalin Péter was prominent in the promotion of this thesis in Hungary. See Katalin Péter, *A reformáció: kényszer vagy választás* (Budapest: Európa, 2004), 74–89.

6 See Bernd Moeller, *Reichsstadt und Reformation* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, G. Mohn, 1962).

7 Szakály’s 1995 book is testimony to the resilience of the thesis. See note 1.

Csepregi concludes that in their decisions pertaining to matters of religion, city leaders were more concerned with maintaining peace than they were with theological tendencies (chapter X/5, pp.333–40). Moreover, the main actors of Csepregi's books are the urban reformers who worked in the shadow of the celebrated preachers. By providing his readers with biographies of these figures, Csepregi restores actors to the narrative of the cultural history of Hungary in the first half of the sixteenth century of whom historians have had at best distorted impressions. (For instance, with regards to the first generation of reformers, in addition to the frequently mentioned Franciscan friars, Csepregi calls attention to the prototypical figure of the Humanist parish priest or Humanist canon who turned towards the new teachings [chapter VII/4]). Another one of the “by-products” of the biographical sketches of the reformers is Csepregi's thoroughly documented insight that northern Hungary should be treated together with Moravia and Silesia as one region. The main actors moved within the borders of these territories in their searches for employment [chapter VII/2]). In the course of his detailed inquiry into these two topics, Csepregi gains the experiences which help him to reflect on the issue of historical agency. He calls attention to the importance of the dialogue between preacher and community. A preacher had to find his place within the complex web of local political relationships if he wanted to become the accepted leader of a community (p.362). One of the most recent and most frequently cited narratives of the English Reformation also places the political dimension of the process of the religious conversion of a community into the foreground, drawing attention, in other words, to the interplay of power relations and religious issues.⁸

By combining the linguistic approach with the study of the urban Reformation, Csepregi arrives at one of the most interesting, if hypothetical conclusions in the book. He observes that different communities often failed to learn one another's languages, and there was very little translation between the various vernaculars. He interprets this (along with other phenomena) as a sign that in the sixteenth century mother tongue was the determining factor in the creation of identity, not confessional difference, which was only subsequently perceived as decisive. In other words, to the ethnically diverse urban population, whether a sermon was delivered in its mother tongue mattered more than whether the teachings were Catholic or evangelical in spirit. According to Csepregi, the

8 Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

polyglot nature of the communities offers an answer to an old question in the historiography, namely why did the decisive majority of Hungarians adopt Calvinism in the sixteenth century, in contrast to other nationalities in Hungary or in the neighboring states. As the borders of language shaped religious choices and differences, in their relative linguistic isolation the Hungarians followed their own path. In other words, in the sixteenth century there was a “Hungarian,” “German,” and “Slovak” religion, while Lutheran or Reformed identities became more significant only in the eighteenth century. According to Csepregi, the distinctive development of the Hungarian-language Reformation is explained in part by the fact that Hungarian reformers learned German poorly in Wittenberg (he notes somewhat sarcastically that because of their strong knowledge of Latin, they preferred to attend Melancton’s lectures in Latin over Luther’s exegeses, which were held in a mix of languages). This explains their “original theological thinking,” in other words the distinctly different substance of Calvinism in Hungary. Thus one of the important conclusions of the book is that the distinctive aspects of the Reformation in Hungary were due in part to the reformers’ insufficient knowledge of German.

I have mentioned only a few of the basic theses of the work. It also contains a discussion of the ideas of Mátyás Dévai, the first influential Hungarian reformer, who—a notion striking for its time—included women in Luther’s idea of the priesthood of all believers. Csepregi analyzes Dévai’s ideas not according to the mechanical accusation of Anabaptism, but rather in the context of his own “personal experience and creative vision.” Given the dire state of affairs in the country, which had been devastated by civil war, the reformer, who never married, may well have perceived it as the order of the day that women assumed active roles as preachers and confessors (VIII/5, pp.228–38). Csepregi also provides a similarly enlightening analysis of the concept of the Reformation in *Reformatio ecclesie Coronensis* (1543), a work by Johannes Honterus (a reformer of the Transylvanian-Saxon city of Brassó, known as Kronstadt to the Saxons). Csepregi situates Honterus’ notions at the intersection point of several traditions, including the philologically and pedagogically motivated Erasmus movement, the southern German urban Reformation, and the gradually emerging Catholic revival. In other words, at the time (the early 1540s) the term Reformation included reforms that were acceptable to every trend in thinking, thereby containing some promise of the preservation of unity. It thus fell quite far from the meanings it has acquired today, which emerged in the wake of the first centennial celebrations in 1617 (IX/7, pp.270–85).

I will stop here, lest I deprive the reader of the pleasure of making several fascinating discoveries on his or her own. This pleasure will come at the price of some pains, since Csepregi, who is thoroughly familiar with the complex texts and historical contexts, is inclined to abandon his reader at times in the thick of the data and arguments. His book constitutes a fundamental study of the early Reformation in Hungary. Like any fundamental study, it is dense. An attentive reader, however, stands to glean from it innumerable new insights and perspectives.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Gabriella Erdélyi

Politikai korrupció a Monarchia Magyarországon, 1867–1918 [Political Corruption in Hungary of the Compromise Era, 1867–1918]. By András Cieger. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2011. 208 pp.

András Cieger's monograph makes a term that is rich with meaning and shifting in its content (both historically and from culture to culture) the subject of analysis within a chronologically and geographically precisely circumscribed framework. The framework is Hungary within the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, which from the perspective of constitutional law was a well-ordered arrangement and harmonized essentially with the norms of the time, with an effective system of parliamentary representation. The chronological framework is the second half of the nineteenth century and the first eighteen years of the twentieth.

In this period, Hungary became an organic part of Western civilization. Thanks to its successful economic and social modernization, it caught up in every essential sphere with Western Europe. While in the period under discussion, Hungary's statutory law essentially harmonized with the principles of law in Western Europe, the mentality that found manifestation in the unwritten behavioral and ethical norms still bore the traces of a transitional phase. Modernization (parliamentarism, an open public sphere) was intricately entangled in tradition (feudal principles of authority and prestige, the persistence of old social structures, the role of nepotism).

In the introduction Cieger makes plainly evident that he has thoroughly studied the secondary literature on the phenomenon of corruption, though the legal, political, and historical scholarship offers little more than vague definitions that rest on generalizations, so instead he relies on the contemporary uses of the term in order to define the actual subject of his inquiry. Thus he includes in his examination all of the social practices that were characterized by contemporaries as examples of corruption, in other words as abuses of power and the moral depravity of power.

However, even using this as the defining criterion, it is still not possible to circumscribe the subject of Cieger's inquiry clearly. Significant differences may still remain, for instance, between perceptions of practices as corrupt in public opinion and acts that were either criminalized or sanctioned by the law. And indeed it is worth noting that the term corruption was not even used in the law of the Dualist Era (it does not occur a single time in the texts of the laws), even if it was frequently used in public life. The book presents several cases in which

an act was not prohibited by the law, but the resulting scandal was sufficient to prompt the public to condemn the person involved, which in the end led to his political downfall. There were also cases in which this was reversed. An act that was technically illegal was seen by a significant portion of the public as justified or at least tolerated.

From the perspective of the scholarship on corruption, given its complex and transformational nature, the era is of particular interest. At the beginning of the period under discussion, the transition from a political and social structure that was based on feudal privileges to a system based on civil equality and parliamentary representation was taking place at the same time as the transition from a traditional economic order, not based on the principles of the market, to a capitalist market economy and a time of ever greater public scrutiny. These changes brought about the transformation of the political culture and the emergence of new techniques in the exercise of power. In the process of this transformation, from the perspective of corruption (and in general the ethical expectations that were placed on the political order), the professionalization of the public sphere was of particular significance. The figure of the ideal politician before the Hungarian Revolution of 1848—the dedicated politician who was independent and lived for political causes, serving the public good and able to make the necessary personal financial sacrifices in order to play a role in the public sphere—was replaced with the figure of the professional politician of the Compromise Era, who saw politics as a long-term occupation and source of income and served party interests. Concerns arose from the outset that, as a consequence of the transformation of politics into a profession, the management of public affairs would slip into the hands of a narrow group that represented its own private interests instead of public interest.

The increasing use of the term corruption can be understood as a symptom of nostalgia for the so-called “gentleman” politician and skepticism regarding the professionalization of politics. According to public opinion, politics itself had been debased, and this was seen as a consequence of the moral decline of the political class. This public sentiment, however, was inconsistent with the fact that, with the widening of public scrutiny (first and foremost through the proliferation of organs of the media), it was in fact becoming possible to keep the political class under close watch.

Cieger succinctly and convincingly refutes two misguided (and mutually reinforcing) convictions prevalent in Hungarian historiography. According to the first, of the states that had a Western style democracy, Hungary was particularly

“infected” with corruption. Cieger refers to examples of other Western states and persuasively demonstrates that corruption was not peculiar to Hungary. The political institutional system and the legal order were slow to adapt to the social and economic changes in other lands as well, and the “grey zone” that emerged because of this lag was fertile soil for corruption. At the same time, as the comparison also reveals, the Western European parliamentary systems that were regarded as the models to be followed (first and foremost England) were much more consistent and consequential in their attempts to close at least the widest gates to corruption with legal and institutional reforms (for instance, the reform of the electoral system).

According to the other prevalent misconception, corruption was simply systematically encoded in the political order of the Dualist Era, or at least in the elements related to voting. The widespread acceptance of this notion is “thanks” in part to the contemporary literature, two prominent figures of which—Mór Jókai and Kálmán Mikszáth, both of whom are still regarded as major Hungarian authors of the nineteenth century—knew the business of politics at the time from the inside and often wrote about it in their works. In his explanation of Hungary’s deviations from the West, István Bibó,¹ the greatest political thinker of the twentieth century (or at least the one who had the greatest influence), ascribed key importance to this phenomenon. According to Bibó, the system that was brought into being with the Austro–Hungarian Compromise of 1867 was founded on lies and self-delusions that had been swept under the rug. Its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens was weak, thus in a representative system this veneer of legitimacy could only be maintained through corruption, which led eventually to the complete ruin of the political culture, understood in the broadest possible sense.

Cieger analyses the results of elections and comes to the conclusion that it was not necessary to corrupt voters in order to maintain the legal and state

1 István Bibó, “Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem” [Deformed Hungarian Character, Dead-end Hungarian History], in idem, *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Essays], ed. Tibor Huszár, vol. 2, 569–619 (Budapest: Magvető, 1986). István Bibó (1911–1979) was a political thinker and indeed a politician. In his essays, most of which were written in the brief period of democratic rule in Hungary between 1945 and 1949, he addressed questions fundamental to the past, present and future of Hungarian statehood, the relationships between Hungary and the other peoples of Central Europe, and the potentials of the region for growth and development. He was a minister of state in the revolutionary government in 1956, and after the suppression of the revolution he was given a long sentence for his role in the events. His moral integrity and acumen as a scholar made Bibó the exemplary figure of the intellectual opposition in the late Kádár era and a symbol of democratic political culture.

system that had come into being with the Compromise (except perhaps in the first decade of the existence of the Dual Monarchy). The official data concerning the enforcement of electoral law does not support the hypothesis according to which corruption was widespread or pervasive.

According to Cieger, the so-called '67-ers, who created the Compromise and, with the exception of a short period of five years, governed until the collapse of the Monarchy, were less and less motivated, in their attempts to corrupt voters (which remained difficult to prove), by the fear of the rise to power of the so-called '48-ers opposition. The costs were relatively small, given the small number of people who could vote. Rather, they justified abuses of power that marred political life as necessary efforts in order to prevent the non-Hungarian nationalities, which together represented more than 50 percent of the population, from gaining ground in the political sphere. As of the turn of the century, this justification was buttressed with the fear of an organized working class that was demanding political representation. References to the maintenance of a unified Hungarian state at any cost, the "holy cause," eroded ethical norms in politics. However, the fact that the Hungarian political elite managed to maintain its monopoly on power throughout the period was not due so much to corruption as it was to the fact that they blocked attempts to extend suffrage.²

Cieger indicates two significant failings of the legal system at the time that allowed for and even encouraged the spread of corruption. The law barely dealt with the question of regulating party finances, in other words with the need to make party financing transparent. In an era of professional, party-based politics, regulations that were based on the anachronistic ideal of the "gentleman" politician remained in force. The discord between legal norms and actual political practice was therefore addressed in large part with illegal tools.

Cieger identified the other major failing as the lack or rather belated nature of regulations regarding conflicts of interest that arose as a consequence of participation in public life and private economic ventures, as well as the failure to adhere to these regulations when they existed. While the role of the state in the redistribution of wealth in the Dualist Era was small in comparison with the welfare systems of the twentieth century, in comparison with the early (feudal)

2 Only adult males with a minimum level of property, income, and education (as set by law) could vote. People who enjoyed the right to vote represented 6 percent of the total population and 25 percent of the adult male population. This was not a shockingly low proportion in Europe at the time of the 1874 electoral law.

period it had grown abruptly. The state played a significant role in the process of modernization, which had begun late in comparison with the states of Western Europe. This role was palpable first and foremost in the development of infrastructure. The role of the state in the distribution of resources in the decades following the Compromise was most clearly visible in the construction of the railway network. Decisions regarding tenders that enjoyed state support, the granting of licenses, guarantees of profits, and investments of public funds were almost always subjects of scandal.

With the creation and expansion of the modern sectors of the economy and the ever more pronounced tendency of the state to play increasingly influential roles in the economy,³ the possibilities for corruption proliferated. The relationship between institutions of finance and institutions of politics was particularly intensive. The problematic intertwining of the market economy and the state found clearest manifestation in the presence of people in influential positions in both spheres. Politicians (and not only representatives of the governing party), public servants who worked at the highest levels of state administration, were members of the advisory boards and supervisory boards of large banks and industrial and transportation share companies that were doing business with the state.

Cieger presents a few case studies (the examples of Prime Ministers Count Gyula Andrásy and Menyhért Lónyay) illustrating the extent to which the two major, simultaneous transitions, namely the emergence of a parliamentary civil state founded on the rule of law and a profit and growth oriented capitalist market economy, made the collective and personal norms of public life uncertain. The effort to represent the ideal of the gentleman politician is hard to reconcile with the role of the citizen seeking to secure his fortune, even if one does not have personal moral failings.

Cieger devotes a considerable share of his book to analyses of scandals. He examines the “people targeted,” the circles of those who sparked scandals, the growing role of the free press, the question of timing, and the eventual consequences. One of his most important conclusions was that the denunciations were rarely motivated by the desire to redress some offence to the legal order.

3 The state either directly financed the major investments in infrastructure (the regulation of rivers, the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and harbors) or supported private ventures with guarantees of profits. The state also provided loans in cases of important goals. As of the 1880s, the state also provided support for the development of industry and some branches of agriculture in the form of long-term tax concessions, tax exemptions, and, after the turn of the century, subventions.

The outbreak of a scandal served some pressing political goal. If elections were imminent, then the aim was often to weaken the opposition, undermine its position in government, and deepen a government crisis. Cieger demonstrates this in part by examining the question of timing. People sometimes waited for years before revealing evidence of some alleged misdoing to the public. Furthermore, having achieved their political goal (for instance having succeeded in removing someone from his position), the people who had made some damning revelation to the public did not care whether the accused actually faced any legal consequences or not.

Cieger also devotes considerable attention to the relationships between the growth in the public forums in which questions of politics were discussed (which refers first and foremost to the growth in the number of dailies and the growth of their readerships), accusations of corruption, and the actual outbreak of scandals. The period proved transitional in this regard as well. In the course of a long process of learning, punctuated by many blunders, figures in public life learned the rules of the modern system of politics, which rested not on prestige but rather on winning public support. After the Compromise, the generation that thought of itself as heir to the liberal gentlemen politicians of the Reform Era were hesitant to accept that they could not simply heed their own convictions, but also, as figures in public life, had to pay attention to their image in the public eye.

Figures in public life who used the accusation of corruption as a weapon seem to have been more shrewd. They recognized that in the era of a new kind of public sphere assessments of character and virtue played important roles in deciding political fates. By shaking the public's confidence in the moral credibility of a politician, they could deprive his political views of credibility as well. In the era of mass media, prestige and good reputation were political capital that scandals prompted by allegations of corruption could easily destroy. Let there be no misunderstanding, Cieger is not saying that the cases under examination were mere political contrivances, but the reader does have the impression that similar procedures and proceedings were part of widespread political practice, and indeed the political elite was well aware of this. Thus the only aspects that really need explanation in a given case are why steps were taken against the given figure of public life *in particular* and why the accuser came forward at the particular time he did.

The relevance of this book extends far beyond political life in Hungary in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth,

even if the individual case studies all involve issues from Hungarian political history in the Dual Era. Historians dealing with the history of European law, the social history of politics, and the history of mentalities and the public sphere will find it revealing and useful, as will political and social scientists and even social psychologists dealing with the history of corruption. It would be highly worth having this focused yet widely relevant, highly readable monograph published in good English translation.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

Reviewed by Zoltán Fónagy

The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare – Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe / Free Europe Committee. Edited by Katalin Kádár Lynn. New York: Helena History Press, 2013. 604 pp.

There are eleven studies written by nine authors in this excellent book.¹ The studies of two of the authors, Katalin Kádár Lynn, the editor of the volume, and Anna Mazurkiewicz are of key importance in the volume. The book is an immense contribution to the history of émigrés and at the same time to the knowledge of the activities of the Free Europe Committee. Though the survey is far from complete—all authors have raised many issues for further research—the book is an important step in furthering our knowledge about the true nature of American policy toward Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

The volume begins with Katalin Kádár Lynn's keynote introduction: "At war while at peace: United States Cold War Policy and the National Committee for a Free Europe, Inc." (pp.7–70). It has long been known that Eastern European communist regimes deliberately drove their political opponents away from their respective countries. This book now basically tells us the story, or tells us *some* very powerful stories, of these exiles. It is not a general or overall history, but rather a very substantial overview of Eastern European émigrés' relationship with the Free Europe Committee (FEC) as an overt U.S. government tool. We are offered insights into different Eastern European exile communities (mainly Hungarians and Poles, but also Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians and Romanians), specifically their political links and personal

1 The authors and their paper in the book: Veronika Durin-Hornyik: "The Free Europe University in Exile, Inc. and the Collège de l'Europe libre (1951–1958)"; Tibor Frank: "Imre Kovács and Cold War Émigré Politics in the United States"; Katalin Kádár Lynn: "At War While at Peace: The History of the National Committee for a Free Europe"; Katalin Kádár Lynn: "History of the Hungarian National Council 1946–1971"; Maria Kokoncheva: "George Dimitrov and the Bulgarian National Council"; Jonathan H. L'Hommedieu: "The Baltic Freedom Committees: Policies and Politics of an Exile Community"; Anna Mazurkiewicz: "The Assembly of Captive European Nations and the Free Europe Committee in the face of Nikita Khrushchev's US Visits in 1959 & 1960"; Anna Mazurkiewicz: "The Schism within the Polish Delegation to the Assembly of Captive European Nations (1954–1972)"; Marius Petraru: "The Romanian Government In Exile in the United States: 1947–1975"; Francis Raska: "History of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia"; Toby Charles Rider: "The Cold War Activities of the Hungarian National Sports Federation".

connections to the FEC. It is a joy to read these sophisticated analyses, which are based on excellent original research.

It is clear from the very beginning that the most fundamental question here is what exactly was the Eastern European exile's influence on the foreign policy of the United States? No doubt, the U.S. government at the beginning saw the émigré groups as a promising tool with which to undermine Soviet power in Eastern Europe. Therefore "bountiful funding, office space, salaries, and support systems" (p.34) were given to them. To be one of the chosen exiles in those times meant a safe haven for some selected groups of people, along with a significant dose of adventure and opportunities for creativity for those who were keen on such things. So the beginning at the FEC and the respective national Committees was promising, but "it was not until after their [national groups'] leadership arrived in the U.S. and U.S. Cold War policy was newly minted that these émigré groups became influential factors in their respective communities in the U.S. and abroad" (p.33). At the same time, however, let us wipe off any idealism clouding the issue, for these groups were under a tight control of the American policy, e.g. with representatives of the CIA and the Department of Defense present at the meetings of the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE) board meetings (p.37).

The story of these émigré groups is almost totally unknown in their former homes, in Eastern Europe today. This book turns this tragedy to an advantage, and this is what makes this scientific attempt so respectable and so unique.

Francis D. Raška tells us the "History of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia" (pp.71–120). One of his most important messages is perhaps that there were not only several Czech-Slovak organizations throughout the United States, Canada, Australia etc., but there were also some (rather brave) attempts to bring all exile organizations under the umbrella of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia. These attempts failed, for it was not easy to unite their political goals, nor was it possible to harmonize the tempo of collaborative actions. There were understandably disagreements in perceptions regarding the end of the exile period, as F.D. Raška tellingly remarks, quoting Rudolf Kopecký: "The majority of our politicians think it is a sprint, whereas I declare that it is a marathon" (p.74). This all can be put down to the fact that the émigré community was a complex one, and their members' "reactions to the Council's establishment were mixed" (p.75). This is a phenomenon that we have known from the history of the National Desks at the Radio Free Europe.

Toby C. Rider's paper entitled "Cold War activities of the Hungarian National Sports Federation" (pp.512–46) is a unique tale of the Hungarian National Sports Federation (HNSF), with two remarkable people in the forefront, Count Anthony Szapáry and Dr. George Telegdy. As leaders of the HNSF, they took the risk of helping 38 athletes (34 from Hungary and 4 from Romania) defect to the U.S. during the "Operation Griffin". T.C. Rider also shares many interesting details with us, such as Szapáry's and Telegdy's 1952 stubborn attempt to convince the International Olympic Committee to let sportsmen without citizenship compete under the name of the Union of Free Eastern European Sportsmen, or the Freedom Tour of the defected Hungarian sportsmen (a propaganda action similar to the tour of the Radio Free Europe [RFE] Freedom Bell) and many others.

Each of the authors confirms that the history of Eastern European émigrés cannot be addressed without researching propaganda. The link between the exile Councils and the RFE is more than apparent in Ferdinand Peroutka's case, where it is clear that "his position at the RFE gave him extraordinary powers on the [Czechoslovak] Council" (p.79). Not to mention such fascinating hidden American propaganda tools, like *Time's* involvement in clandestine operations, through its head Henry Luce, and certainly through *Sports Illustrated*, created by Time Inc. in 1954.

Based on extensive original research, the essays in this book are rich with suggestions of possible new areas of research. I personally wish we had a bit more in the book on the Bat'a Company's contribution to the support provided for the exiles, or Betka Papánek's and Cecilia Sárocky's contribution to the post-Helsinki Madrid conference, or the Palach Press, which was "founded in 1974 by Jan Kavan to provide prompt and accurate information on developments" in Husák-era Czechoslovakia. These topics may all well be worthy of further research, as are Albania and Yugoslavia, the two countries *outside* of the five Eastern European so-called target countries at the RFE, whose links to the FEC could widen our knowledge on Eastern European Cold War history.

Anna Mazurkiewicz has two studies in the book. The first is on the schisms within the Polish delegation to the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN). The second is on the relationship between the ACEN and the Free Europe Committee in the context of U.S. Foreign Policy in the early phase of the Cold War (1950–1960). Her latter study is a *key study* of the book. It is important first of all because she has chosen Nikita Khrushchev's visits to the U.S. (in September 1959 and September 1960) as a subject of a deep analysis,

an interesting issue on its own. Mazurkiewicz describes in detail how the ACEN campaigned against Khrushchev during his visits, how it ran a series of poster campaigns, including a campaign asking people to wear black armbands in every city that Khrushchev visited. By the way, it is also an interesting point that during Khrushchev's visit to France (in March 1960) Eastern European exiles living in France were forcefully held on the island of Corsica to avoid troubles (p.421).

The ACEN was established in 1954, and it “functioned as a quasi-Eastern European parliament, or a lobby of exiled politicians” (p.397). What makes Mazurkiewicz's study extremely interesting is that she has selected “a period during which the exiles began to *openly disapprove* of American foreign policy”. (p.398) Here the author makes a point which is important to stress every time when speaking or writing on this issue *for Eastern Europeans*, i.e. that there was indeed “a widening gulf between the American policymakers and the exiles” regarding U.S. foreign policy in general, and policy toward the Soviet Union in particular (p.400). Eastern European exiles like Ferenc Nagy, Béla Varga, Imre Kovács, Stefan Korbonski, Joseph Czapski, Ján Papánek, Petr Zenkl, Mojmír Povolný, George M. Dimitrov, and many others indeed had an impact on American foreign policy, and no doubt the “ACEN has always to some extent functioned as lobby for Eastern European interest on the U.S. political scene” (p.425). But it has to be clearly stated, and Mazurkiewicz demonstrates this clearly and with great empathy, that gradually a divergence arose between the exiles and the core interests of the U.S. She reveals a great deal regarding this steady process, which needs to be considered carefully by historians when dealing with the *dynamics of the early cold war*. The U.S. government first reduced the political influence of the exiles, then it reduced their budget, and finally it ended their direct funding in 1972. This U-turn in American foreign policy was expressed in a key speech made by Dean Rusk on February 25, 1964 when he tried to explain, “why we treat communist countries differently”. In simple and maybe rude words, this means that despite all their genuine or even heroic efforts, active Eastern European political exiles were not the center of the American political solar system.

Some general conclusions can be drawn from the volume. The most importance of these, at least in my view, involves the dynamics of the early Cold War. While the non-professional historical discourse in many Eastern European countries is still built around the question ‘Why did no help come from the West?’ a new chronology of the Cold War is being written in the international historiography. After the Hungarian Revolution, a serious shift can be seen in

the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy towards an increasingly peaceful co-existence. If this is true, then *détente* started much earlier. This contradicts traditional Cold War chronology, and the notion has gained an important role in Csaba Békés' recent works.² And this is not just a theoretical question. It is a fact that had very practical consequences in the context of the topics covered in the book under discussion here, i.e. the *émigré* groups indeed fell victim to the international thaw. As Katalin Kádár Lynn puts it, "the real casualties were the *émigré* groups whose social, educational and cultural services all fell victim to the policy change" (p.59).

This book adds nuance to our understanding of the circumstances under which Eastern European exiles played a part in the U.S. Cold War propaganda. None of the authors in the book is so naive as to deny the fact that is expressed in a document written by Willis D. Crittenberger as FEC president. Crittenberger states straightforwardly that "national committees are propaganda agencies of FEC" (p.408). Historians who have dealt with Cold War diplomacy know that many Cold War propaganda tools that proved to be effective, such as Radio Free Europe, for instance, were often looked down on and even disliked by professional policy makers. Francis D. Raška rightly states that "professional diplomats showed little sympathy for Czechoslovak exiles and no real support, except for propaganda purposes" (p.114). Seen with a healthy dose of cynical realism, the duty of the exiles on American payrolls was purely to give hope, as Toby Rider states.

Realism leads to more accurate understanding. But the authors are shrewd enough to be cautious when addressing the question: was it worth it for the exiles to cooperate with the institutions of Western propaganda. Was it worth it in spite of the fact that the U.S. administration was, more often than not, indifferent to the actual fates of the exiles? Was it worth it when at home their activities were strenuously decried? Was it worth it when, at the end of the day, the U.S. did not hesitate to sacrifice Eastern European *émigrés* on the altar of good relations with the Soviet Union, when the moment came?

Most of the authors emphatically insist that it was, for both the National Councils and Radio Free Europe were the most effective anti-Communist activities of the exiles. Mazurkievich's offers a heartwarming acknowledgement

2 See e.g. Csaba Békés's "Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika az enyhülés időszakában 1953–1991" [Hungary, the Soviet Block and the International Politics in the Period of Remission, 1953–1991], a thesis lecture he held at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on September 16, 2014. The manuscript is accessible at (accessed November 25, 2014) http://real-d.mtak.hu/653/7/dc_499_12_doktori_mu.pdf.

to the devotion and sacrifice of all of the people involved in this historical adventure: “For them [exiles], it was a matter of being able to act on behalf of their captive nations, and it was this goal that forged their dedication and commitment for the life of the organization” (p.428). This dedication and commitment has now gained them a place in history, a place to which this engaging compilation of essays attests.

Barnabás Vajda

Kisebbség és többség között. A magyar és a zsidó/izraeli etnikai és kulturális tapasztalatok az elmúlt századokban [Between Minority and Majority. Hungarian and Jewish/Israeli Ethnical and Cultural Experiences in the Last Centuries]. Edited by Pál Hatos and Attila Novák. Budapest: L'Harmattan–Balassi Intézet, 2014. 329 pp.

Hungarian Jews, historically speaking, represent a unique population in Central and Eastern European Jewry. There are many reasons for this. Some of these reasons have to do with the major traits that are attributed to the Jewry, some with their deeds, some with the political environment with which they had to cope or in which they actively took part, and some with the fate they suffered. When talking about Hungarian Jewry, one usually means a group of people residing in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom at the time of the Hungarian nation-building project—or their descendants all around the world. This participation in the Magyarization project and Judaism are the basic attributes that seem to define the group. Research on Hungarian Jewry, as a rule, has mostly addressed this group of people (treating earlier Jewish settlements mainly as an introduction to the real story) or those who were seen as their successors in the post-assimilation era. The definition, however, is far from unambiguous.

Nineteenth-century discourses, representatives of the rising political anti-Semitism excluded, maintained for the most part the definition of Hungarian Jews as a group of Magyars who belong to a specific denomination. This appeared to be part of the “assimilation for emancipation paradigm,” or the assimilation pact as some would call it. Although operational for those parts of the Jewry who were willing to mingle with the rest of society, this discourse disregarded the non-assimilationist strata of contemporary Jewry. After research on Jews began in earnest in the 1980s (some of the pioneers of this research are among the contributors to the book under review here) and continued to flourish in the 1990s, one of the major shifts in paradigm was a turn towards those whose story was not told in the assimilationist, or Neolog—if using the Hungarian term to describe the Enlightenment-leaning wing of local Jewry—narrative. However, with the factual advancement of assimilation, which included a growing number of intermarriages and was also accompanied by a certain degree of secularization of the public sphere, the definition of Jewry as a religious group had become less and less satisfactory. This development was of course strongly driven by anti-Semitism, which was

occupied with questions concerning Jewish ethnicity and general otherness from the beginning and became increasingly racial until its full-fledged version ruled the scene in the interwar period. Hence the difficulty of talking about Jewish ethnicity in a neutral way. The pressure towards denying one's Jewish origins after World War II complicated things further. Research has thus defined post-assimilation Jewishness as a religion or a community connected by common origins, habits or cultural traits, but also in a looser sense, defining as Jews those who identify themselves, or are identified by others, with Jewishness.

Hungarian Jews have been described as showing traits of Western and Eastern Jewry, being urbanized but partly Orthodox, following patterns of political behavior typical to Western Jewry, but relatively numerous. The outstanding Jewish contribution to Hungarian culture, economy and modernization in general has been widely noticed. The emancipation of Hungarian Jews and the remarkable support it had from the Hungarian political elite at the beginning, and partly in later times, constitute the “most Eastern” example of Western-type emancipation projects. The Hungarian Holocaust, terrible in scope, almost entirely destroyed the Jewish communities outside of Budapest, while letting many to survive in the capital. The twentieth century also generated a remarkable diaspora of Jews with Hungarian origins in Western Europe, overseas, and in Israel.

Research on Jews flourished in particular after the transition—not forgetting the pioneering works and researchers who began to deal with the role and position of Jews in Hungarian modernization already in the 1970s and 1980s. The main thematic areas were the Holocaust, schooling and social inequalities, anti-Semitism, demography, economic history and culture. But while certain outstanding researchers were pioneers who set new goals for subsequent generations in terms of thematic foci, research has become even more diversified over the last two decades. We have also seen the establishment of several research centers dedicated to Jewish studies and Holocaust studies in the meantime. Of the most important achievements, I would point out the series of research findings published by Viktor Karády in many volumes and two enormous undertakings: Géza Komoróczy's monograph of the history of Jews in Hungary and György Kövér's book concerning the social environment

of the infamous blood libel case of Tiszaeszlár.¹ The volume under review is to be seen against this disciplinary background.

The book in hand is the outcome of a joint Hungarian–Israeli conference held in Budapest in 2011. The reader is not given especially extensive information either on the background of the conference or the criteria used in the selection processes. The lack of such data leaves the reviewer guessing about background information. A list of contributors at least with some biographical notes would perhaps have helped give the reader an impression of the whole. This would have been all the more important, since the articles differ considerably in length and style, some being previously published while some seem to be identical with the paper presented orally at the conference. Some clarification would have been helpful. Especially as—according to the title page—the publication is blessed with the luxury of a copy editor, in addition to the two scholars who are the editors—and apparently conference organizers. Nonetheless, the reader cannot escape the feeling that some proofreading would have worked miracles for this publication, and some effort towards uniformity of style would have made the book more professional-looking. Fortunately, for those who do not read Hungarian, an English version of the book was published in Tel-Aviv entitled *Between minority and majority. Hungarian and Jewish/Israeli ethnical and cultural experiences in recent centuries*, a strict translation of the Hungarian original.² Very rare and fortunate that conference proceedings see daylight in two languages, especially in two parallel volumes. This fact seems to indicate that the conference bears some special importance.

If it is of scholarly value, the editors fail to communicate this to the readership. Based on the description of the project provided by the editors, the occasion was more closely connected to the field of history politics or diplomacy than to pure scholarship. The conference was organized by the Balassi Institute, which characterizes itself on its website as the “top Hungarian governmental organization of cultural diplomacy.” Tibor Navracsics, deputy Prime Minister at the time, appears to have been the main patron of the conference, József Pálinkás, then president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, being the patron. Ms. Aliza bin Noun, Israel’s ambassador to Hungary at the time, opened

1 Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon* [The History of Jews in Hungary], vol. 1–2 (Budapest: Kalligram, 2012); György Kövér, *A tiszaeszlári dráma. Társadalomtörténeti látószögek* [The Tiszaeszlár Drama. Social History Aspects] (Budapest: Osiris, 2011). See Anikó Prebuk’s review about the latter in *Hungarian Historical Review* 1, no. 1–2 (2012): 253–62, accessed November 20, 2014, http://www.hunghist.org/images/volumes/Volume_1_Issue_1-2/Bookreviews5.pdf.

2 Pál Hatos and Attila Novák, eds., *Between Minority and Majority. Hungarian and Jewish/Israeli Ethnical and Cultural Experiences in Recent Centuries* (Budapest: Balassi Intézet, 2013).

the conference. If this is a piece of public history, which serves essentially political, ideological, and diplomatic purposes, as the list of supporters suggests, there is perhaps no need for further elaboration on the scholarly value of the book or the conference. In this case, the question as to whether this compilation of articles serves purposes of public history or political representation might well be more relevant. Seeing, however, that the actual articles, although differing in quality, style, subject and scope, are without exception works of scholarship leads us to the examination of the scholarly value of the publication.

As said, there is not much to examine. Instead of an introductory chapter, one finds a two-and-a half page “Preface,” most of which consists of an enumeration of the supporters of the conference, the articles’ topics, and the names of their authors. Again, a bit more elaboration on the background and purpose of the conference would have been welcome, for instance some insight into the genesis of the chapters and the backgrounds of the participants. The editors argue that the conference had a particular purpose and brought new approaches to the topics at hand, but this is hardly convincing. “The topic of the symposium differs to some extent from the approach that usually characterizes conferences meant for the Hungarian speaking academic public on Jewish history,” according to their formulation (p.7.). The allegedly different approach lies in the fact that (again, allegedly) “this book does not discuss Hungarian and Jewish history (including the history of Hungarian Jews) merely as a passion narrative, but how these communities are constructed, how narratives of individual and collective identities influence each other [...] these stories receive their meaning in a comparative manner” (p.7). While this is a very legitimate approach, it is difficult to see the novelty of it. Discussions concerning Jews’ position and identity between majority and minority status is a common topic in the realm of Jewish studies, and the more established participants in the conference have all been engaged in such research earlier. The reference to Hungarian and Jewish history as “passion narratives” is rather perplexing also. The manifest-like contention by the editors, according to which “the authors and the editors realize the uniquely tragic significance of the Hungarian Holocaust and deprivation of rights that lead to it” (p.8) does not make things any clearer, despite the apparent intention. In which sense are the editors entitled to speak on behalf of the participants on issues that are more ethical than scholarly? Why is it even necessary? It might not be self-evident, however, to understand the similarities between the Holocaust and the peace treaties following World War I in terms of scholarship. If the intention was to argue that discussion on the fate of Jews and on the loss of

territories according to the Trianon Treaty are similar, this would require explicit exposition of the this thesis. The editors apparently found the issue provocative and settled instead for a defensive move.

More problematic is the fact that the papers included in the volume do not really reflect on the problems described in those few sentences. Although the “Preface” lays emphasis on Jewish—Hungarian identity and its representation in a comparative manner, in the first sentence it describes the conference as one organized to tackle the problem of diasporas. However, none of the papers seem to intend on answering any of those questions except for the one by Viktor Karády, who starts his article with the following sentence: “It is highly problematic to answer directly the question posed by the Balassi Institute: where can we find possible parallelisms in the development of Hungarian and Jewish diasporas” (p.107). He spends several pages of his paper explaining why the topic outlined seems irrelevant. It is somewhat unusual, but one does not find a contradictory argument in any part of the book. Also, if the aim was to compare diasporas, the volume is rather one-sided. The Israeli diaspora is discussed in only one comprehensive article (Raphael Vago), while the non-Jewish Hungarian diaspora is only discussed in an article concerning Hungarian organizations in the United States (Attila Z. Papp). Guy Miron writes about the conceptual changes in the self-understanding of European Jewry under Nazi pressure, comparing German and Hungarian Jews in particular. Apart from that, the problematic of diasporas is hardly present in other articles.

However, if the reader does not concern themselves with the aim of the project, the product seems to be the result of a good if quite “regular” Jewish studies conference, with contributions by some of the most established scholars in the field. Regarding topics, the papers form various clusters. There are several articles on the problems of Hungarian Jewish identity. The one most directly targeting identity is András Kovács’ article about changing identity formation strategies, entitled “Stigma and Renaissance” (pp.129–36). He describes the major findings of intergenerational research among Hungarian Jews with those two words. Stigma refers to the attitudes of those who survived the Holocaust and their children, who tried to distance themselves from Jewishness, while renaissance describes groups which, after the fall of Communism, actively seek a Jewish identity. Judit Frigyes, known for her expertise in Jewish music, contributed a fascinating article entitled “Is there such a thing as Hungarian-Jewish music?” (pp.55–88). The question might seem rather provocative, and she gives an elaborate answer. The source base of the article is the outcome of fieldwork carried out during the

1970s among traditional Jews in Hungary. Her findings regarding the interaction between liturgical music and the music of the surrounding non-Jewish population are intriguing, and she includes Jewish secular music in her analysis.

Regarding questions of identity, Viktória Bányai comes up with an especially well thought-out, sophisticated analysis of the role of language in Jewish identity projects during the long nineteenth century. While the linguistic assimilation of Hungarian Jews has been a frequent topic in scholarship since the nineteenth century, there has been less discussion of the role of Hebrew in the modernization projects. The article also gives an assessment of the changes in the factual knowledge of Hebrew among different Jewish groups. Another expert of Jewish studies, Tamás Turán, contributes with a lengthy and generously documented (while some of the papers lack references altogether, he attaches a bibliography that is several pages long) article that offers a highly interesting Jewish–Hungarian comparison. The reader might even think it contains two texts. The analysis of Hungarian literary references to similarities between Jewish and Hungarian history is connected to the semantics of antique Jewish texts concerning collective identities by the concept of “shared destiny.” It would be interesting to know what the original language of Turán’s article was, but the only information given is that it was translated into Hungarian. Viktor Karády, an indisputable expert on Jewish schooling and problems involving the inequalities between denominational groups, has contributed an article that widens the geographical scope of analysis substantially. Following an extremely interesting discussion of the nature of diaspora in Jewish history, he compares data on schooling from all over East Central Europe to show how investment in education was a collective strategy of Jews in the region.

Two parallel papers reflect on the position and possible strategies of Jews between the dominant ethnicities of the respective successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Hungarian speaking minority. Gusztáv Tamás Filep focuses on Jewish involvement in the public life of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, especially from the perspective of the possibilities of representation of minority interests. Attila Gidó analyzes the options of Transylvanian Jewry in the midst of Romanian, Hungarian and German anti-Semitism. His article summarizes the factors which shaped the social reality surrounding Jews and examines in particular a debate on possible Jewish “roads” from the 1920s. Levente Salat’s article seemingly belongs to this thematic group, as it concerns the Hungarian minority in Romania. Salat contributes with an analysis of the

notion of political community and its repercussions for the Hungarians in Romania. His article is among the lengthiest and most elaborated chapters of the book, appearing as a republication or revised version of three different articles.

Several papers are connected to the Holocaust, anti-Jewish legislation and the fate of Hungarian Jewry after the rise of Nazism. Balázs Ablonczy's essay, which is the leading chapter of the volume, attempts to establish a typology of letters sent to prime minister Teleki at the time of the introduction of the second anti-Jewish law (1939). Attila Novák, one of the editors, tells the story of the negotiations between the Jewish Agency and the Hungarian government. Szabolcs Szita uncovers some details about returning survivors from the Mauthausen camp.

It is difficult to determine, on the basis of the volume described above, whether the conference achieved its alleged goals. As far as I can tell, the published papers do not represent approaches that were not present in the study of Hungarian Jewry earlier. That Jews and non-Jews influenced each others' lives and adopted various strategies of identity formation in different moments of history in differing environments may be a thesis worth presenting to the larger public, but it is hardly any news for students and scholars of Central European history. However, thanks to the contributors, the volume makes interesting reading and sheds light on important aspects of the many collective identity projects in which Hungarian Jews have been involved over the course of the last two centuries.

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