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*Research Reports
on Central European History*

Victor Karady and
Peter Tibor Nagy (Eds.)

*The numerus clausus in Hungary
Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and
Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe*

Edited by Victor Karady
and Peter Tibor Nagy

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Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy (Editors)

Volume 1

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Pasts Inc. Centre for Historical Research, History Department
of the Central European University
Budapest, 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of this book has benefited from a number of contributions and support. Several of the studies included have been funded in part by the European Research Council thanks to its grant 230518 - Culturally Composite Elites, Regime Changes and Social Crises in Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Confessional Eastern Europe. (The Carpathian Basin and the Baltics in Comparison - cc. 1900-1950), and TEMKA foundation. Pasts Inc. Centre for Historical Research of the History Department of the Central European University has generously offered its label for the whole collection inaugurated by this volume. We have profited from the material and intellectual contribution of the Nationalism Department of the Central European University and its chair Professor Mária M. Kovács. The publishing company of the John Wesley Theological College has granted specially favorable conditions for the printing of the volume.

The numerus clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe/ ed by Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy (Research Reports on Central European History ; Vol 1.)
ISBN 978-963-88538-6-8 .ISSN 2305-5189

ISBN 978-963-88538-6-8
ISSN 2305-5189

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ABOUT THE BOOK COLLECTION

Research Reports on Central European History

This collection of books emerged from a practical need. The editors have been in charge since the last thirty odd years of a number of large scale research projects on East Central European social and cultural history related to issues as different as elite training, student peregrinations, the systematisation of educational provisions, ethnic identity and assimilation, processes of nation building in multi-ethnic societies, Jewry and group specific patterns of modernization, social inequalities of urbanisation (notably in capital cities), culturally differential population movements, transformations of national 'reputational elites'. Our studies have been funded by national, international or even private agencies of research promotion like the Hungarian Academy of Science, OTKA and NKFP, those connected to higher education in Budapest (Research Support Fund of the Central European University, Pasts Inc. Centre of Historical Research of the Historical Department of the CEU, John Wesley Theological Academy, ELTE University), the French CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*) and the French Ministry of Research or lately the European Research Council (via the 'Advanced Investigator's Grant' - Elites 2008 program). These projects have resulted in the formation of an European network of scholars accumulating various data banks for several East Central European societies since the 19th century – mostly prosopographies, statistical compilations, sets of anonymous serial information – the primary exploitation of which has been hitherto only synthetically used in academic publications or exposed in workshops and conferences. Hence the idea to make available with as many details as possible a large array of empirically documented scholarly reports, attempts at in-depth data analyses, commented semi-raw sources and data bases capable of shedding light on mostly long term and often parallel historical developments in countries of the Other Europe. The collection is open to proposals without any thematic restrictions. The first volumes are in an advanced stage of preparation in English, but publications in other languages could also be included. Each volume will appear in a paperback edition while remaining freely accessible via internet at the following sites : <http://elites08.uni.hu>, <http://mek.oszk.hu/>

Victor Karady - Peter Tibor Nagy

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Introduction

This volume offers a concerted set of studies on the impact of the Law 1920/XXV often recognised as aiming essentially to curb the high representation of Jews in Hungarian higher education.

Our book is indirectly the outcome of two motivations. On the one hand a large scale survey, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) in the years 2009-2012, has provided ample information on the ethnic-confessional composition of the student population before and after 1919 in Hungary, allowing an objectivist evaluation of the academic impact of the *numerus clausus*. On the other hand a memorial conference was organised by the Holocaust Museum in Budapest to remember the 90th anniversary of this extraordinary act of legislative infamy enacted by the 'Christian Course' Parliament. Most of the authors of this book participated in the conference.¹ They were individually invited to contribute on the strength of their special expertise and original research results in this matter – in part directly deriving from the ERC project.

The relevance of our book for contemporary history writing, recently enriched with a number of topical studies², can be illustrated by the difficulties

¹ See Judit Molnár (ed.), *Jogfosztás – 90 éve. Tanulmányok a numerus clausról*, Budapest, /Deprivation of rights – 90 years ago, studies on the *numerus clausus*/, Nonprofit Társadalomkutató Egyesület, 1911.

² See among others : Mária M. Kovács, *A Numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1919-1945* /The *numerus clausus* in Hungary, 1919-1945/, Budapest, 2012 (forthcoming) ; Peter Tibor Nagy, *Hajzálcsovek és nyomáscsoportok, Oktatáspolitikai a 19-20. századi Magyarországon*, /Capillarity and pressure groups, educational policies in Hungary in the 19th and 20th centuries/, Budapest, Új Mandátum, 2002; Peter Tibor Nagy, The *numerus clausus* in inter-war Hungary. In: *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 35, Nb. 1, June 2005, 13-22; Victor Karady, Funktionswandel der österreichischen Hochschulen in der Ausbildung der ungarischen Fachintelligenz vor und nach dem I. Weltkrieg, in Victor Karady, Wolfgang Mitter (eds.), *Social Structure and Education in Central Europe*, Köln, Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 1990, 177-207; Krisztina Bognár, László Molnár, Zsolt Osváth, *Az egyetemi felvételi rendszer változásai a 20. században*, /Changes in the system of academic admission in the 20th century/, Budapest, 1910; *A felvételi rendszer változásai a források tükrében, 1871-1949*, /Changes in the system of enrollments in the Technical University as reflected in the sources/, Budapest, 2001; Andor Ladányi, Klebelsberg felsőoktatási politikája, /The policy of higher education of the minister Klebelsberg/, Budapest, Argumentum , 2000; Andor Ladányi, *A magyar felsőoktatás a 20. században*, /Hungarian higher education in the 20th century/, Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó, 1999; Andor Ladányi, A felsőoktatási felvételi rendszer történeti alakulása, *Educatio*. 1995/3, 485-500; T. Kiss Tamás, *Állami művelődéspolitikai az 1920-as években. Gróf Klebelsberg Kunó kulturát szervező munkássága*, /State policy of culture in the 1920s. The action for cultural organisation by count Kuno Klebelsberg/, (no indication of place) 1998; Peter Hencz, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kunó, a harmadik évezred minisztere*, /Count Kuno Klebelsberg, the minister of the third millennium/, Szeged, Bába, 1999; Katalin Fenyves, When Sexism Meets Racism: the 1920 *Numerus clausus* Law in Hungary. *E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, 2011. Volume 4. 12. (<http://ahea.net/e-journal/volume-4-2011/12>); Csaba Fazekas, Collaborating with Horthy. Political Catholicism and Christian Political Organisations in Hungary, 1918-1944. In Michael Gehler, Wolfram Kaiser, Wolfram , Helmut Wohnout (ed.), *Christian Democracy in 20th century Europe*, Wien - Köln - Weimar, 2001. (Arbeitskreis Europäische Integration. Historische Forschungen. Veröffentlichungen, 4.), 224-249.

experienced by the conveners of this conference to publish the proceedings of the event. The papers presented at the scholarly gathering organised in November 2010 by and in the premises of the Budapest Holocaust Museum at Páva street were, after a forceful change of direction in the Museum, not allowed to be published at all, especially not under the aegis of this state institution. The publication could be finally realised by the initial conveners, after much tergiversation, thanks to private means and the support of the contributors involved. The *numerus clausus* appears to be such a controversial issue even nowadays, that its souvenir is still regarded by many – especially decision makers in contemporary Hungarian cultural politics – as worth to be covered by a generous forgetfulness rather than analysed by means of advanced socio-historical scholarship. The recognition of the results of such analysis would indeed disturb the idillic clemency with which the epoque – concluded by the *Shoah* and another defeat in a disastrous war entailing the loss of close to one tenth of the country's population - is nowadays considered in official hindsight, as objectivated in its symbolic policies.

The regime of anti-Jewish exclusionism, legalised in the *numerus clausus* law 1920/XXV by the Hungarian Parliament, can be interpreted in negative terms as the combined outcome of three major developments in Hungary and beyond in several Central and Eastern European societies. They include the incompleting pattern of Jewish emancipation, the inequalities of post-feudal modernisation to the benefit of ethnic outsiders (especially Jews and Germans) and the inadequate reaction to this by the titular elites in power, comprising the rejection and social degradation of Jews, and the more or less forcible 'nationalisation' of Christian ethnic outsiders. In this short introduction only the first and the third aspect of this development, the most directly linked to the *numerus clausus* law, can be shortly evoked.

Emancipation indeed never implied in this part of the world the equality of Jews and non Jews in terms of employment chances in the civil service or in public functions connected to the state power (public industries, the army, the administration, politics or...academe). As the numerical relationship cited below in this book of religious Jews and converts in academic positions³ suggests, baptism was in this respect the often necessary if far from sufficient condition (the infamous 'entry ticket' quoted erstwhile by Heinrich Heine) for nomination. This unachieved form of emancipation was the tacitly but efficiently applied precedent to the *numerus clausus* – and its main implicit reference – liable to legitimate discriminative student selection. The negatively meant 'difference' or 'otherness' of Jews (indeed inferiority) in the social space was never fully neutralised or compensated for in public markets of self-assertion and professional success, let alone in other symbolic spaces of public life. This was, on the contrary, tacitly maintained in the framework of the otherwise indeed quite liberal 'assimilationist social contract', connecting Jews to the consciously integrationist ruling elite of

³ See Victor Karady's study in this volume.

the emerging Hungarian nation state of the long 19th century, in spite of official policies of equality to which the contemporary political class was openly committed before 1919 (or at least paid regularly lip service).

Though Jewish otherness continued to be regularly denied in the dominant political discourse of the dual monarchy, this was not true of the social perception of Jews. Jews appeared in public life regularly not only as ethnic or cultural aliens, but often as morally inferior (since not belonging to the Christian mainstream), somewhat suspicious or even potentially dangerous outsiders. Such type of 'Jewish difference' came to be implicitly but quite officially recognized in the public presentation of social data by statistical services both in a benevolent and hostile manner.

Religion and mother tongue had, from early on, been part and parcel of the essential categories applied for the registration of the state and the movement of the population in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Habsburg Empire, particularly in Hungary. This was indeed the only would-be nation state in Europe without any formal confessional or ethnic-cultural majority, which explains the importance granted to that kind of surveys. Ethnicity was always measured by mother tongue, whereby minority idioms could be subsumed under larger language clusters. This happened to Yiddish, the dominant Jewish language, the native speakers of which were thus branded as Germans, speaking a low graded Germanic dialect, a 'jargon'. (Such negative qualification of Yiddish speakers was taken over by 'assimilated' Jews and often by the very Yiddishists themselves.) Thus the language of Eastern Jewry together with their speakers were concealed or made disappear in statistical data of the Dual Monarchy. Such act of symbolic administration, depriving many Jews of their ethnic particularism, had far-reaching political and educational consequences. Eastern Jews were thus for instance not entitled, unlike most other large national-ethnic clusters, to use their language in public life or public schooling.

Confessional statistics came to be also quite explicit since the early years of the 20th century to separate Jews from others via a negative qualification. (In the same time they would not offer cues till the period of nazification – and then only as a drastic stigmatisation - as to the identification of those of Jewish family background, let alone converts, whose collective difference continued to be, as a rule, socially perceived.) Now, from around 1900, official statistical publications started to produce data, especially on issues related to the Jewish presence in fields of elite activities – higher education, landownership, free professions – where Jews were simply compared, globally, to non Jews.⁴ This apparently innocent, heuristically justifiable scholarly practice displayed in reality a new and properly antisemitic public perception of Jews, explicitly presented as dangerous competitors of the Christian middle classes. The topic of 'the Jewish conquest of ground' in middle class activities (*zsidó térfoglalás*) was thus officially introduced

⁴ See the study by Victor Karady : Les fonctions idéologiques des statistiques confessionnelles et ethniques dans la Hongrie post-féodale (1867-1948), *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, 2008, nr.18, 17-34.

in printed statements emanating from a public office, hence in the public discourse of Hungarian elite circles.⁵ It will gain a large publicity in the debates conducive to the *numerus clausus* and throughout the inter-war years to serve as a permanent argument in anti-Jewish hate speech and actions. The second anti-Jewish law (1939/4) will be openly titled (and justified) as a scheme to „limit the conquest of space of Jews in the economy and public life”.⁶

After the 1919 political crises, the upcoming 'Christian Course' governments made matters much worse indeed for educated Jews in search of public careers corresponding to their degrees and levels of qualification – often better, in objective terms, as compared to their Christian counterparts. Though they showed on the average higher grades, as demonstrated by the marks obtained at secondary school graduation (*matura, érettségi*),⁷ a decisive degree for the social qualification for gentlemanly professions (as a precondition of higher studies) and middle class status, the employment of Jews in public service came to be severely restricted. Those who happened to be employed were often forced to early retirement or arbitrarily dismissed. In 1910 one finds 2343 Jews (6 % of the personnel) in public administration of all levels in Hungary.⁸ In 1920, in the rump state, there were still 1425 such Jewish staff (4,4 % of the total),⁹ out of which by 1930 only 595 remained active (a mere 1,7 % of the total).¹⁰ This process of the exacerbation of anti-Jewish employment policies in the public sector – which effected much beyond civil service proper practically every field of economic activity. Jewish managerial or intellectual employment was restricted in health institutions (via public hospitals), in the judiciary (among prosecutors, judges,

⁵ See for example in Magyar statisztikai közlemények /Hungarian statistical reports/ 64, 204*-208* a table of figures specially dedicated to the share of Jews in the intellectual professions. It compares relevant data for 1900 and 1910 with long commentaries including repeated references to the Jewish 'conquest of the space' /*térfoglalás*/ in the elites and their glaring or flagrant (*kirívó*) presence in some professional clusters. In counties where the Jewish share was less than elsewhere, the authors speak unabashed about a "more advantageous (*kedvezőbb*) situation", *ibid.*, 207. There is another table of similar structure, intention and message in the same volume comparing the proportions of Jews in the general professional stratification of the active population of the country in 1900 and 1910 (*ibid.* 278-281).

⁶ See the text of the law in Krisztina Bognár, László Molnár, Zsolt Osváth, *Az egyetemi felvételi rendszer változásai a 20. században*, /Changes in the system of academic admission in the 20th century/, Budapest, 1910, 232-243.

⁷ See earlier results in this matter in various publications by Victor Karady : (with Stephane Vari), « Facteurs socio-culturels de la réussite au baccalauréat en Hongrie », *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 70, novembre, 1987, 79-82; Social Mobility, Reproduction and Qualitative Schooling Differentials in Old Regime Hungary, *History Department Yearbook 1994-1995*, Central European University, Budapest, 1996, 134-156; Das Judentum als Bildungsmacht in der Moderne. Forschungsansätze zur relativen Überschulung in Mitteleuropa, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, 1997, 347-361. Jewish Over-Schooling Revisited : the Case of Hungarian Secondary Education in the Old Regime (1900-1941), *Yearbook of the Jewish Studies Programme, 1998/1999*, Budapest, Central European University, 2000, 75-91.

⁸ *Hungarian statistical reports*, 56, 713-725.

⁹ *Hungarian statistical reports*, 72, 474.

¹⁰ *Hungarian statistical reports*, 96, 126.

prison personnel, etc.), in the press or the cultural industry (thanks to censorship and selective state subsidies strengthening journals favorable to the Christian Course), large scale industries, trade or banking (through state investments, sponsored credits and targeted commissions), even agriculture (across the limited land reform of 1920 aiming at the preferential expropriation and redistribution of mostly recently purchased – often Jewish - properties). Just as an illustration : the census in 1920 found still 1026 Jewish estate owners over 100 *holds* and 1191 agricultural managers (men and women).¹¹ According to the 1930 census there were only 606 of the former and 914 of the latter.¹² A more general consequence of anti-Jewish employment policies can be found in contemporary figures of those in the educated professions without work. In 1928 while Jews represented 18,9 % of the 'intellectual workforce' in the country,¹³ they were as many as 30 % among unemployed intellectuals (and 38 % of the latter in Budapest).¹⁴

In this context it is indispensable to remember that data, such as cited above on Jewish-Gentile divisions in the active population, especially in middle class and elite clusters, appear to be more and more often in time liable to be biased, in the sense of under-estimating the share of Jews in the educated workforce, due to the growing frequency of religious conversions. Baptism had been, even before 1919, a way to escape from stigmatised Jewish identity. But it was a narrow track due to the very limitation of anti-Jewish pressures in the liberal era. The Magyarization of surnames was a much more general and popular practice among Jews in their effort at symbolic nationalisation and 'assimilationist' strategies asserted themselves in an ever increasing manner by residential mixing, common education (even in Christian secondary schools) or even mixed marriages – probably due to the fact that the latter would not imply complete self-denial in terms of collective identity. This is why the number of baptisms among Jews tended to stagnate from 1900 to 1916 on a rather low level, involving yearly less than 0,5 per thousand population (around 500 per year, with 544 in 1900 and 463 in 1916¹⁵), in contrast for example to surname Magyarisations (which was achieved by some 6 % of Jews in the country during the two last decades of the Dualist Era¹⁶) or mixed marriages (contracted by 3,2 % of Jewish bridegrooms in 1897-1904, 4,7 % in 1906-12, 7,7 % in 1913-14 and as

¹¹ *Hungarian statistical reports*, 72, 429, 431 and 443.

¹² *Hungarian statistical reports*, 96, 8-9,

¹³ *Hungarian statistical reports*, 79, 46.

¹⁴ *Hungarian statistical reports* 79, 157.

¹⁵ Data from the relevant years of *Magyar statisztikai évkönyvek* /Hungarian statistical yearbooks/.

¹⁶ See the book by Victor Karady and István Kozma, *Családnév és nemzet. Névpolitika, névváltoztatási mozgalom és nemzetiségi erőviszonyok Magyarországon a reformkortól a kommunizmusig*, /Surname and nation. The policy of naming, the movement of surname modification and relations of ethnic forces in Hungary from the Vormärz till Communism/, Budapest, Osiris, 2002, 83.

many as 14 % in the war years of 1914-18.¹⁷ In a balance sheet of social costs and advantages, the temptation of apostasy could at that time become attractive only for Jews with special existential motivations, notably those contracting confessionally mixed marriages (whereby the confessional status of expected children could be a significant stake) or others engaged in or aspiring for a career in public service. With the crisis period of the advent of the 'Christian Course' - or even before, during the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, when the menace of a rightist backlash with anti-Jewish implications became apparent - baptism started to represent a major scheme of identity dissimulation with over 9000 cases (some 2 % of the Jewish population) in 1919-20, the worst years of the White Terror (including the implementation of the academic *numerus clausus*), and with a yearly average of 450-500 cases during the rest of the 1920s (around 0,1 % per year of the Jewish population concerned).¹⁸ Baptism just like all other acts related to the formation of 'assimilationist' identities, as it is well established in specific survey results, concerned above all the educated and urbanised middle class.¹⁹ For 1931-37 - understandably under conditions of the *numerus clausus* - as many as 13 % of Jews getting baptised in Budapest were students.²⁰ Among lawyers of Jewish background on the list of members of the Budapest Chamber of Lawyers in 1940 some 28 % were listed as converts.²¹ Hence, all the quantified information about Jews in elite groups must be increased, and more and more so for the inter-war years, to evaluate the real share of those of Jewish background in the middle class categories under scrutiny. The 1941 Census found in the population legally defined as Jewish 12 % Christians in the post Trianon territory and 17 % in Budapest.²² These data provide still a crass under-estimation of the real demographic impact of those of Jewish origin, since they disregard early converts (before the 1st of August 1919) or others of Jewish descent qualified as Christians by the 1939 and 1941 racial laws. Such counts must be applied with a vengeance to middle class clusters providing disproportionate numbers of converts.

This specification appears to be all the more important that converts continued for long to be reconed with by the dominant public opinion (in Jewish and Gentile circles alike, though with obviously different moral undertones, such as 'baptised Jews', 'of Jewish origin', 'of Jewish birth', etc.) in a society where

¹⁷ Viktor Karády, *Önazonosítás és sorsválasztás. A zsidó csoportazonosság történelmi alakváltozásai Magyarországon*, /The management of identity and the choice of destiny. Historical alterations of Jewish identity in Hungary/, Budapest, Új Mandátum, 2001, 246.

¹⁸ Data from the *Magyar statisztikai évkönyvek*.

¹⁹ See Viktor Karády, *Önazonosítás...*, *op. cit.*, 288.

²⁰ *Ibid. loc. cit.*

²¹ Survey results on the legal profession in the inter-war years. See Victor Karády, Professional status, social background, and the differential impact of right radicalism among Budapest lawyers in the 1940s, in Charles McClelland, Stephan Merl, Hannes Siegrist (ed.), *Professions in Modern Eastern Europe*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1995, 60-89, particularly 81.

²² *A zsidó népesség száma településenként (1840-1941)*, /The size of the Jewish population by settlements, 1840-1941/, Budapest, KSH, 1993, 26-27 and 32-33.

opinion-makers of the mainstream Christian Course came to be more and more obsessed by various shades of antisemitic hysteria. The Law 1920/XXV did not introduce (unlike later the second anti-Jewish law 1939/IV) any legal definition of Jewishness. Thus it was left to the arbitration of the local academic authorities to apply or not the ominous restrictions to converts. Legally Jews were defined by religion only at that time in the absence of any other definition. Thus even against the law, there were several cases in point when baptised Jews were excluded from enrollment on the strength of the *numerus clausus* due to their Jewish origins.

However it was, we must conclude that anti-Jewish discrimination in professional activity markets, controlled by the public authorities that be, was a well established policy pattern much before the introduction of the academic *numerus clausus* itself. This legislative measure, commonly considered even by contemporaries as exceptional – and exceptionally discriminatory – was in fact part of an already perfectly organised, integrated and tacitly accepted system of anti-Jewish social practices of restrictive and repressive nature. One cannot ignore though that the legitimacy of such practices in non Jewish middle class circles could be vastly enhanced by the aggravation of the competition on intellectual markets in the inter-war years. Trianon Treaty (definitely signed in June 1920) reducing Hungary to a rump state on barely two thirds of its former territory and with merely 43 % of its earlier population. But in this contracted country was concentrated the bulk of the established educated middle classes – as much as 82 % on the whole, comparing data of the two censuses in 1910 and 1920 – with 80 % of civil servants, 84 % of physicians and 68 % of lawyers, for example.²³ In this situation the scapegoating of Jews²⁴ was a direct means to gain market shares for gentile specialists in the intellectual professions of the rump state. The *numerus clausus* was a legal instrument for such a transformation of market conditions to the benefit of ‘Christian’ university graduates. It is certainly not an accident that the most ferocious academic supporters of the *numerus clausus* (uninhibited even by considerations of professional ethics - unlike lawyers) were found in the Budapest Medical Faculty, catering for a professional market dominated by doctors of Jewish background. The very proposal of the *numerus clausus* was first formulated by the governing body of the Budapest Medical Faculty²⁵, the members of which were among the founders of the antisemitic MONE (National society of Hungarian physicians).

But this remark must be referred to fundamental insufficiencies of the post-feudal modernisation of Hungarian society. They are implicating a deficit of modernisation proper of the would-be Gentile middle class as opposed to the

²³ See a comparison of such basic data in *Magyar statisztikai közlemények*, 56, 713-725 and *ibid.* 72

²⁴ See to the whole problem area recent studies by Attila Pók, especially his book, *The Politics of Hatred in the Middle of Europe, Scapegoating in Twentieth Century Hungary : History and Historiography*, (Szombathely, Savaria University Press, 2009), especially 43-45.

²⁵ Cf. László Molnár, *Felvételi korlátozások és érvényesülésük a budapesti Orvoskaron 1920-1949 között*, in Bognár Kristina et al, *op. cit.* 110.

intensive agency of Jewry (as well as Germanic, Armenian and Serbian ethnic clusters) in terms of educational and other types of mobility in the very professions (like medicine²⁶ or engineering) demanding the heaviest investments in terms of learning and work input.

Moreover it was also true, that such arbitrary anti-Jewish restrictions could explicitly or implicitly claim to be supported by precedents abroad in Eastern and Central Europe and sometimes even elsewhere. In Russia a strict limitation of Jewish university enrollments was the rule between 1886 and the formal emancipation of Jews due to the Kerenski government emerging from the February 1917 Revolution. In Romania various limitations of access to the intellectual activity markets for Jews deprived higher educational degrees occasionally conferred on Jews from their professional functions, as witnessed by the low level of Jewish enrollments in Romanian universities before 1919.²⁷ Russia or Romania could certainly not serve as examples worth to be followed in Hungary. But temptations to control the inscription of Jewish students or to exclude them from higher studies or at least from 'normal' student status or from intellectual employment occurred in Austria and Germany as well – the traditional destinations of academic peregrinations for students from Hungary – both before and after 1919. Student corporations started to stress their 'Christian' character at least to the effect to exclude Jews since the 1880s in Vienna²⁸. This was and remained a general practice in German universities. In the latter and among imperial decision makers on matters academic in Germany a long public discussion was carried out in the years 1905-1913 about the *Ausländerfrage*, targeting the alleged overcrowding of German universities by Russian students (with a majority of Jews)²⁹. In the debate and the ensuing turbulences staged by German students, the *Judenfrage* was a strong topical element under the disguise of the *Slawenfrage*, with often explicit agitation for the exclusion of foreign Jews (especially Russians, a very large part of foreign students).³⁰ Following an initial statement of the Emperor ("The Russian students must get out"),³¹ police actions, student strikes and riots, the debate was finally concluded in 1913 by serious

²⁶ The completion of basic medical studies demanded from the early 19th century a minimum of five years (ten semesters) of study – without even specialisation –, as against four years (8 semesters) for other university degrees.

²⁷ See the relevant data in Lucian Nastasa's study in this volume.

²⁸ Cf. Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, 428.

²⁹ Jack Wertheimer, The „Ausländerfrage“ at institutions of higher learning. A controversy over Russian-Jewish students in Imperial Germany, *Yearbook, Leo Baeck Institute*, 27, 1982, 196-215.

³⁰ Mario Klotzsche, Perzeption ausländischer Studenten durch die deutsche Studentenschaft und die „Ausländerfrage“, in Hartmut Rüdiger Peter, Schnorrer, *Verschwörer, Bombenwerfer ? Studenten aus dem Russischen Reich an deutschen Hochschulen vor dem I. Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt a. M., Peter Lang, 2001, 117-141.

³¹ Hartmut Rüdiger Peter, Politik und akademisches Ausländerstudium 1905-1913. Preussisches Beispiel und Sächsisch-Badische Variationen, in Hartmut Rüdiger Peter, Natalia Tikhonov (ed.), *Universitäten als Brücken in Europa*, Frankfurt/M., etc., Peter Lang, 2003, 175-194, especially 177.

(mostly financially) restrictive measures against the enrollment of foreigners³². The Hungarian *numerus clausus* had thus precedents in academic markets abroad to which the Magyar academe was closely connected.

But precedents could be easily found in the Dual Monarchy itself. Though there were no formal limitations to the inscription of Jews in any institution of higher education before 1919, there was a number of special Christian preserves among academic institutions where Jews were discouraged to apply or tacitly but efficiently refused admission. This had to do with academies and colleges training specialists for the service of the state or territorial authorities, including public economic agencies. Thus there were practically no Jews at the Budapest based Ludovika Military Academy or in the Selmechánya College for 'engineers in forestry',³³ much like in the Vienna based *Konsulakademie*, the *Technische Militär Akademie* or the *Theresianum*³⁴ attended by a big number of students from Hungary throughout the long 19th century.

In the inter-war years Central and Eastern European universities in Romania (as reminded in this book by Lucian Nastasa's study), Austria, Germany, Poland or even the otherwise fully democratic Czechoslovakia (as mentioned here in Michael Miller's study) will be places of antisemitic agitation organised by 'nationalist' student groups aiming at the exclusion of Jews from higher education or the limitation of their presence in the campuses. In Austria after World War I the erstwhile liberal admission policies were actually reversed. In the heavily antisemitic political climate of Vienna (aggravated by the presence of large 'Eastern Jewish' refugee populations) restrictions to the inscription of Jews in both universities started to be enforced in 1923 – with a 10 % Jewish quota proper at the Polytechnical University.³⁵ Although contacts with America were still scarce at that time, it was well known that the main classical private universities in the United States – the Ivy League Colleges network – all practiced an anti-Jewish quota system from the 1920s (when the educational mobility of the immigrant Jewish masses reached higher education) till as late as the 1950s, included. (Of course, such restrictions in private institutions of an otherwise liberal state could hardly affect general trends of Jewish educational mobility,

³² Ibid.

³³ As witnessed in my as yet unpublished survey results drawn from the multi-variate statistical analysis of inscription files of the institutions concerned, there was just 1 Jewish student (0,1 % of the total) inscribed in the sector training 'forestry engineers' in the years 1868-1915. A limited Jewish student body could though be identified in the sister institutions at Selmechánya, in the department of 'mining engineers' (8,5 %) and in the department of 'metallurgical engineers' (3,9 %) during the same period. After 1919 Jews disappeared all but completely from the successor academy, transferred to Sopron.

³⁴ For the latter see the prosopographical lists in Patyi Gábor, *Magyarországi diákok Bécsi egyetemeken és főiskolákon, 1890-1918* /Students from Hungary in Viennese universities and academies, 1890-1918/, Budapest, 2004, 325-430. A survey based on the prosopography of students has found that a mere 1,3 % of this student body was of Jewish religion.

³⁵ Michael. L. Miller, From White Terror to Red Vienna, in Frank Stern, Barbara Eichinger (ed.), *Wien und die jüdische Erfahrung, 1900-1938*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 2009, 307-323, especially 312.

given the large network of state universities and other – private, sometimes properly Jewish – institutions of higher learning ready to admit Jews without reservations.) Anyhow, the Hungarian *numerus clausus* was not lacking contemporary models and examples, though none of them reached the level of state legislation like in the Hungarian ‘Christian Course’, ere the beginning of the Nazification process in the 1930s.

Despite these obvious precedents and parallelisms, the Hungarian *numerus clausus* law can be justifiably qualified – as it has been repeatedly done in several studies in this volume, notably those of Peter Tibor Nagy, Andor Ladányi and Maria M. Kovács - as the first piece of (almost) openly anti-Jewish legislation in the contemporary history of Western type parliamentary states. By stating this I would not enter into academic polemics about its significance on the road leading to the Nazi policy of extermination. Arguably enough, restrictive anti-Jewish policies are not equal to a policy of extermination.³⁶ It is though also demonstrable that the *numerus clausus* proved to be a major precedent, openly preparing the antisemitic legislation of the then still fully independent Hungarian state in the period of nazification, starting in 1938 following local parliamentary initiatives, continued in bloody mass atrocities committed by the Hungarian soldiery in Újvidék (1941) or by the deportation of ‘stateless’ Jews from the whole country to Kamenec Podolsk during the Summer of 1942 (18-20.000 victims) and completed by the deportation into death camps of half a million of Jewish citizens of the same state during Spring 1944. Truly enough, this latter stage of anti-Jewish policies was implemented under the occupation of the country by the *Wehrmacht*. Nevertheless the Hungarian part of the *Shoah* was operationally carried out by the local authorities having a certain degree of liberty - as it is proved by the fact that in early July 1944 governor Horthy, the head of state still in charge, had enough power to stop the procedure in order to save the Jews of the capital city from deportation (at least temporarily, for many of them).

The character of the *numerus clausus* as an ominous precedent (and also a model, in some sense) to the Nazi type legislation (which in Hungary followed in the late 1930s clearly the example of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws) can be indeed attested on several scores.

First, from the beginning, the political rhetoric and public discourse that accompanied the campaign in support of the *numerus clausus* contained elements suggesting or even requesting that the restrictions of Jewish enrollment in higher education would be just a stage towards the elimination of Jews from public life. Some of these statements, emanating even from academic circles, resorted to openly racist argumentation of the kind later much used in Nazi times. One of the most influential exponents of the *numerus clausus* law, professor of ophthalmology, Károly Hoór invoked images of a life and death struggle among

³⁶ As remarked by Gábor Ujváry in his study : A felsőoktatási felvétel szabályozásai a két világháború közötti Magyarországon, / Regulations of the admission into higher education in inter-war Hungary/, in Krisztina Bognár, László Molnár, Zsolt Osváth, *Az egyetemi felvételi rendszer...op.cit.* 13.

racess as early as 1925. „If the Hungarian nation would at any time reach a point that it would or could have only Jewish doctors, at that point the Hungarian nation would be ripe to be annihilated by epidemics or to entirely disappear from earth because at that point it would cease to exist as a viable nation.”³⁷

Second, as mentioned already, the *numerus clausus* was only a piece in the anti-Jewish drive which the governments of the Christian Course implemented to segregate Jews in public life, expropriate Jewish properties,³⁸ dampen their efforts at national assimilation (notably by making difficult surname Magyarizations³⁹), ban them from state or local government employment, brand them in antisemitic press campaigns or even properly terrorize them under the bloody White Terror, which was organised with the complicity of or at least tolerated by the authorities. Other administrative measures included pensioning off Jewish teachers and public officials and reviewing the licenses of shops and movie theaters ending up in the revocation of licenses from Jews. Thus, from the beginning, the *numerus clausus* was just one of a set of anti-Jewish measures, just like in the late 1930s in the period of Nazification proper.

Third, though aiming formally, in the text of the law, at some sort of ‘proportional’ representation of ‘racial groups’ (*nép-fajok*) in higher education, the restrictions in question were applied exclusively to Jews. In the first official ‘anti-Jewish Law’ (the 1938 *zsidótörvény*) exactly the same procedure and rhetoric (to “reestablish the social equilibrium”) were applied. In the second so called anti-Jewish Law 1939/IV the same proportion (6 %) was introduced as the maximal limit of representation admissible for Jews in various fields of middle class activities. This law also confirmed the *numerus clausus* (in its § 7) following the original version (canceling its 1928 alleviation) but extended it on a ‘racial basis’ over baptised Jews as well, whom the law (in its § 1) requalified as Jewish. Moreover the scheme explicitly widened the application of the *numerus clausus* over all institutions of higher education (except theologies). In this sense the ensuing 1940/XXXIX law on the regulation of the enrollment of students in higher education effaced (in its § 4/1) both the 1920 Law and its modification in 1928. The consequences of this formal reaffirmation of the *numerus clausus* in 1939 were already directly conducive to the ensuing practice of a quasi *numerus nullus*, openly demanded by the Extreme Right in Parliament with the approbation of the minister of cult and education Bálint Hóman.⁴⁰ Indeed the law was already

³⁷ Károly Hoór, A *numerus clausus*, MONE, II/4, 1925, április 1., 4.

³⁸ One fourth of the land distributed in the framework of the far too modest land reform of 1920 (Law 1920/XXXVI) had belonged to Jews, when they owned just 18 % of estates over 200 *holds*. Cf. György Ránki (ed.), *Magyarország története 1918-1919, 1919-1945*, /History of Hungary 1918-1919, 1919-1945/, Budapest, Akadémiai, 1978, 427-428. The Jewish share of estates over 100 holds was just 11,1 %. Cf. *Hungarian statistical reports* 72, 429 and 431.

³⁹ Or even cancelling those legalised during the 1919 Republic of Councils. Cf. Victor Karády, István Kozma, *Név és nemzet...*, *op. cit.* 176-180.

Andor Ladányi, *A gazdasági válságtól a háborúig. A magyar felső oktatás az 1930-as években*, /From the economic crisis till the war. Hungarian higher education in the 1930s/, Budapest, Argumentum, 2002, 191.

applied in 1939/40 already in such a way that in many faculties and academies no Jews were admitted at all and their global proportion among the newly enrolled did not exceed 1,4 % of the student body.⁴¹

Finally the 1920 *numerus clausus* was openly recognised, even claimed to be a positive precedent to the Nazi type anti-Jewish legislation by the Hungarian authorities themselves in the period of Nazification. “The Hungarian law of 1920...was the first break with the unified liberal, democratic order in Europe”, following the declaration of the director of the Berlin Collegium Hungaricum in 1942.⁴² The war governments resorted to the same argument in their negotiations with their Nazi allies, in order to prove their good faith as to their antisemitic commitment.⁴³ Paradoxically enough, these claims targeted at that time to justify and support defensive Hungarian policies, to ward off a more active participation of the Hungarian authorities in the ongoing implementation of the Final Solution (before the 19th of March, 1944).

A reappraisal of the historical significance of the 1920 *numerus clausus* pops up in several studies of this volume. But this is certainly not its major message. Rather, the book intends to offer glimpses from various topical angles at the implementation, the immediate results, the long term consequences as well as the more general implications – even beyond the social destinies of Hungarian Jewry – of the new academic legislation. Indeed the law 1920/XXV in question was the first step towards the established regime of direct state intervention into admission procedures of the higher educational provision in the country. This was continued under Communism and beyond – as reminded in Katalin Fenyves’ study in the volume - so much so that a version of it still persists in the early 21st century, under utterly modified disguises, to be sure.

Our book has been divided into two parts. The first comprises core studies of sorts, related directly to the political and academic implications and consequences of the 1920 *numerus clausus* law and its later modifications. The second part concerns studies more loosely connected to the law itself, with reference to its ideological underpinning and the experience of academic antisemitism in the Central European academic scene.

The first studies have thus to do specifically with the implementation and the immediate or long term impact of the Law 1920/XXV.

Mária N. Kovács gives here some fundamental results of her large scale investigations (to appear in a forthcoming book) on the political circumstances of the vote, the application, the formal amendment and the final consequences of the *numerus clausus* law. By this she extends her earlier analyses on antisemitism in

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴² *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, 1942, 21 – cited in Michael L. Miller’s study in this book.

⁴³ In April 1943 for example Andor Szentmiklóssy, head of the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared a memorandum for Regent Horthy to expose the claim during his forthcoming visit to Hitler that the first anti-Jewish law was due to the Hungarian Parliament. Cf Randolph L. Braham, 1997: *A népirtás politikája. A Holocaust Magyarországon*, /The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary/, Budapest: Belvárosi Könyvkiadó, 1997, 200.

the 'liberal professions' in inter-war Hungary.⁴⁴ She stresses the ambiguities with which representatives of the conservative Right accepted the scheme under the still ongoing White Terror, exemplified in the capital city by the pressure of right radical student battalions and the emerging proto-fascist political establishment of the 'Christian course'. Contrary to allegations that the *numerus clausus* was not fully and equally realised in different institutional settings, she explores some of the market mechanisms and statistical tricks which appear to lend credit to such beliefs. The double talk of the 'consolidation government' after 1921, with different arguments inside the country and those destined to the West, as well as some technical difficulties of the implementation gave indeed rise to a number of historical myths the author is unmasking thanks to her discoveries of the political manoeuvres and practical conditions of enrollments in contemporary universities which marked the management of the anti-Jewish legislation from the 1920s to the 1930s.

Following a number of publications on Hungarian-Jewish issues⁴⁵ as well as long term processes of modernisation and nationalisation of the educational provision in Hungary from the Reform Era till socialism, centred on the growth of the regulatory functions of the State,⁴⁶ Peter Tibor Nagy takes up the problem of the *numerus clausus* as a borderline case of brutal state intervention conducive to the disruption of the liberal educational market. He scrutinizes the process leading from the building up of a pattern of popular anti-Jewish resentment, manipulated by rightist political circles during the war, to the first instance of legislative anti-Jewish repression in Europe during pre-Nazi times for which, via a new type of anti-Jewish scapegoat effect, the revolutions and the counter-revolutionary agitation prepared the road. He accounts step by step for the management of negotiations the pragmatic minded Bethlen government was conducting with its extremist sympathisers and its European critics of the League of Nations, making eventually inescapable the enactment of the 1928 amendment. This did not, though, end the heavily biased competition between elites under utterly unequal terms as it was forcefully defined by the *numerus clausus*.

Having accomplished a number of basic investigations on Hungarian higher education before⁴⁷ and after 1919⁴⁸, which makes him the distinguished

⁴⁴ See her *Liberal Professions, Illiberal Politics. Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*, Oxford, 1994; *The Radical Right and the Hungarian Professions : the Case of Doctors and Lawyers*, in Charles McClelland, Stephan Merl, Hannes Siegrist (ed.), *Professions in Modern Eastern Europe*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1995, 168-188.

⁴⁵ See besides seminal articles his particularly precious digitalised publication (by Peter Tibor Nagy) of the *Magyar-zsidó lexikon* /Hungarian-Jewish encyclopedia/, initially edited by Peter Ujvári (Budapest, 1929), henceforth consultable online : <http://mek.oszk.hu/04000/04093/>

⁴⁶ Cf. *Az egyensúly megbomlása a modern magyar oktatáspolitikában*, /The loss of the balance in Hungarian educational policy/, Budapest, 1996; *Hogyan kerüljük el a polgárosodást ? Magyar oktatáspolitiká, 1867-1945*, /How can we avoid Western type modernisation ? Hungarian educational policy, 1867-1946/, Budapest, 1997.

⁴⁷ See his *A magyarországi felső oktatás a dualizmus kora második felében*, /Higher Education in Hungary in the second part of the Dual Monarchy/, Budapest, FEPEKUT, 1969.

scholarly doyen of this field, *Andor Ladányi*'s focus here is precisely the political history of the controversial 1928 amendment. This is interpreted by some historians as an at least temporary reversal of the anti-Jewish legislation, while others – like the author and other contributors to this volume – consider it rather as a tactical concession made in exchange of expected foreign political benefits, without significant results for Jews beyond a few years (factually after 1933). *Ladányi*'s account dwells on the debates in parliament, started already since the first attempts at a revision in 1923, anti-Jewish mob violence and agitation on campus sites to halt the amendment (masterminded by the Turul corporation), ups and downs of the discussion with Geneva, whereby minister Klebelberg could count on open reservations of the patriotic Jewish leadership, refusing to resort to foreign aid against the government. The study offers a sharp glimpse into the still very unequal application of the selection of students after the amendment, whereby Christian candidates were admitted in a proportion varying (in 1928/9) between 47 % and 100 % in different faculties while their Jewish counterparts just between 5 % and 67 %. This led to the decline of Christian (and general) academic excellence in higher studies.

Victor Karady proposes a sociological investigation – in a shortcut – into the impact of the *numerus clausus* on some structural features of the upcoming educated middle class in the country. Thanks to his recently completed surveys of student populations in the Carpathian Basin – from secondary school graduates to degree holders of higher education since the 1870s till Communist times – systematic comparisons are mobilized here between Jewish and non Jewish alumni (men and women) of Hungarian universities for the years before and after 1919. They concern the participation in the student body at various levels of education (from secondary school onwards), access probabilities to universities, escape routes for Jews abroad and in the provinces, socio-cultural characteristics including father's profession, levels of Magyarization (by percentages of those with Magyar surnames) or regional origins. The study also evaluates the outcome of more general objectives of the *numerus clausus* to limit the 'overcrowding' of universities, reduce the 'intellectual proletariat' and restrict female educational mobility - in contradiction with other policy targets, such as to secure the 'cultural superiority' of Hungarians in the region. A major socio-demographic finding of the study is exemplified by the stagnating or in part decreasing proportions of those with advanced certified learning at successive censuses between 1920 and 1941.

Robert Kerepeszki takes up the problem of the Turul student corporation in a case study centred on the University of Debrecen. Turul was one of the infamous agencies instrumental throughout the interwar years in the production of a climate made of symbolic terror and open anti-Jewish violence in and outside university premises. It was, to be sure, only one of the proto-fascist organisations

⁴⁸ Among his books not cited above, the following is particularly important for our topic : *Az egyetemi ifjúság az ellenforradalom els éveiben (1919-1921)*, (The academic youth in the first years of the counter-revolutionary course, 1919-1921/, Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó, 1979.

pressuring public opinion, including government circles, to keep up, enforce and strengthen anti-Jewish restrictions in academe and in middle class professions. Born in Budapest during the White Terror, it was immediately outlawed after the 1945 turnover, together with all other organisations of the extreme Right. Modelled after the German *Burschenschaften* and borrowing from them some of its machist rituals, the Turul, interestingly enough, claimed to have closer connections with Italian fascism than with emerging Nazism, to the effect of incorporating in its *völkisch* type ideology a line of anti-German ethnic 'Magyarism'. Though engaged in political battles on the side of Right extremism, the Turul leadership kept its distance from political parties, even if many of its rank and file followers would join Nazi movements in the 1940s.

The essay by *Katalin Fenyves* broadens the problem area of the impact of the *numerus clausus* in two ways. On the one hand, the Law 1920/XXV concerned from the outset women as well as Jews, to the effect that for some years after its vote the recruitment of female students actually stopped at the Budapest Medical Faculty. The author offers an overview of the application of enrollment restrictions on women. On the other hand her study suggests a substantial reinterpretation of the repressive law as the first historical case in an erstwhile liberal, Western type provision of public higher education, to confer on the state power decisive competences to limit the size and determine the nature of the social recruitment of the emerging educated elite. In different forms – anti-Jewish *numerus clausus* in the old regime (verging on *numerus nullus* by the end), social class contingents under state socialism or pre-fixed numbers of students with tuition waivers in post-socialist years - this entitlement has been maintained ever since in Hungary as well as in several East Central European societies, though the anti-feminist biases have been all but eliminated since the socialist reforms of higher education.

The second part of the book takes issue with different aspects of the anti-Jewish legislation and its consequences inside and outside Hungary, including similar developments abroad by the case study of Romania.

Csaba Fazekas gives a condensed account of the discursive and mobilisational activities of the highly influential Roman Catholic bishop and theologian Ottokár Prohászka (1858-1927). He was one of the major propagators of political antisemitism in Hungary since the late 19th century and a main initiator, in concrete terms, of the anti-Jewish clause in the original version of what became the Law 1920/XXV. The collection of his anti-Jewish writings and talks were published in a special volume in his times. Even if present day historiography is divided between apologists of the bishop, attempting to neglect or minimize the anti-Jewish bias of his activities, and other historians who see him as a precursor in this matter, the numerous topical quotations and references analysed in the study do not allow much space for an ambiguous interpretation. This central figure of modern Hungarian Catholicism has amply proved to be a protagonist of racist anti-Judaism during the first stage of a development

conducive to the neutralisation of mainstream Hungarian society facing the Nazi danger.

Tibor Frank, author of a recently published comprehensive report on the exiles of the White terror,⁴⁹ invites the reader to participate in a vividly pictured and well researched rambling in the company of intellectual emigrés, mostly Jewish, forced out of the country by the White Terror and the *numerus clausus* in the 1920s. Thanks to the mobilization of a rich documentation – personal recollections, autobiographies, interviews, contemporary press reports and a large array of correspondence between the protagonists under scrutiny – the study evokes and presents several actors of the progressive intelligentsia having left Hungary for the West, mostly under duress, in the inter-war years. Their peregrinations started in Austria, Czechoslovakia or Germany to end up often in America. The main conclusion to be drawn is that the country deprived itself from many of the most creative intellectual messengers of modernity, including a long list like Oszkár Jászi, the Polányis, Georg von Hevesy, Arnold Hauser, Charles de Tolnay, Georg Lukács, Béla Balázs – to cite only some who later became international celebrities. Their careers to world fame and influence are illustrated here by the detailed itinerary in the United States of two artists, the violonist Joseph Szigeti and the revolutionary promoter of the visual arts in the *Bauhaus*, reestablished in Chicago, László Moholy Nagy.

Michael L. Miller is engaged in a vast research on student peregrinations in the post World War I years. He gives here a more focussed look at forced student migrations under the *numerus clausus* in a case study of Hungarian student life in Berlin between the White Terror and the Nazi take-over. Some of those involved succeeded later to reach top positions in international science like the future nuclear physicist Eugene P. Wigner or Leo Szilárd. Others would endure the ordinary existential miseries of poor students and the predicaments of intellectual alienation, which was to some extent alleviated by stipends procured by the Central Student Aid Committee of the Pest Jewish community, or else by generous actions of Hungarian-Jewish philanthropers, like the Berlin based bank director Alfred Manovill.⁵⁰ In spite of efforts at a more balanced cultural diplomacy by the minister Kuno Klebelsberg, who founded a number of *Collegium Hungaricum* in European capitals, like Berlin, the climate of antisemitism was exported to the local Association of Hungarian Students as well. This happened much before the closure to Jews of the German academic market under the Brown Plague (as of April 1933, officialised in the law euphemistically entitled “Against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities”).

⁴⁹ *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009). See also Tibor Frank, Frank Hadler (ed.), *Disputed Territories and Shared Pasts.: Overlapping National Histories in Modern Europe*, (Basingstoke, London, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

⁵⁰ Michael Miller is actually writing a biography of Manovill.

Lucian Nastasa, a renowned specialist of Romanian higher education,⁵¹ has recomposed country⁵² to make it an original contribution on the last European state to grant equal rights to its Jewish citizens. Bound by the Versailles treaty with its stipulations on the obligation of 'minority protection' in the aggrandized Romanian state, the public educational and police authorities appeared indeed to act in most cases (at least up to the late 1930s) in favor of Jews threatened by Right extremist movements. But the menace turned often into open physical aggression against Jewish students who got enrolled for the first times in growing numbers in Romanian universities thanks to their civic emancipation inscribed in the 1923 Constitution. The study gives precious quantified information on the initially growing and later declining share of Jews in Romanian student populations. It also offers an overview of the increasing intensity of anti-Jewish incidents, outbreaks, calumnies, riots, aggressions, which mark the academic scenery in interwar Romania. Compared to this state of affairs, Hungarian academic antisemitism may be qualified as restrained, if not moderate, at least in the sense that it never turned into murderous violence, unlike in the four Romanian centers of advanced learning, especially in Iasi and Czernowitz.

The book is completed by the personal testimony of *János Bak* (eminent medievalist emeritus of the Central European University in Budapest). It is about his experience as a Jewish pupil enrolled in a Budapest gymnasium in 1939, year of the introduction of the *numerus clausus* in secondary education. Connected to the second anti-Jewish law of May 1939, which formally reintroduced, extended and 'racialised' (after the Nürnberg model) the *numerus clausus* of 1920, a ministerial decree imposed a 6 % quota to those defined as Jews (including many converts) on new admissions in secondary education. This restriction applied to state run gymnasiums and *Realschulen* above all. Catholic institutions had already earlier practiced a quasi complete exclusion of Jews (as well as other non Catholics), while Protestant schools with an erstwhile larger Jewish clientele complied with it variously, the Lutherans less than others. Given the very large Jewish student constituency in some central Budapest schools, special 'Jewish classes' were organised in three state gymnasiums. This arrangement was both a 'quasi-liberal' concession - an exception to the *numerus clausus* -, and a humiliating segregation of Jewish pupils amongst their Christian schoolmates.

⁵¹ See especially Lucian Nastasă, *Itinerarii spre lumea savant . Tineri din spa iul rom nesc la studii in str in tate, 1864-1944*, /Itineraries towards the learned world. Students of Romanian background abroad, 1864-1944 / Cluj, Edit. Limes, 2006; Id., „Suveranii” universit tilor românești. Mecanisme de selec ie i promovare a elitei intelectuale, /The "sovereigns" of Romanian universities. Mechanisms of selection and promotion of the intellectual elite/, Cluj, Edit. Limes, 2007; Id., *Intimitatea amfitearelor. Ipostaze din via a privata a universitarilor „literari” (1864-1848)*, /The intimacy of the lecture halls. Sketches from the private life of teachers at the faculty of literature (1864-1948) /, Cluj, Edit. Limes, 2010.

⁵² See Lucian Nastasă (ed.), *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1939). M rturii documentare*, /Academic antisemitism in Romania, 1919-1939, documentary testimonies/, Cluj-Napoca, Edit. Institutului Pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților naționale, Kriterion, 2011.

János Bak's text is an insider's report on ordinary processes of everyday Nazification as perceived by a boy growing up in the years of the anti-Jewish laws, to survive among mortal dangers the German occupation, the murderous *Nyilas* rule and the siege of the capital city.

A broad chronology of historical events leading to and following the enactment of the *numerus clausus* law accompanies the texts of the studies proper. It is worth looking at it in parallel with the chronology attached to Lucian Nastasa's essay, offering glimpses at the mounting tide of Right extremism, which could be identified in similar chronologies of several Eastern and Central European societies in the inter-war years, held spellbound by the mirage of xenophobic nationalism and later Nazification proper. One can identify there all cases of symbolic and physical violence – often mob rule proper – this process involved, wherein large sectors of the upcoming middle class youth found their illusions of collective salvation at the expense of their Jewish comrades and co-citizens.

Part I.

Academe and the politics of numerus clausus

Mária M. Kovács

The Hungarian *numerus clausus*: ideology, apology and history, 1919-1945

The *numerus clausus* law of 1920 applied religious criteria to limit the admission of Jews to universities. The Jewish quota was part of a larger “nationality” quota system, but in the case of all other nationalities, the law prescribed that quotas be calculated by linguistic affiliation. The *numerus clausus*, therefore, virtually created a new legal status for Jews, that of a “nationality” based on religious affiliation. This change was not reflected in relevant parliamentary legislation that would have explicitly altered the legal status of Jews, pronouncing them a nationality, although the radical right tried to push for such a change. Nonetheless, the *numerus clausus* law signaled the start of a new period for Hungarian Jews, one fraught with danger. The law elevated to the plane of government policy the idea that the so-called „Jewish Question” could, and should, be resolved by extraordinary legal measures applied only to Jews, which denied them equality with their fellow citizens. In this sense, the *numerus clausus* was just as much an anti-Jewish Law, as the anti-Jewish Laws of the 1930s.

The numerus clausus law

The law establishing the new system university admissions (Law no. XXV of 1920) did away with the previous system, under which it was enough to be in possession of a high-school diploma in order to register for university studies. The law entitled the Minister of Education to set admission targets, ie. to annually determine how many students would be given places at university each year. This in itself would not necessarily have included differences discriminative towards Jews, since it merely meant that the number of undergraduates who could attend university in a given year was predetermined. At around the same time as Hungary, university quotas were introduced in Norway, Finland and Scotland, without being coupled to any form of discrimination. The law defined the concept of *numerus clausus* thus:

„The number of students to be admitted to the various faculties shall be determined by the Ministers of Religion and Education, based on the recommendation of the relevant faculty (or council at the Polytechnic)”.¹

¹ Magyar Törvénytár [Hungarian Legal Record] (1921), pp. 145-146.

The nationality quota

The discriminatory mechanism of the law was established in its third paragraph, which introduced the nationality quota system. According to this system only as many members of each „nationality” or „race” could be admitted (granted permission to enroll) to university studies as was proportionate with their share of the overall population. The text of the paragraph ran: „When granting permission to register, besides considering the candidate’s national loyalty and moral rectitude, their intellectual ability, care should be taken that the numbers of students from a given race or nationality living in the territory of the country should, if possible, reach the national proportion of that race or nationality, but in any case should represent at least nine tenths of that proportion”.² By implication, no “race” or “nationality” could claim a larger share of university admission than was proportionate to the group’s share in the overall population.

Since the proportion of Jews among the population as a whole in 1920 was 6%, but their numbers among university students hovered around 25% before the War and by 1918 reached 36%, it should already be clear that the majority of Jewish students would be shut out of higher education as a result of the law.

On paper, paragraph three introduced limits that applied to all nationalities. However, with the exception of the Jews, no other minority was affected, since applicants of no other minority made up a larger proportion of all applicants than their quota allowed. As a result, the quota system would not have had any ramifications for them, even if the prescribed proportions for each nationality had been in fact kept to.

But the authors of the law were never really serious about the system of nationality quotas. Its sole purpose, in anticipation of condemnation of the *numerus clausus* law from abroad, primarily from the League of Nations, was to be able to hide the anti-Jewish action in a law that seemingly applied an equal measure to all national minorities. In reality, however – apart from the anti-Jewish actions – the nationality quota system was never really introduced. The Council of the University of Budapest had established as early as 1922 that the nationality quotas „in no way” influenced admissions, and that the law was used exclusively against Jewish students. „Applicants”, wrote the University Council, „do not have to declare, either verbally or in writing, whether they are Hungarian, German, Romanian, etc... and the University itself does not look into this...”³ The council also determined that, given the fact that Hungarian birth certificates did not indicate nationality, it would be impossible, anyway, to observe a nationality quota. Boards of admission – the council concluded - were concerned solely with establishing „whether the applicant is Jewish, or not”.⁴ The University Council came out and said what everybody already knew, that the system of nationality

² Ibid.

³ ELTE Archive, Egyetemi tanácsi jegyzőkönyvek [Minutes of the University Council], 1922/I. ordinary meeting. January 25, 1922.

⁴ Ibid.

quotas was, in fact, nothing else than a Jewish quota hidden within a nationality quota system.

The Jewish quota

Notwithstanding the fact that the legend persists in popular knowledge this day, it is fact an erroneous belief that the expression „Jewish” does not appear anywhere in the text of the *numerus clausus* law. The implementation of the law was determined by the enacting clause. And in this, both the expressions „Jewish” and „Israelite” feature, as does the statement that the term “Jewish” refers not to religious affiliation, but rather to a “nationality”.

In other words, the explicit Jewish quota was not brought into being by the main text of the law itself, but in its enacting clause.⁵ This included a table entitled “The distribution of the population of Hungary according to mother tongue in rump Hungary (together with western Hungary).” Below the main title a line said: “Israelites are to be considered a separate nationality”. In the table itself, the eight groups listed were the Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenians, Croats, Serbs, the Rest and the “Jews”. The provision that Jews are to be considered a separate nationality”, revealed the true intention of the law: the creation of the Jewish quota.

The enacting clause of the *numerus clausus* law

A népesség megoszlása anyanyelv szerint.
Csonka Magyarországon (Nyugat-Magyarországgal együtt).
 Az izraelitákat külön nemzetiségnek véve.

Összes népesség	Magyar	Német	Tót	Román	Ruszin	Horvát	Szerb	Egyéb	Zsidó
7,974,385	6,703,070	700,200	105,074	40,810	1,300	63,504	22,100	31,300	444,500
7%	79%	9%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	5%

A hivatalos másolat hiteles:
Trifán Miklós s. k.
 k. táj. igazgató,
 az állam. ügy. min.

Source: 1920. 123 033 sz. V.K.M. sz. rendelet. Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára (1920) [Book of Hungarian Statutes], 1455-1460.

It is important to clarify that „Israelite”, in the sense of the law in force in Hungary in 1920, did not designate a „nationality”, but a religion. The concept of a „Jewish nationality” did not exist in Hungarian law up till then, nor was such a legal status ever created later. For the purposes of the *numerus clausus*, legislators calculated the quota applying to the various nationalities based on their mother tongues. The size of the quota applied to each was – in principle – based on the linguistic data from the census. Each nationality could be part of higher education in proportion to the number of individuals using its mother tongue within the overall population.

⁵ 1920. 123 033 sz. V.K.M. sz. rendelet. Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára (1920) [Book of Hungarian Statutes], 1455-1460.

However, in the case of Jews, mother tongue was not taken into consideration. They had to be – irrespective of their mother tongue – listed as „separate nationality”, even if their mother tongue was Hungarian. So despite the linguistic principle being the basis of the nationality quota system, when it came to the Jews, their mother tongue made no difference whatsoever. What actually happened therefore was that the enacting clause removed the Jews from their legal status up to that point and – without any specific explanation – declared them to be a nationality, rather than a religious group. It thus applied a unique rule to Jews, a rule that did not apply to the other citizens of the country.

As to the difficult question of who was to be considered Jewish from the point of view of this law, the legislators gave no answer. This omission led to conflicts and scandals at the universities, since even different faculties of the same university interpreted the law differently. Some faculties, as the department of law in Budapest, only applied the quota to those professing the Jewish faith, while other faculties, as the faculty of medicine considered applicants who had converted to Christianity but were either born Jewish, or had Jewish parents, to be „Jewish”. At the faculty of medicine, then, origin by birth trumped religious belonging.

Universities were unable to settle these differences within their own walls. Finally, in 1922, in a tense meeting, the Council of the University of Budapest branded the table attached to the enacting clause of the law a makeshift „scrap of paper” which made it obvious that „both the Parliament and the Government wanted to transfer all the difficulties and unpleasantness of this affair onto the academic faculties”.⁶ The most influential politician in cultural matters of the time, Kunó Klebelsberg, however, thought that on the basis of the law of 1920, it was the faculty of medicine that had drawn the correct and logical conclusion.

In 1920, the legislature – said Klebelsberg in Parliament eight years later – „had the explicit purpose” in creating the *numerus clausus* law „of declaring Jews to be a race. ... Because once Jews are declared a race, it is no longer possible to flee from a race as it is – for example – from a religion, by conversion, or an ethnicity by declaring oneself to be of a different nationality”.⁷ In other words, Jews had to be classified according to origin as a „race” in to prevent them from using religious or linguistic „justifications” for „escaping” the restrictions imposed upon them.

Therefore, contrary to the frequently held interpretation in Hungarian historiography, in Hungary discrimination by origin did not start in 1939 with the so-called second anti-Jewish law, but in 1920 with the explicit Jewish quota of the *numerus clausus*, even if at this early stage, discrimination by origin was not a uniform practice across the entire spectrum of higher education, but only in certain institutions.

⁶ ELTE Archive, Rectori Hivatal [Rector’s Office], Egyetemi tanácsi jegyzőkönyvek [Minutes of the University Council], 1922/I. ordinary meeting.

⁷ Diary of the Chamber of Deputies [Képviselőházi Napló], 1927, vol IX, p. 198 (23 Feb 1928)

The risks and the double-talk

For a Hungary struggling with the losses of World War One, the introduction of the Jewish quota was a risky move. The goodwill of the Western Powers was needed in order to achieve Hungary's diplomatic goals, but state-level anti-Semitism damaged Hungary's reputation abroad and complicated the raising of international loans necessary for Hungary's economic consolidation. This explains the unusual phenomenon that while in the Parliament and the press, the subject of *numerus clausus* was accompanied by vicious anti-Semitic rhetoric, in Government circles, the topic was nonetheless surrounded by a less than frank dissimulation and double-talk.

The country's political leaders – from international political considerations – thought it unwise to speak officially quite openly about the anti-Jewish intentions behind the law. Alajos Kovács, a statistician, ministerial advisor to the Office of Statistics (and later its President), described the need for this double-talk thus: „Those statesmen who today hold in their hands the future of the country...will have a difficult time resolving the Jewish Question without making the philosemitic West angry at us”.⁸

This meant in effect that anti-Jewish actions had to be disguised in a legal framework that neither foreign opinion nor the League of Nations could fault. As István Haller, Minister of Culture for the first Teleki government noted, the legislature had to find an answer to the Jewish Question that „reached the very goal itself, but was unimpeachable and will not lead to any difficulties for the country and the nation anywhere.”⁹

The law was also detrimental for the newly-minoritarian Hungarians in Romania. Romania used the analogy of the Hungarian *numerus clausus* law to justify the closing down of a string of Hungarian schools, arguing that the situation of the Hungarians in Romania was very similar to the situation of the Jews in Hungary, and that therefore the „disproportionate” educational opportunities inherited from the previous system could be withdrawn from the Transylvanian Hungarians. For this very reason, the Bishops of the Transylvanian Hungarian Churches asked the Hungarian government as early as 1922 to repeal the Hungarian law, to help the situation of the now minority Hungarian community in Romania.¹⁰ Eight years later, this prejudicial effect of the law on the Hungarians of Romania was also emphasized towards the end of the 1920s, as

⁸ Alajos Kovács, The expansion of Jewry in Hungary [A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon], Budapest, 1922, p. 53

⁹ Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], 1920, vol. II, p. 395. (session of the 29 April 1920).

¹⁰ Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], 1922, vol. II, p. 224 (1922. július 20).

an argument in favor of the modification of the Jewish quota, by the Minister of Culture, Kunó Klebelsberg.¹¹

But the introduction of the *numerus clausus* law also entailed risks in domestic politics: it shook the feeling of security of the Jewish bourgeoisie, and thus endangered post-War economic consolidation. As Lóránt Hegedűs, the Minister of Finance for the Teleki government said: „Patriotic [Hungarian] Jews can not effectively co-operate in attracting foreign investment to Hungary until we Christians have not destroyed this law”.¹²

Hungary's leading politicians were aware of the international and domestic political risks of the Jewish quota right from the start. A good indication is that three successive governments in office following the collapse of the communist revolution of 1919 resisted the demand of extreme anti-Semitic forces to put the Jewish quota into law. When the law was finally accepted by Parliament in the autumn of 1920, it is notable that the Prime Minister, Pál Teleki, did not attend the vote, and several of the leading politicians of the age abstained from voting, among them István Bethlen and Kunó Klebelsberg. The majority of the government's ministers also did not attend the vote, nor did 70% of the members of Parliament. The government therefore carried the derogation of Jewish rights through Parliament by transferring responsibility for the law, the draft of which the government had itself introduced to parliament – thus hoping to be able to preserve the international respectability of the government.

Ideology and apologia

The Jewish quota was initially in force until 1928, and during these eight years, the Hungarian government received numerous strictures, both from home and abroad. As a response to these, there developed an entire set of apologetic justifications with which the Government tried to deflect foreign criticism. The Jewish quota was then formally abolished in 1928. However, the new quota based on the parents' occupational affiliation also served to exclude the Jews, as did its predecessor. Then, from 1934 onwards, the euphemistically named „professional” quota was once more called in official communication what it really was: „Jewish proportionality”. Five years later, the 1939 anti-Jewish law formally re-established the Jewish quota at universities.

The ideology behind, and the justification for the Jewish quota that was developed in the early 1920s nonetheless survived these developments. So much so that certain elements of the ideologically motivated contemporary justifications for the law still, to this day, pop up occasionally in the historiography of the

¹¹ Preamble to the „modification of the XXV law of 1920 regulating admissions to universities, the Technical University, the College of Law and the Faculty of Economics of Budapest University” draft law, Documents of the Upper House [Felsőházi irományok], 1927-IV, p. 398 (18 Nov 1927).

¹² Pester Lloyd, 1 Aug 1926 (quoted by Haller, 1926, p. 248.)

period. These original official justifications for the law, however, fail to sufficiently explain the reasons behind the legislation. Although there was much talk of the very real effects of the crises of the time, the law did not present a viable solution for these. The Jewish quota was not a well thought-through policy to tackle the postwar crisis, but rather – as Kunó Klebelsberg, the Minister of Culture responsible for keeping the quota alive for years, later acknowledged – was the product of makeshift „desultory legislation”, which – in an exceptional historical moment – translated ideas based on false premises into the language of the law. Such legislation could not fulfill the expectations attached to it, indeed that it was nonsensical even from the point of view of majority society.¹³ „It is extremely hard”, Viktor Karády wrote, „to consider rationally this mass of obvious gobbledygook that is the hallmark of anti-Semitic speeches, which often therefore remind one of the emotional product of delirium tremens...The causal connection between the justifications produced [for their views] by modern Jew-haters and the consequences of the hatred of Jews is either entirely non-existent or remarkably vague.”¹⁴

My intention in this paper is not to look for these vague causal connections. Rather, I would like to direct attention to those interpretative traps that contemporary justifications of the law had set for the subsequent historiography; thanks to which, the racial paragraph of the *numerus clausus* continues to be presented, to this day, as a sociologically sensible response to the crisis caused by the War, the revolutions, and the loss of territory. In other words, I intend to re-examine a set of relevant facts, library and archival sources, statistics and use them to uncover the sources of some of those persistent legends that have come to surround the story of the *numerus clausus* in the past century.

The war years and the refugee question

One of the officially stated aims of the law was to create room to clear the higher education backlog of male Christian youth who had completed their military service, which had come into being because of the War. But their problem did not necessitate new legislation. The necessary spaces could have been created for them in Hungary, as it had been done in several other European countries affected by the War with supplementary summer semesters and relaxed admissions criteria. In most countries of Europe, including countries with high proportion of Jews in education, there was a similar glut of studies delayed by the war, but Hungary alone introduced a Jewish quota in 1920.

¹³ „Indoklás „a tudományegyetemekre, a műegyetemre, a budapesti egyetemi közgazdaságtudományi karra és a jogakadémiákra való beiratkozás szabályzásáról szóló 1920. évi XXV. Törvénycikk módosításáról” szóló törvényjavaslathoz” (Justification for the modification of Law 1920 XXV. on the regulation of registration to universities, the Polytechnic, the faculty of economics and law academics.) Felsőházi irományok, 1927. IV. 400. old. (1927. november 18.)

¹⁴ Viktor Karády, Jewry in Modern Europe [Zsidóság Európában a modern korban], Budapest, Új Mandátum, pp. 333-334.

The second official reason was that the rights to education of Jews had to be cut back to make space for the sons of middle-class refugees created by the territorial losses at Trianon. According to this reasoning, the quota could only have been abolished if the borders set by Trianon changed. „Let them give us back the old Greater Hungary”, Klebelsberg said in Parliament, „and we will be able to remove the *numerus clausus* from effect”.¹⁵ This was plain talk.

But the sociological facts underlying it were not so clear. The students seeking refuge in Trianon Hungary could have been accommodated without squeezing the Jews out. The universities where these students had originally been enrolled, namely the Universities of Cluj and Bratislava, were also transferred to Hungarian soil. Soon after their transfer, it turned out that in fact, there was more room at the country's four universities (Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged) than could have been filled with Christian students, refugees and non-refugees combined. Once the backlog from the war years disappeared, it emerged that admission target numbers set by the government under the mandate provided by the *numerus clausus* law (keretszámok) could not even be filled, especially if the 6% Jewish quota was observed in first-year admissions. „Despite [the] *numerus clausus*” said Klebelsberg in 1925, „the children of the Christian educated classes did not apply to university in greater numbers”.¹⁶ Dezső Laky, an expert statistician noted that as early as 1924, “the almost abnormal rush of our youth to universities has taken the opposite turn”.¹⁷ So by the mid-1920s, the government decided to reduce admission target numbers to a level that was characteristic of pre-war years. The overall number of students was also down to pre-war dimensions.

However, even so, given the restrictive Jewish quota, many more Christian high-school graduates were theoretically needed to fill up prewar levels at the universities. For instance, back in 1911/12 when the Jewish quota did not exist, only 8906 Christian students were needed to reach a total student population of 12 247 at universities and law academies, the rest of the places were filled by

3 368 Jews.¹⁸ But in 1925/26, when the overall number of students was again similar to 1911/12, totaling 12 326, the number of Christian students at universities and law academies was a total of 11 043 which meant that the number

¹⁵ Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], (1922-26), vol. XXIV, 295th session, 4 June 1924, p. 320.

¹⁶ MOL, K 305, VKM Document Fragments, Count Kunó Klebelsberg's address to the League of Nations concerning the *numerus clausus*, 1925, XI. 30.

¹⁷ Király Sándor, *Az egyetemi hallgatóság társadalmi arculata Magyarországon a két világháború között* (The social profile of university students in interwar Hungary), *Doktori Értekezés*, Debrecen, BTK, 2009., 16. old.

¹⁸ In this year when the actual number of high-school graduates continuing at universities and law academies (Jews and non-Jews) was 2805, the rest were from the so-called upper trade schools and older cohorts who had graduated from high school in previous years. (Data from the Hungarian Statistical Yearbook)

of Christian students surpassed the 1911/12 numbers with 2 137.¹⁹ However, once the backlog from the war years was cleared, a surplus of two thousand Christian students, as compared to pre-war levels, was not at all so easy to produce, especially as the number of Christian high-school diplomas did not increase significantly.²⁰

So, by 1924 the tide has changed. In 1924/25, the Budapest medical faculty for instance, would have needed 400 applicants to fulfill admission targets.²¹ After subtracting the 6% allotted to Jews, they still would have needed 376 Christian applicants, but only 253 applied, followed by only 280 in 1925/6,²² 273 in 1926/27²³ and 278 in 1927/8.²⁴ In order to make up for the shortage of applicants, the Budapest faculty convinced first year Christian medical students from other universities in the country (Pécs, Szeged) to move to Budapest during the academic year, thus altering the racial balance of cohorts during the academic year in those universities. Even so, applicant numbers continued to decline until, in 1928 the admission target for the Budapest medical faculty was reduced by the minister of education to a little over half of what it had been before, from 400 to 240. Similar reductions applied to other faculties and universities. The same shortage of applicants was characteristic of the technical university where, in 1925, there were only 558 applicants for 670 allotted places, of whom only 472 were acceptable.²⁵ The field that did not experience this kind of shortage of Christian applicants consistently was law.

But all in all, by the mid-1920s, it gradually became clear that, having excluded the majority of Jewish high-school graduates from university studies, and having got rid of the backlog from the war, the number of Christian applicants

¹⁹ In this year the actual number of high-school graduates continuing at universities and law academies (Jews and non-Jews) was 2638, lower than the figure for 1911. (Data from the Hungarian Statistical Yearbook).

²⁰ The number of high-school degrees issued (*gimnázium és real iskola*) to Christians was 3900 in 1911/12, 4128 in 1912/13, 4452 in 1913/4, but only 3017 in 1919/20, 3533 in 1920/21, 3420 in 1921/22, 3242 in 1922/23, 3558 in 1923/24, 3512 in 1924/25, 3819 in 1925/26. (Data from the Hungarian Statistical Yearbook.) Around a tenth of all applicants to higher education in institutions falling under the *numerus clausus* legislation were from the so-called upper trade schools. (Asztalos József, *A magyar főiskolai hallgatók statisztikája az 1930/31. tanévben*, Bp. 1932. 31. old. Given that an average of a third or more of all university students were first year students, these graduates would have had to make up for a yearly 3-400 Christian applicants. This target was not easily reachable, even if all those exiting high-school (*gimnázium* and *reáliskola*) would have applied to universities, which was, of course, not the case. The ratio of high-school graduates continuing at universities was 1919/20:42.6%, 1920/21: 47.6%, 1921/22: 52.4%, 1922/23: 45.4%, 1924/25: 51.5%. (Data from the Hungarian Statistical Yearbook).

²¹ SOTE Levéltár, A budapesti kir. Magyar Pázmány Péter tudományegyetem orvostudományi tanártestületének 1924 szeptember 10-én tartott I. rendes ülése; Uo. 1925 szeptember 10-én tartott I. rendes ülés. Ld. még Haller (1926), 144, 233.

²² U.o. 1925. szept. 10, I. rendes ülés, 1926. szept. 7. I. rendes ülés.

²³ U.o. 1927. III. rendes ülés.

²⁴ U.o. 1928. okt. 9. II. rendes ülés.

²⁵ BME LT. 3/a, 5, 1926. (Council of the Technical University [Műegyetemi tanács] 11 November 1926.)

to universities was hardly enough to satisfy government-set admissions targets at many faculties, even if those were reduced to the pre-war level.²⁶ It emerged that the law conceived in the hysterical atmosphere of 1920, which established government-set admission targets and the Jewish quota, was based on false premises: neither the refugees, nor the Christian middle class of post-Trianon Hungary applied to the universities in the numbers of the sort of blind panic that might have justified the whole measure. Once the backlog from the war was cleared, the conceptual, besides the moral, weakness of the *numerus clausus* law became evident: the assumption that there would be at least an overall 25% increase in Christian high-school graduates interested in university education to fill places on the level of the pre-war years after the exclusion of most of the Jews was, in itself, seriously questionable.

Conservatives and radicals

It is an axiomatic element of the discourse on the *numerus clausus* that the law was born of the struggle, and horse-trading, of the extreme Right and the conservative Right. According to this view, the Jewish quota was forced onto the conservative Right by the political force of the extreme Right and anti-Semitic student associations, while the conservative Right was generally against the introduction of the Jewish quota. According to this view, the Teleki government introduced the *numerus clausus* law in order to „disarm” the popular anti-Semitic mood which was prevalent following the Revolutions, and to „take the wind out of the sails” of the radical Right. The Bethlen government used this reasoning to justify the origin and continued existence of the law for years during the League of Nations’ enquiries. This justification is deceptive, though, insofar as it creates the mistaken impression that it was only the extreme Right that supported the Jewish quota, while the country’s conservative leaders disapproved of it. But Prime Minister Teleki certainly did not introduce the law merely because of pressure from the extreme Right.²⁷ Teleki was in fact very much in favor of the Jewish quota. Prior to its introduction he publicly declared that „if possible, the places for Jews in the intellectual sphere, should be proportionally reduced”, and in order to achieve this, an institutional answer was required.²⁸ His government did not try to silence the anti-Semitic student groups, but rather encouraged them.²⁹ A month after the law’s introduction in September of 1920, the Teleki government issued a decree that strengthened its strictures, and allowed for the admissions committees certifying „patriotic spirit” to contain two student members of anti-revolutionary organizations. It was these committees that

²⁶ Haller 1926, pp. 144 and 233.

²⁷ Balázs Ablonczy, „Epilogue”, Balázs Ablonczy (ed.) Selected political writings and speeches of Pál Teleki, Budapest, 2000, p. 552.

²⁸ Pesti Élet, 15 September 1919, p. 3

²⁹ Zinner (1989), p. 79. The campaigns at the universities were led by the „Ébredő Magyarok” [‘Wakening Magyars’].

eventually removed several thousand upper-cohort Jewish students from university.³⁰

The cases of other moderate conservative leaders, as István Bethlen and Klebelsberg were different. For a start, the taking of unnecessary international risks was far from Bethlen's political style, since – as he said – „the country has much greater problems than the Jewish Question”, and the resolution of these problems could not be made subordinate to any second-rate troubles.³¹ That notwithstanding, it cannot be said of either Bethlen or Klebelsberg that they opposed the law, once they got it „ready-made” from the Teleki government. They both defended it for years against domestic and international criticism.³² And when – at the end of the 1920s – Bethlen and his circle did decide that this anti-Jewish action had to be discontinued (at least on paper), Teleki turned against them and vigorously defended the paragraph on race, thereby belatedly reinforcing that it had not been against his better conscience that his government introduced the quota in the autumn of 1920.

The line between the conservative and the radical Right in the matter of the *numerus clausus* therefore, was not nearly as sharp as it might have been. In fact, Bethlen himself considered the quota a useful tool, with the help of which – as he put it – the position of the Jews in Hungary could be sufficiently weakened until the members of the non-Jewish middle class, who represented the „race conforming to historical tradition” would be „the leaders of the nation once more”.³³ However – ran Bethlen's thinking – it would be quite improper to allow domestic struggles over the Jewish question to 'get in the way of' international aims.³⁴ Bethlen put off the radicals because they wanted to place their anti-Semitic views at the center of Hungarian political life, „on the shelf of the lone star ruling the sky of Hungarian politics”, while they ignored the „much larger, much more burning, more dangerous problems which threatened the life of the nation, as if these were not [the problems] that ought in the first place to guide the compass of Hungarian political life”.³⁵ Bethlen thought that obsessive anti-Semitism crippled the problem solving capacity of Hungarian political life. During the course of the 1920s, he increasingly distanced his government from

³⁰ VKM 136.515/1920 qualifying decree 19 October 1920.

³¹ István Bethlen's speech, Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], 1922. vol XV, (27 July 1923), p. 176.

³² According to Ignác Romsics, author of the most reliable biography Bethlen – although he did not comment on the matter – „most likely” agreed with the anti-Semitic ramifications of the *numerus clausus* (Romsics, 1991, p. 113.)

³³ Bethlen's 1925 interview with the press is quoted in Ignác Romsics: Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz [István Bethlen, a political biography], Osiris, Budapest, 1991, p. 201

³⁴ István Bethlen's speech, Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], 1922. vol XV, (27 July 1923), p. 176.

³⁵ István Bethlen's speech in Debrecen, 8th May 1922, in Speeches and writings of Count István Bethlen [Bethlen István gróf beszédei és írásai], Budapest, Genius publishers, vol. I, p. 236. See also p. 128.

political anti-Semitism. He nonetheless did not end the Jewish quota until the League of Nations initiated determined action against Hungary. And when he did modify the law in 1928, he approved the recommendations of his Minister of Culture which, no longer with declared racial quotas, but now with quotas on the occupational position of the father, still served to exclude Jews.

The sociological reasoning

The third important element of *numerus clausus* discourse, also inherited from the 1920s, is the assertion that the anti-Semitic law was necessary in order to slow the frightening over-burgeoning of people with university degrees, or – as Kunó Klebelsberg, the Minister of Culture, noted at the 1925 conference of the League of Nations, to protect „against the development of an intellectual proletariat.”³⁶

Despite rehearsing this apologia in international fora, even Klebelsberg himself did not believe it. He said as much, exposing himself to the charge that he adapted his views to suit the audience he was addressing. „I never associated myself with this law”, he told the press in 1927, „I merely inherited it.”³⁷ As for the theories about the glut of intellectuals, he labeled them simple demagoguery: „Unfortunately in Hungary, one can achieve absolutely anything with slogans. The talk of the glut of intellectual proletarians is just such a slogan, which may have dangerous consequences...School is school, you can't make a socio-political or economic question out of it.”³⁸ The thought that the surplus of university graduates could be prevented with state intervention, Klebelsberg labeled a straight „impossibility”, which „takes us down an impassable road” and leads to political conflict.³⁹

But there were aspects of the *numerus clausus* law that Klebelsberg, despite all this, did approve of. Even if he did not agree with the existence of the official Jewish quota, he did agree that Jews should somehow be kept out of the universities. In his 1926 private letter to Bethlen, he suggested that the exclusion of Jews from the universities should be achieved by means other than the official quota. „As a lawyer, I can see quite clearly that, the way our law is currently phrased, we can not approach the Cour permanent in the Hague with any hope of success...We will therefore have to revise the law, not in order again to unleash thousands of Jewish university students on the nation, but rather in order to conserve the meaning of the enterprise by taking certain rational actions. In this regard, I have my ideas (autonomous admissions committees at the universities; stressing, alongside intellectual ability or talent shown in one or two subjects, the

³⁶ MOL, K 305, VKM Document Fragments, Count Kunó Klebelsberg's address to the League of Nations concerning the *numerus clausus*, 1925, XI. 30.

³⁷ MTI Survey of the Hungarian Press [Magyar lapszemle], 21 October 1927. <http://archiv1920-1944.mti.hu/Pages/PDFSearch.aspx?Pmd=1> (2011-03-07)

³⁸ Pesti Napló, 4 September, p. 5.

³⁹ Ibid.

rating of comportment and physical education, etc.)...I would consider the complete opening of the floodgates a catastrophe, and therefore I think it is necessary to construct, with the co-operation of discreet Christian politicians, a text that will give no pretext for interference from Geneva or the Hague."⁴⁰ All of Klebelsberg's suggestions are to do with how the anti-Jewish restrictions deleted from the letter of the law could continue to be maintained in practice.

„Proportionality”

A vocal part of the extreme Right did not in fact envision the introduction of the Jewish quota within the framework of a higher education law at all, but wanted a much broader anti-Jewish law affecting all branches of the economy. The statistician who elaborated the statistical background of the Jewish quota, Alajos Kovács, was in favor of regulations that would change the differences apparent in the „social status” of Jews and non-Jews: they would reduce the proportion of the bourgeoisie and liberal professionals among Jews.⁴¹ According to Kovács, Jews held a disproportionate amount of the national wealth and income, at around 20-25%. It was this proportion that he would have liked to have seen reduced to the 5.9% that reflected the proportion of Jews within the overall national population.

The logical sequence of Kovács' „proportionality” program would have been that the exclusion of Jews should have started in those branches in which they were present in the greatest proportion, principally the banking and trade sectors. Compared to the proportion of these two sectors Jews occupied in 1920, their proportion of 13.4% in the liberal professions and civil service as a whole was not so high: in the banking sector, 80.6% of directors and 43.7% of employees were Jewish; while in the trading sector, 53.6% of self-employed merchants and 48.2% of employees were Jewish.⁴²

At the beginning of the '20s, though, there was no realistic expectation that the Hungarian state would regulate the workings of an economy based on the principle of private property, with a racial quota system. It was unthinkable that there be legislation to dictate to firms from which religion or race they could hire employees, and from which not: this historic change did not come to pass right up until 1938. In the international political climate of the 1920s, anti-Jewish employment regulations could only be effected in areas where the state itself was the employer, principally in the civil service, from where – by means of compulsory retirements – they got rid of most Jewish employees.

⁴⁰ Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs (eds.) *The secret documents of István Bethlen* [Bethlen István titkos iratai], Budapest, Kossuth, 1972, pp. 256-257.

⁴¹ Alajos Kovács: „The extent of Jewry in Hungary” [A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon], Budapest, 1922.

⁴² Alajos Kovács (1938), p. 64.

The over-representation of Jews among the university-educated professionals

Under Kovács' „proportionality” program, the role of the Jewish quota in the universities was to „make out space” for the children of the Christian middle class. However, soon after the introduction of *numerus clausus*, it became apparent that the program was based on a mistaken premise. It turned out that despite forcing the majority of Jewish students out of the universities, non-Jewish families could not, or did not want to send their children to university in significantly larger numbers. The truth was that prior to the *numerus clausus*, Jewish students did not block the entry of non-Jews to universities. The law regulated a field that had previously not had any kind of limits on attendance. The proportion of Jewish students was indeed high. But this was not because Jewish students occupied „too many” in a system with a defined number of places. Rather, it was the number of „Christian” applicants, put into contrast with the Jewish students that did not live up to expectations. The phenomenon of “Jewish overrepresentation” at the universities of which the Jews were accused was not the result of an exclusionary rivalry between Jewish and non-Jewish students in a zero-sum game. Indeed, Jews were present among university students in a proportionally high number because a greater proportion of Jewish youths went to high school than their non-Jewish counterparts, and a greater proportion of Jewish high school graduates enrolled at university than non-Jewish ones.⁴³

The highly politicized statistical literature of the day tended nonetheless, for campaign purposes, to exaggerate the space Jews „took up” among educated professionals. Arguments in this literature were based on the statistical fact that in 1920, the 13.4% proportion of Jews in the educated liberal professions and the civil service exceeded the 5.9% proportion of Jews in the overall population of the country.⁴⁴ Even if the facts used were correct, the interpretations put on them were used in a demagogic fashion.

Three quarters of the Jewish population was urban, while the majority of the non-Jewish population lived in rural communities, that is to say, villages.⁴⁵ It is obvious that if we compare a mostly urban population with a mostly rural population in a purely mechanical way, the mostly urban group will exhibit a higher degree of educational achievement and as a result, will have a higher proportion of members engaged in the educated professions. This was particularly so among the poorer classes, who – although they could afford to have their children educated in their own city – could not bear the cost of sending their children somewhere else to continue their studies. It is not surprising that the exclusion of Jews after 1920 did not bring about changes in the educational tendencies of the rural population. In 1914, the children of agricultural labourers

⁴³ Karády 1977, p. 251.

⁴⁴ Alajos Kovács (1938), p. 67.

⁴⁵ Gyáni, p. 215.

made up 0.6% of all university students, their absolute numbers remained under 50, and this number did not rise even after the introduction of the Jewish quota: in 1930, of the 16 930 students at university, a total of 49 persons came from such families.⁴⁶ The children of tenant farmers made up a total of 6.3% of all university students in 1914, and after the introduction of the *numerus clausus*, this number remained similar right up until the middle of the 1930s.⁴⁷ Given that within the social pyramid, these rural classes made up the majority of the population, it was irrational to compare the over-representation of the three-quarters urban Jewish population with the data of the mostly rural agrarian population.

In order to get an image of the degree of over-representation of Jews free of demagoguery, we have to compare their data not to the overall population of the country – which was still mostly rural – but to the urban population. In the capital, for instance, where nearly a quarter of the population was Jewish, the 25-28% of university students who were Jews is not nearly as disproportionate as the heavily ideological statistical literature of the day made out.

Contemporary observers had also noted these problems in the use of data and interpretations, which exaggerated the amount of space Jews „took up” years before the introduction of the *numerus clausus* law. The Christian Socialist politician, Sándor Giesswein warned in 1917 that the high rate of urbanization among Jews lay behind the phenomenon: „First of all, a much greater percentage of Jewish children live in the cities than Christian children, and has concomitantly greater access to the means of education and learning than Christian children. Second, the Jewish child is allowed to learn, whether he be a rag-picker’s or a banker’s son. Among Christians, however, it is mostly only the sons of the upper classes, the gentry and the intelligentsia who make it to the halls of learning...”⁴⁸

Additionally, the participation of Jews in all levels of education – beneath university level – was also higher than that of non-Jews: Alajos Kovács held the degree of difference to be simply „horrifying”.⁴⁹ While in 1910, 31% of the overall population was illiterate, only 13% of Jews were counted as such and even in their case the knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet was not counted.⁵⁰ The educational indicators of the Jewish populace were better at all levels than that of

⁴⁶ Rudolf Andorka, The social composition of students at the universities and polytechnics [Az egyetemi és főiskolai hallgatók társadalmi összetétele] 1898-1942, Statistical Review [Statisztikai Szemle], 1979/2, p. 178. The numbers of the children of agricultural workers began to increase somewhat from the middle of the 1930s thanks to the establishment of various scholarships.

⁴⁷ Rudolf Andorka, The social composition of students at the universities and polytechnics [Az egyetemi és főiskolai hallgatók társadalmi összetétele] 1898-1942, Statistical Review [Statisztikai Szemle], 1979/2, p. 183. The children of smallholders made up 6.3% of university students between 1914-19, 7.7% between 1920-25, 7.2% from 1925-29, and 6.7% in 1930.

⁴⁸ „The Jewish Question in Hungary” [„A zsidókérdés Magyarországon”] A Survey of the Twentieth Century [Huszadik Század Körkérdése,] Budapest, 1917, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁹ Alajos Kovács (1922), p. 29.

⁵⁰ True, the 1910 census declared only 87% of Jews literate, but this was because those Jews who could only read or write in Hebrew were officially counted as illiterate. Miklós Szabó, The Chosen People of Modernisation [A modernizáció kiválasztott népe], Mozgó Világ, September 2000, 26/9, <http://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00009/szep8.htm>.

the non-Jewish population.⁵¹ In 1910, of Jewish boys aged 19 or older, 18.2% had high-school diplomas, while for Catholics the figure was 4.2%, and Protestants, 3.9%.⁵² More than a third of all high-school graduates were Jewish, at 35.4%.⁵³

The link between education, urbanization and the professional structure was obvious to contemporary observers. This is what Vilmos Vázsonyi highlighted in saying that the comparison of the educational data of the mostly urbanized Jewish populace with the mostly agrarian non-Jewish populace was a „fallacy” that was bound to produce false results: „If I am honestly looking for the proportion, I have not to look at the proportion of the country overall that sends their children to university, but the proportion of the urban population that sends its children to university.”⁵⁴ And since the proportion of Jews among the urban populace was 13% in 1920, the 13.4% of the jobs in the „civil service and liberal professions” held by Jews was, in fact, proportionate to the proportion of Jews in the urban population.⁵⁵ Applying this standard, we get a completely different picture of the degree of „over-representation” too. We find that in 1920, of the country’s 57,966 Christian university graduates, only one fifth (11,105) worked in professions where the proportion of Jews exceeded 13%. And despite the proportion of Jewish graduates being lowest (at 4.9%) in the group which employed the most – around 30,000 members – of the university-educated intelligentsia, the civil service, this was not a feature that would have been emphasized by anti-Semitic propaganda. The presence of Jews was much more obvious in those liberal professions where, although their real numbers were far smaller (at a few thousand people), the proportion of the whole they made up was unusually high – as for example among doctors, pharmacists, or lawyers.

True, in some of these professions, such as the medical or legal professions, the over-representation of Jews – by any measure – was salient: 49.4% of lawyers or legal trainees, and 46.3% of doctors were Jewish. But these were small professions, accounting for less than one fifth of the Hungarian university-educated intelligentsia; although it is also true that it was a fifth with a loud voice, which created the false impression of the Jews’ „taking up of space” was the biggest concern facing the Hungarian intelligentsia. Ede Alföldy, a judge, explained this overreaction in the columns of *„Huszadik Század”* [Twentieth Century] by arguing that Jews had been excluded for so long from educated positions, that when this prohibition ceased following emancipation, Hungarian society could not come to terms with the new situation. „First and foremost, as for the accusation that the better social positions are awash with Jews, let us not forget when considering this, our traditional prejudice that deems it natural that

⁵¹ Karády (1997) p. 17, and Tibor Péter Nagy, *The growing influence of the state in Hungarian education, 1867-1945*, *Iskolakultúra* 2005/6–7, http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00011/00094/pdf/tan_vita2005-6-7.pdf

⁵² Alajos Kovács (1922), p. 29.

⁵³ Alajos Kovács (1922), p. 31.

⁵⁴ *Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló]*, 1922. Vol XXXVIII, p. 220 (12 December 1925).

⁵⁵ Alajos Kovács (1938), p. 61.

Jews be excluded from any significant position in public life, which makes even insignificant gains on their part look like the gathering of untrammelled power. Even the appearance of Jews in field where we are not used to their presence gives the impression that some unscrupulous intrusion has taken place.”⁵⁶

The extent to which the Jewish intelligentsia „took up space” was also enlarged by the fact that in everyday language, „intelligentsia” referred not only to university graduates, but to all those who were engaged in white collar work. Anti-Semitic politicians frequently complained of the „Judaisation” of professions which did not even require university degrees, so it would seem more logical for them to have demanded not so much a quota on university students, but a *numerus clausus* on places in high schools. But in the end, the *numerus clausus* law created anti-Jewish restrictions only for university students. At the same time, the restrictions on women’s rights to education in force prior to 1918 were also re-established. The intervention against female university students also had an anti-Jewish edge, since more than half of female medical students (62%) were Jewish, while in the humanities, this figure was 48%.⁵⁷

Antisemitism and the „provocation law”

The Christian middle classes could not expect direct advantages from the *numerus clausus* law. What could be expected at most was that in the long run (over decades), it would reduce the number of Jewish graduate professionals. Immediately palpable benefits could only have been expected if the *numerus clausus* was extended to the professional occupations that required a graduate degree – medicine, law, engineering, teaching, etc. But this was still unthinkable in the Europe of the 1920s.

It was therefore obvious to contemporary observers that the *numerus clausus* in the universities was not an instrument for dealing with any kind of social problem. The smallholder, Rezső Rupert, called the *numerus clausus* a „provocation law”, a „pinprick law” which, although it „put stakes” in the gates of the universities, could not alleviate the economic woes of the intelligentsia, and was only good for „provoking Jewry and with it, the world”.⁵⁸ Károly Grecsák, Minister of Justice in the Wekerle government (1917-1918), was of a similar opinion. He noted that the university *numerus clausus* did not solve any social problem, because it was no more than „a hate law conceived in hysteria”.⁵⁹ Grecsák was of course not using the expression „hate law” in the meaning common today, but in the sense that the law was born out of hatred and its goals was precisely to maintain and elevate into a norm that anti-Jewish feelings which

⁵⁶ A Survey of the Twentieth Century [Husadik Század Körkérdése], Budapest, 1917, p. 42.

⁵⁷ Mária M. Kovács, The turning point of Hungarian Feminism [A Magyar Feminizmus korszakfordulója], Café Babel, 1994, 1-2, pp. 179-183. 48% of the students of humanities were Jewish in 1918.

⁵⁸ Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló], 1920. Vol. V., p. 421 (20 September 1920)

⁵⁹ Pál Bethlen (1925), p. 29.

was inflamed throughout the country during the War and the revolutions. The provision of the law that gave the university admissions councils the right to judge the applicant's „patriotism”, and disbar applicants, who had taken part in the revolutions or belonged to left-wing organizations, served a similar purpose.⁶⁰

Hungary's new political establishment that gained power after 1920 did not consider it their task to protect the country's Jewish citizens from such feelings. In the person of Pál Teleki, who took over the running of the country in the summer of 1920, the country had a leader who thought that the emancipation of the Jews had been a historical error that „had to be corrected” even by means of „the stripping of rights” if necessary.”⁶¹

After a year, when Teleki's place was taken at the country's helm by István Bethlen, anti-Semitism was suppressed in government-level politics. But despite the fact that anti-Semitism which occasionally popped up in Bethlen's appearances before the war, had, by the 1920s, disappeared from Bethlen's political rhetoric, he himself was not free of anti-Semitic stereotypes. Bethlen, as many anti-Semites, also used false generalizations of the Jewish conspiracy theory to explain the turn of historical events: Bethlen, too, found the reasons for the outbreak of the left-wing revolutions in the actions of the Jews. In his opinion, the „majority” of Jews had taken part in the left-wing revolutions, whereas out of the almost half a million Hungarian Jews, only two to three thousand can be said to have participated in the revolutions.⁶² Bethlen was not exaggerating in saying that there had been a conspicuously large number of Jewish leaders in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, but he did not take into account that non-Jews also took part in the revolution, and that it was only a tiny minority of Jews who actively participated in the revolutions.

The leading politicians of the 20s, being themselves prejudiced when it came to Jews, reacted ambiguously when it came to the politics of anti-Semitic scapegoating. Though they acted against the anti-Semitic acts of violence that severely threatened foreign opinion of the country, but they sympathized with those who presented the Hungarian Soviet Republic as a Jewish revolution, and accordingly named „the Jews” as responsible for the revolution, and as the ones to be held to account.⁶³

In this mentality, foreign and Hungarian, rich and poor, communist or non-communist Jews were conflated: the Jews bore the burden of collective responsibility. As Rezső Rupert said: this was the populist mechanism which

⁶⁰ The action merely codified events: the majority of left-wing students had been removed from the universities through disciplinary actions by the time the law was passed in the autumn of 1920. Ladányi, 1979, p. 161.

⁶¹ I.m. p. 383. Presenting his programme as Prime Minister, Teleki promised that his government would take steps „institutionally to protect the interests of Christian society”. Ablonczy (2005), p. 172. Teleki outlined his programme on the 22nd July 1920.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ According to Gusztáv Gratz's data, 32 of the 45 commissars were Jewish. Gusztáv Gratz, *The Age of Revolutions, history of Hungary 1918-1920* [A forradalmak kora, Magyarország története 1918-1920], Budapest, 1935, p. 102.

made it possible to „generalize – even by law – the ‘guilt’ of a few to hundreds of thousands, even millions.”⁶⁴ In this mentality, there was no contradiction in concurrently applying racial and political, even gender-based arguments: university applicants were to be judged not only on the basis of their origins, but also from the point of view of what political „behavior” they had demonstrated prior to 1920; in other words, if they are „patriotic” enough. The use of racial and political criteria together cast suspicion on leftists as being „Jews”, and Jews as being automatically left-wing. This served to reinforce the conviction that the left-wing revolutions served some kind of special „Jewish” interest.

The *numerus clausus* law was above all a product of this mentality. It was an anti-Jewish law, which – after 1920 - punished Hungarian Jewry as a group without consideration of the culpability of the individual concerned, for the losses which Hungary suffered as a result of the War. The racial quota was thus linked with the post-revolutionary anti-leftist political cleanup: the same paragraph, which institutionalized the racial quota, tied university admissions to demands of „patriotism and moral uprightness”, and thereby conflated the political cleanup with the exclusion of Jews.⁶⁵

The concept behind the racial paragraph

Calls for the Jewish quota had been present in Hungarian public life from turn of the century, but these calls did not carry decisive strength before 1918. The concept behind the *numerus clausus* really gained ground only at the time of the War and the revolutions. The novelty in the political situation following the revolutions was that – in contrast to previous times – the country’s political leaders did not resist the powers calling for the *numerus clausus*, and finally, by introducing the law, raised political anti-Semitism to a government level; on the basis of collective guilt, they designated an entire group of people as scapegoats.

The government level policy of rescinding of rights to education on the basis of race set the Hungarian *numerus clausus* apart from the other uses of anti-Jewish *numerus clausus* in the Western world. In the United States and Canada, numerous universities (e.g. Harvard, Yale, and Columbia) introduced anti-Jewish quotas at around the same time as the Hungarian *numerus clausus* and many medical schools also capped the number of Jewish students. But in these countries, the anti-Jewish quota was never elevated to the level of government action or into law. The students excluded from one university or another could continue their studies in other universities within the same state. In Eastern

⁶⁴ Rezső Rupert’s minority opinion on the second Jewish law, Documents of the Chamber of Deputies [Képviselőházi irományok], 1935, vol. XII, p. 514, 3rd February 1939.

⁶⁵ „When approving applications, as well as patriotism and moral rectitude, the applicant’s intellectual capacities should be taken into consideration, not forgetting that the proportion of students of each ethnicity should reach the proportion of that ethnicity living within the boundaries of the country, or at least represent nine tenths of that figure.”

Europe, the *numerus clausus* was on the agenda from the 1920s on in Romania, Poland, and Lithuania, and while it didn't pass into law in any of those countries until the 1930s, in Romania and Poland, from the 1920s on, universities and polytechnics instituted „in-house” anti-Jewish quotas, without any legal authority. It is not unimaginable that it was not precisely because of the large number of Jewish students excluded from the Hungarian educational system and trying to find places in Prague and Brno that demands for the *numerus clausus* appeared in the Czech parliament too.⁶⁶ In Austria, the *numerus clausus* was introduced following the Anschluss.⁶⁷

The significance of the law and the legends surrounding it

For international diplomatic reasons, the Bethlen government de-emphasized the seriousness and significance of the Hungarian Jewish quota. The government elaborated an entire set of defense arguments that worked to make the law seem milder for the League of Nations inquiries, in the hope that Hungary would be relieved of the charges of discrimination. The legends survived the Bethlen government; in fact, elements of them still determine historical thinking today. The first of these legends is that from the moment of its introduction on, the Jewish quota was not enforced with uniform vigor throughout the country. This legend is, however, false.

Let's look first of all at the statistics. The law capped the proportion of Jewish students who could be admitted to the first year of graduate study at 6%. Nonetheless, in the table below, we see that between 1920 and 1937, the proportion of Jews in higher education was higher than 6%. This statistical difference is the source of that now commonplace legend that the Jewish quota was never consistently observed throughout the entire country.⁶⁸

The legend is based on the erroneous interpretation of the statistics and the *numerus clausus* law. For the figures below from the Central Office of Statistics show the university students from *all* cohorts, whereas the *numerus clausus* law did not impose a quota on all cohorts, but only on those applying *for the first year of university*.⁶⁹ The question of whether the quota was observed at 6% in its first

⁶⁶ MTI News Broadcast, 30th November and 2 December 1922; <http://archiv1920-1944.mti.hu/Pages/PDFSearch.aspx?Pmd=1>.

⁶⁷ MTI News Broadcast, 22 January 1923; <http://archiv1920-1944.mti.hu/Pages/PDFSearch.aspx?Pmd=1> (2011-02-22)

⁶⁸ The table presents the numbers and proportions of students in all higher education institutions, a small part of which did not fall under the *numerus clausus* legislation. However, the proportions are still comparable: the number of Jews at such institutions was minimal. The proportion of Jews solely in universities and law academies, falling strictly under the *numerus clausus* legislation was, on average, 0.5-1.5% higher than among all higher education students.

⁶⁹ According to the second paragraph of the law, the restrictions did not apply to those students who were not starting their first year, but continuing their studies in one of the higher years. This was reinforced in the enacting clause; <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=7440> (2011-03-09)

year cannot be settled by looking at the proportion of Jews in higher education as a whole – including the higher years, which had not been subject to the *numerus clausus*. The question of whether the universities observed the *numerus clausus* law can only be judged in light of the statistics of first year students, since the law applied only to admissions for the first year of university. But official statistics were not published until the late 1920s on the composition of the first year.

It is a fact that the Bethlen government itself obfuscated the data for the League of Nations inquiries: instead of presenting the data for the first year only, it presented the data for all the years, and instead of the data for the capital, they took the data for the provinces. All this, however, was part of their manipulative communication.

Instead of looking at the total percentage proportions, which were manipulated eclectically and at will, we should be clear about the real figures. The number of Jewish students at those universities and law colleges that fell under the aegis of the *numerus clausus* after 1920 was 6,027 in the academic year 1917-18.⁷⁰ This number had shrunk to 1,712 by 1920-21: therefore in the first year of the application of the law, there was a 4,315 capita reduction in the number of Jewish students. The biggest reduction was at the University of Budapest, where the number of Jewish students was reduced by 3,880.⁷¹ This huge reduction was possible by not clearing several thousand higher year Jewish students, students with so-called „vested rights” on the „patriotism” requirement. At the Humanities faculty in Budapest, for example, the proportion of higher year Jewish students dropped to 6.97%, despite it having been between 35-4% in the previous academic years, from 1913-14 – 1917-18.⁷²

A small group of the over 3,000 higher year Jewish students excluded from Budapest – c. 500 people – were admitted to universities in Pécs and Szeged, where the universities of Bratislava and Cluj had been moved to be within the post-Trianon borders of the country, and which did not have enough Christian applicants to start their academic years, following the move.⁷³ The *numerus clausus* law did not forbid the admission of higher year Jewish students, since it applied only to first-year admissions.

⁷⁰ Haller (1926), p. 130. The data are to be understood as not including the polytechnics. In the colleges of law, there were 237 Jewish students in this year; figures have only remained for 1921-22 for the polytechnics (with the exception of the School of Theatrical Arts), when there were altogether 24 Jewish students in these institutions.

⁷¹ Haller (1926), p. 135.

⁷² Haller (1926), p. 134.

⁷³ There were altogether 777 Jewish students at the universities of Szeged and Pécs in 1920-21 (Haller, 1926, p. 134). Given that in 1917-18 the two universities had 311 Jewish students, and that of these only a negligible number graduated in 1918-19, those with „vested rights” continued at the universities, the Jewish students who „properly” belonged to the two universities was around 250-300.

Numbers and proportion of Jewish students enrolled in the second semester at universities and other higher education institutions among all students: 1910-1943

Academic Year	Total Number of Students	Jewish Students	
	Number	Proportion	
1910/1911	14021	3490	24.9%
1911/1912	14233	3387	23.8%
1912/1913	14575	3553	24.4%
1913/1914	15414	3879	25.2%
1914/1915-1917/1918	No data	No data	No data
1918/1919	18449	6719	36.4%
1919/1920	10005	558	5.6%
1920/1921	14258	1721	12.1%
1921/1922	17306	2318	13.4%
1922/1923	20815	2388	11.5%
1923/1924	17329	1861	10.7%
1924/1925	15582	1533	9.8%
1925/1926	15200	1372	9.0%
1926/1927	15020	1284	8.5%
1927/1928	15459	1290	8.3%
1928/1929	15675	1378	8.8%
1929/1930	15497	1473	9.5%
1930/1931	16053	1689	10.5%
1931/1932	16002	1967	12.3%
1932/1933	15766	1965	12.5%
1933/1934	15694	1816	11.6%
1934/1935	15088	1465	9.7%
1935/1936	14216	1175	8.3%
1936/1937	13821	1017	7.4%
1937/1938	13228	820	6.2%
1938/1939	13219	510*	3.9%
1939/1940	13815	437*	3.2%
1940/1941	17161	532*	3.1%
1941/1942	19900	584*	2.9%
1942/1943	21732	580*	2.7%

Source: Hungarian Statistical Yearbook [Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv], 1910-1943 and Alajos Kovács (1938, p. 73). For the years marked with a star, see Andor Ladányi (2005), p. 68.

Selective registration

But as for the admission of *first-years*, even those provincial universities which took a higher proportion of Jews for the higher years, by and large observed the quota, though they may have occasionally overstepped the quota

with one or two percentage point, keeping in mind these universities were so small, that for example, in Pécs in 1920/21 the admission of a single Jewish student to the first year raised the proportion of Jews by 0.6%.⁷⁴ In Szeged for instance, despite admitting over 7% Jewish students to the third, fourth and fifth years of their medical course, the university already in 1921, had limited admissions of Jewish students to 7% for their first year of studies. The situation was similar at the University of Pécs. And if at these small universities, the percentage of Jewish first-year students did occasionally exceed 6% in the first year, this was not that the Jewish quota was not observed, but that, come the start of the academic year, many of the Christian applicants who had been admitted, simply did not show up, as in the fall of 1922 when in Szeged, 52 Christian first-year medical students left for studies in Budapest in a single year out of a cohort of about 130.⁷⁵ Since all the Jewish students admitted started their studies, their proportion grew somewhat, but this did not mean that even a single Jewish student more had been admitted than the quota proscribed.⁷⁶ Official statistics revealed none of these events during the admission cycle as they gave numbers and proportions for the end of the semester.

Students of the Medical Faculty of the University of Szeged, academic year 1921-22, Jews/ Non-Jews

Year	Total Students	Jewish Students	Proportion of Jewish Students %
I	146	11	7.5
II	152	47	30.9
III	139	101	72.7
IV	104	75	72.1%
V	74	54	73%

Source: Parliamentary record [Nemzetgyűlési napló], 1920. Vol. XVII, p. 25. (9th of February 1922), speech by Géza Budaváry

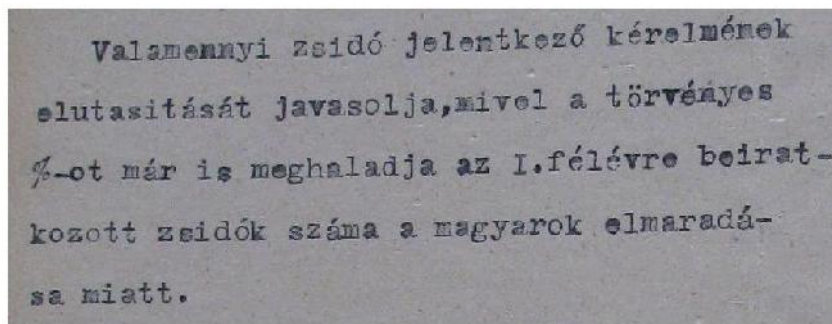
⁷⁴ The calculation is based on the assumption that a quarter of all students in a given year is in the first year which, at the early twenties was characteristic of provincial universities.

⁷⁵ For example, 150 students were accepted in 1920-21 to the first year of the medical course at the university of Szeged, but only 108 showed up. In the following year, 150 students were admitted to the mathematics and pharmaceutical courses, but only 57 appeared. Of those 57, 10 were Jewish, and they had been accepted within the original admissions framework in such a way that they would make up 6% of the students on each course. But since more than half of the Christian students admitted did not matriculate, the proportion of Jews grew to 18% without the university having admitted even a single extra Jewish student above the numbers allowed by the quota. Károly Hoór, *Numerus clausus* at the universities of Pécs and Szeged [A *numerus clausus* a szegedi és a pécsi egyetemen], Budapest, 1923, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Haller (1926), p. 124.

Klebensberg, the Minister of Culture, himself gave an account in Parliament in 1924 of the phenomenon of „selective registration”. Admissions permits, he noted, were issued by the universities of both Budapest and the regions in accordance with the Jewish quota. „It often happens, however, that Christian youths do not make use of their admissions permits, do not take up their place, and go on to another university. Those Jewish youths, however, who were granted such permits by the University of Pécs, took up their places without exception, as a consequence of which their number was already greater at registration than the permitted percentage.”⁷⁷

The decisions of the Admissions Committee of the Medical Faculty of the University of Szeged for January 1923



“The committee suggests rejecting all Jewish applicants because the proportion of Jews registered for the first year supersedes the lawful percentage as a result of Hungarians having left.”

Source: Szeged University Archive, meeting of the medical faculty, January 12, 1923.

The selective dropout rate

Statistical differences resulting from selective dropping out also allowed for some manipulation of data to construct the legend according to which the small provincial universities did not at all apply the quota in their first year admission. The quota system gave birth to a sort of academic counter selection in the admissions process insofar as the meritocratic principle could only be applied in a very partial way during the process. The admissions boards did rank the Jewish students in order of accomplishment, but – at least in the case of the first-year students – only took this ranking into account until the 6% quota had been filled. The majority of Jewish students with good grades did not get admitted, while Christian students with weaker marks got in more easily. The principle of academic competition between the two groups did not really take effect: the academic results of the two groups were judged largely independently of one

⁷⁷ Parliamentary Diary [Nemzetgyűlési Napló] 1922, vol. XXIV, pp. 320-321 (4th June 1924)

another and independently served as the basis of the admissions decisions. At times the admissions boards did not even show the Jewish students' academic results. Such was, for example, the report of the Budapest Faculty of Medicine in 1921, which broke down admissions into the following categories⁷⁸:

„Christians with distinction at high school diploma level: 99

Christians with good marks at high school diploma level: 116

Christians with high school diplomas of average, or satisfactory grade: 138

Born Jewish: 23”

The effects of the process were observable in the dropout rates also. Of the students admitted to their first year in the Medical Faculty in Budapest in the 1920s, which enforced the quota inflexibly, 4% did not finish their studies.⁷⁹ The universities had to face the fact that having admitted a far larger number of Christian students than had been the case before the *numerus clausus* out of a pool of Christian high-school graduates whose numbers did not reveal a corresponding growth, the great majority of dropouts in most cases also came from among the Christians. The Minister of Culture, Klebelsberg, reported on the phenomenon of the selective dropout rate in Parliament, although he attributed the main cause of it to the poorer economic background of the Christian families: „My honoured friend Gömbös said that although the *numerus clausus* is only six percent, there are over 1% of Jews in the universities. Why is this? In the first-year admissions, the *numerus clausus* is applied. This is due to the fact that there is another *numerus clausus* besides the legal one, and this is the *numerus clausus* of poverty, which affects those Christian children who often cannot continue their studies for the lack of financial means. I am referring here above all to the Technological University. For this reason, Christians fall behind, and the proportion of Jews increases.”⁸⁰

The selective nature of registrations and the dropout rate also helps to explain why the decrease in the proportion of Jewish students was somewhat slower than would have been expected, based on the 6% quota effected in the first year university. It also explains why in 1925-26, when the Jewish students with „vested rights” had already disappeared from the system, the proportion of Jewish students among all university and polytechnic students was still around 8.25%. Given that the effects of the selective registrations and dropout rate were cumulative, that is to say that the gaps from the first year also affected the composition of the higher years, the proportions above reinforce the Minister's statement that the 6% Jewish quota for first-year admissions was by and large observed at all universities, even if deviations on a small scale existed.

⁷⁸ Katalin Szegvári (1988), p. 130.

⁷⁹ According to data by Balázs Kenyeres, the professor of medicine who played a key role in admissions and who was well-known for his racial supremacist views, Baron Sándor Korányi's comment, Diary of the Upper House [Felsőházi Napló], 1931, vol. II, p. 349 (24 June 1933).

⁸⁰ Diary of the Chamber of Deputies [Képviselőházi napló], 1927, vol. IX, p. 201 (23 February 1928).

To summaries: the statement that the 6% Jewish quota on first-year admissions was not nationally applied is largely a legend, which the detailed data – broken down into year groups and bearing in mind the selective nature of registrations and the dropout rate – do not support.

The Jewish quota after 1928: the legend of „abolition”

The most misleading legend attached to the history of the *numerus clausus* is the assertion that the law was “abolished” in 1928. The legend of „abolition” started at the end of the 1920s, but lingers in historical publications to this day. Its nascence was made possible by the clever politics of the Bethlen government. The *numerus clausus* was not really abolished in 1928, but merely renamed; and the discrimination against Jews in the universities did not stop. The only truth in the legend is that the law’s racial paragraph underwent some metamorphosis.

Under pressure from the League of Nations, the Bethlen government did indeed formally remove the Jewish quota from the law in 1928. But on the other hand they introduced a new quota into the law, which was a so-called occupational quota. The goal of the new quota was the same as of the old one, to keep the Jews away from the universities, but to do it in such a way this time so as not to give the League of Nations any grounds for condemnation of Hungary for racial discrimination. Klebelsberg advised Prime Minister Bethlen two years before the modification to change the law, but to do so in such a way that the „thousands” of Jewish students should nonetheless be kept out of the universities. Bethlen in other words should bow to the League’s pressure, but this concession should be purely formal. The government eventually replaced the racial quota with a quota that restricted the numbers of students to be admitted according to the occupation of the applicant’s father.⁸¹ The internal proportions of the professional quota were developed in such a way as to prevent any significant increase of the proportion of Jews within the new system.

The government did not wish to comment formally on the philosophy behind the modifications in 1928 – for understandable reasons – since the whole point of the exercise was so that the League of Nations could not continue to condemn Hungary for discriminating against Jews. Ten years later, however, when Hungarian politics was looking no longer in the direction of the League, but to Germany for friendship, the president of the Central Office of Statistics, Alajos

⁸¹The text of the law introducing the professional quota ran: „When granting permission, as well as considering the applicant’s patriotism and moral rectitude, the results of their highest level of academic study should be considered, as should their intellectual ability. In the first instance, the children of war widows and those with war service, of civil servants and other various occupations (agriculture, industry, trade, the liberal professions, etc.) should get to the polytechnics in the numbers in proportion to the numbers belonging to these occupations and their significance, and that the number of those admitted should be equitably distributed between the different municipalities.” Documents of the Chamber of Deputies [Képviselőházi irományok], 1927, vol. VI., p. 434.

Kovács described in detail the internal logic of the 1928 professional quota. According to him: „that softer version of the *numerus clausus* that the late Count Klebelsberg, Minister of Culture, initiated – although it did not say openly that certain races are to be admitted to the universities in accordance with their proportion within the population – it...effectively serves the same purpose... Insofar as in the first [occupational] category, which includes about half the applicants, there are hardly any Jews, in the second half of the numbers...there would overwhelmingly have been smallholders...in the end, the proportion of Jews among the students would have been approximately equal to their proportion of the overall population.”⁸²

It was not hard to grasp the motives behind the changes. Lucien Wolf, an Englishman, who wrote the report on the modification for the League of Nations, clearly saw that the new, occupational quota „can be used for anti-Semitic ends”; however, as he wrote, the starting point still has to be that the actions of the Hungarian government were „made in good faith.”⁸³ The League of Nations therefore did not concern itself with the hidden motives behind the new quota: it was satisfied that the Jewish quota as such had been taken out of the law. It considered the removal of the Jewish quota a symbolic victory, and did not expect anything more. The leaders of the Jewish community in Hungary felt the same, and hoped that the symbolic concessions would be followed by real change in due course.

The government itself tried to appease opinion both at home and abroad. After 1928, in accordance with the expectations of the League of Nations, it raised the number of Jews allowed to be admitted to university (by a suitable minimal number). In the next four years, the proportion of Jewish students admitted increased (by around 250 people a year), from 8.8% in 1928-29 to 9.6% in 1930, 10.5% in 1931, 12.3% in 1932, and 12.5% in 1933. All this however is by no means to say that Jewish students really enjoyed equal opportunities with their Christian counterparts. Under the new quota, in 1928 roughly half to 7% of Jewish applicants to university were rejected while for Christian students the rejection rate was 10-15%. The majority of Jewish youths with high school diplomas still did not have an opportunity to study further.

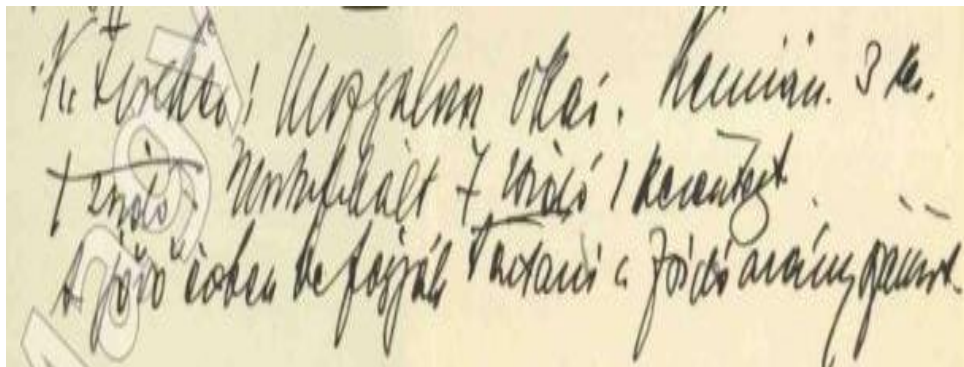
Despite the exculpatory arguments of the Bethlen government for foreign consumption that protested that the proportion of Jewish students had risen above the old 6% quota, what was not mentioned was that even so, two thirds of Jewish students wishing to pursue their higher education could not get into university. There was a cynical game of propaganda played with the numbers and percentages. For, although the 12% of Jewish students did indeed represent an increase of 10% compared to the old quota of 6%, these figures disguised numbers that were very low to start off with; so, even a small numerical increase of these figures produced significant results when translated into percentages.

⁸² Alajos Kovács (1938), p. 39.

⁸³ Ladányi (1979), p. 1131.

Despite the populist propaganda surrounding the percentages, thousands of Jewish students hoping to continue their studies were still stranded outside of the universities.

To summaries, then: the racial quota was not „abolished” in 1928, but renamed. Let me record one more example here that challenges the myth of „abolition”, this time from 1934. After Hitler’s takeover of power, Hungarian racial supremacists demanded that the Hungarian government openly reinstate the explicit Jewish quota. The Gömbös government was not inclined to this, but it was willing – without any legal framework, in line with the racial supremacists’ demands – to decrease the proportion of Jewish students. The Minister of the Interior, Ferenc Fischer Keresztes declared in the Cabinet meeting in January 1934 that „in the coming year, the proportion of Jews would be observed.”⁸⁴



Source: Cabinet Records [Minisztertanácsi Jegyzőkönyv], 16 January 1934, p. 5.

According to the record, Fischer Keresztes did not need to explain his meaning. He did not need to specify what „proportion of Jews” he was referring to. He did not have to concern himself that such a „proportion” did not – in principle – exist in law following the modification of 1928; everyone present there in the Cabinet knew which „proportion” he was referring to, since the quota had never really been abolished, merely rechristened. The proportion of Jewish students immediately started to decrease following the Minister of the Interior’s statement, and by 1935 had reached the lowest recorded proportion of the 1920s, while thousands of Jewish applicants were left outside the higher education system.

All this of course does not mean that the trends supported by the *numerus clausus* could not conceivably have been subdued after the modification of 1928. Without that great turn in European politics that was the rise of Nazism, it could all have turned out differently. For example, the racial quota could initially have been renamed, while more, and some genuine reforms could have followed. This was the way events developed in the United States, where the few private

⁸⁴ Records of the Cabinet of Ministers [Minisztertanácsi Jegyzőkönyv], 16th January 1934, p. 5.

universities which imposed a Jewish quota came round to abolishing them only very slowly, by the 1950s.

But in Europe, history took a different turn. In Hungary, the fourth paragraph of the second Jewish law of 1939 reinstated the explicit quota on Jews in the universities, and once again capped their proportion at 6% at universities and law colleges.⁸⁵

The reinstatement of the open Jewish quota

The Minister of Culture at this time, in 1939, was Bálint Hóman, who was not only a politician but – by profession – a historian. In his justification for the law, Hóman gave a thorough historical survey. He noted that the seventh paragraph of the 1939 law did not, in fact, introduce anything new. It was merely a question of a formal step, since the Jewish quota in the universities had been in force continuously since 1920. Hóman also explained that while in 1928 the law really was modified, it was changed „in form only” in such a way as to allow the professional quota which took the place of the ethnic quota, without „openly naming the Jews” to prevent the „spread of Jewry”.⁸⁶

The racial paragraph of the *numerus clausus* law therefore – despite a temporary and derisory relaxation – was in force throughout the entirety of the Horthy period. The law was in force for 14 of the 25 years of that period (1920-1928, 1939-1945). In a somewhat milder form, it was enacted in the form of the occupational quota between 1928 and 1933, and – although it was not officially in effect – was enacted by Ministerial decree even more strictly between 1934 and 1939 than it had been in the 1920s. The effective use of the law was therefore continuous throughout the period, even if its effects were milder in the early years of the “occupational” quota. It is part of its history that that the proportion of Jewish students officially dipped below its lowest point from the 1920s (8.3%) in a year when the Jewish quota of 1920 was officially no longer, and the Jewish quota of 1939 was not yet, in effect (1936-7). The assertion therefore does not stand up that following the modification of the *numerus clausus* in 1928, anti-Jewish discrimination had disappeared from the network of Hungarian institutions and that the university Jewish quota was introduced a decade later, under foreign duress.

⁸⁵ Lajos Zehery and Béla Tótfalusi, The law regulating the presence of Jews in the public and trade sectors, 1939:IV. t.c. and its enacting clauses [A zsidók közéleti és gazdasági tér foglálásának korlátozásáról szóló 1939:IV. t.c. és annak végrehajtásáról szóló rendeletek], Budapest, 1939, p. 110.

⁸⁶ Documents of the Upper House [Felsőházi irományok], justification of the „regulation of the admissions of students to universities and polytechnics’ draft law”, 1939 vol. IV (15 November 1940), pp. 187-188. Hóman added that after 1928 the government acted by means of decrees and case-by-case interventions to ensure that the Jewish quota was enforced.

Peter Tibor Nagy

The first anti-Jewish law in inter-war Europe

The *Numerus Clausus* – or Act 25 of 1920 – restricted the percentage of Jewish college and university students in Hungary to the Jewish percentage of the country's total population, thereby excluding a great majority of Jewish students from higher education. The history of the Act has been relatively well documented. Indeed, it is perhaps this aspect of modern Hungarian history that is best known to historians and educationalists around the world. The Act constituted the first restriction in modern Hungarian history on the process of Jewish integration and assimilation. Moreover it was the first so-called “Jewish law” in twentieth-century Europe. With the passing of the Act, Hungary became the first country to follow in the footsteps of Russia, which, in 1887, had decreed a “ceiling” on the number of Jews permitted to take part in secondary and higher education.¹

My aim in this article is to examine this well-known historical issue within an analytical framework.

Proposition 1: Political and social groups permeated by different types of antisemitism (religious, anti-capitalist and anti-socialist) gathered into a coalition. This “extra-coalition” gave rise to the demand for the *numerus clausus*..

Proposition 2: Rational political considerations identified higher education as the field in which the process of Jewish emancipation could be stopped and possibly reversed.

Proposition 3: The issue of whether or not to implement the provisions of the Act was determined by the relative strength of different pressure groups operating in the political arena, rather than by ideologies or values.

From antisemitic sentiment to an acceptance of legal restrictions

There is a well-known debate among historians about whether the development of antisemitism has been a continuous process in Europe ever since the Middle Ages (Kovács: 1999). In my framework, I share the view that antisemitism has not been continuous. Indeed it would seem that different types of antisemitism have existed concurrently in different societies. The medieval type of antisemitism, the *religious* one, was still featured in the Tiszaeszlár blood libel case of 1882 – a case that achieved notoriety throughout Europe. The publication of the memoirs of the investigating magistrate working on the case – a man who had drawn considerable support from the local antisemitic peasantry – and had accused the local Jewish community of carrying out ritual murder – was an

¹ The study is based on a paper presented at a conference organised at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris in the autumn of 2000. It is partially overlapping with my study published in *East European Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 1, June 2005..

enormous market success in the 1940s, demonstrating antisemitism's ability to survive despite decades of modernisation. Moreover, as we shall see, fundamentalist Catholic intellectuals were among the various proponents of the *Numerus Clausus* in 1919/1920. (Kubinszky:1976)

The other type of antisemitism – a form based on anti-capitalist and “anti-finance” ideas and attitudes – was motivated by the Hungarian nobility's traditional views and way of life as well as romantic peasant anti-capitalism. (Szabó: 1970,1981) This traditional form of antisemitism was hostile to the *social function performed by Jews itself* and would have preferred a society in which the *mediator* function would not exist at all. (Berger, 1986)

Unlike traditional antisemitism, the *modern* type does not hate, but it is *envious* of this function. This form of antisemitism is no less than an ideology based on the confiscation of this function. The exclusion of Jews from universities and from some professions was merely a means of accomplishing this confiscation.

At the end of the First World War, antisemitism became an element in the *competition between the various elites*. Prior to the First World War, social roles in Hungary had been very distinct: the Christian middle classes had sent their sons to work for the state or for local government offices, while the Jewish middle classes had sent their sons to work in non-state-controlled sectors. Among market-controlled professions, the ratio of middle-class Jews was very high. Nationally, Jews comprised 42 % of all journalists, and in Budapest the ratio was 48 %. Jews also accounted for 53% of Hungary's commercial executives – and 64 % in Budapest (MSK, 56:570). Moreover 45 % of lawyers and 43 % of legal staff were Jewish. On the other hand, the Christian middle classes were over-represented amongst public officials. (MSK, 56: 775)

After the 1920 peace treaty, which greatly reduced Hungary's territory, the country needed far fewer public officials. This meant that the Christian middle classes were obliged to secure positions outside the state-controlled areas. (Karady:1994)

But we must also consider another factor: the modernisation of the state after the turn of the century gave rise to a new issue: namely, the need for greater state control in some areas. Several groups in society began to develop an interest in the creation of *non-market-controlled* industrial, health and commercial sectors etc. Because such groups wished also to extend state jurisdiction to these areas and to enhance the power of the state's re-distributive institutions, they sought to prevent non-state-oriented Jewish commercial and industrial elites from obtaining key positions in these fields. (Lackó: 1981:184)

At the same time, non-state-controlled positions constituted real power and prestige in society. For example, the press could be used to influence cultural attitudes, while the growth of a modern economy was rendering commerce, banking and transport increasingly important. Lawyers were becoming more significant in economic and business life, and an expanding social security system

– in which Jewish clerks and medical staff held key positions – was beginning to dispose of an ever-greater share of national income.

Workers of German and/or Jewish background had traditionally led the Hungarian workers' movement. As the workers' and trade union movements began to turn into real political forces, competitors of the traditional workers' elite began voicing antisemitic arguments. This process was not confined to the opposition movement. Thus, for instance, in the parliament of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, the Communist Party's populist elite used antisemitic arguments in their struggle against the Party's central elite. (*Tanacsok: 1919*)

The peace treaty was followed by the mass migration into Hungary of middle-class Hungarian-speakers from the successor states, resulting in stiff competition for positions and jobs. Against this background of increased competition, the Christian middle classes turned to the executive power for assistance in their struggle against the Jews. *Nevertheless, the increased level of competition was not enough to persuade the Hungarian middle classes – so proud of their Corpus Iuris, the symbol of their adherence to Europe – to transform the Hungarian legislative into a means of violently suppressing the Jews.*

Right-wing public opinion began to argue that liberalism, radicalism and social democracy – all of which it perceived as manifestations of “Jewish cosmopolitanism” – were responsible for the collapse of the historical kingdom of Hungary. “National sentiment”, which had been a natural associate of liberalism in the nineteenth century, became locked in a conflict with “liberal sentiment”. In the end, the middle classes chose nationalism rather than liberalism, discarding the old principles of equality and human rights and giving the green light to restrictions against Jews.

As we shall see, although it was evidently the extreme right wing rather than the political centre that gave the concrete impetus to the adoption of the *Numerus Clausus*, nevertheless without this “state of competition” and the “contradiction between nationalism and liberalism”, the country's elite might never have been willing to tolerate antisemitism in the form of a parliamentary act. (*Ladányi, 1979*)

Why introduce a numerus clausus in higher education ?

The issue at stake was which sphere could be used to “administer” restrictions against Jews. After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (which in 1919 had confiscated wealth and nationalised property), the direct confiscation of Jewish property was no longer a real option. Moreover, given the country's dire economic situation, the exclusion of highly qualified Jewish accountants, engineers and economists would merely have exacerbated the crisis. The only apparent “solution” was to assist the Christian middle classes by giving preference to “their sons” in the *educational* sphere.

Education already had a sufficiently anti-liberal tradition. In the 1910s, right-wing political Catholicism had made significant strides in the sphere. The

Ministry of Education had a good chance of obtaining the support of the churches because it had something concrete to offer them: the Ministry could (and did) make participation in denominational services a compulsory part of school attendance after 1919.

Why were restrictions on the number of Jews imposed at *university* level but not at secondary level? We may identify three important reasons for this.

1. The Ministry wished to pacify the extreme right-wing students' movement, whose aim was the complete exclusion of Jews from university education. (In previous decades, the Jewish percentage of college and university students had grown rapidly from 10.4% in 1871 to 20.1% in 1880, 27.8% in 1890, 28.4% in 1900, and 29.6% in 1910.) (*Karády:1997*)

2. Surplus production of intellectuals and intellectual unemployment represented a popular and acceptable argument amongst most social groups.

3. A university *numerus clausus* was relatively less disadvantageous to upper-class Jews, because they could afford to send their children abroad, whereas middle-class Jewish youngsters were excluded en masse. The system had to offer some concessions to the Jewish population: a *numerus clausus* in secondary education would have resulted in an absurd situation for Hungarian Jews. It would have been absurd to force a child to go abroad at the age of ten or to prevent a middle-class businessman from obtaining a secondary education for his son.

A review of the concrete steps that led to the adoption of the *Numerus Clausus* Act demonstrates the existence of a *coalition* of different groups with various types of antisemitic attitudes. This becomes particularly clear if we look at the main arguments for the introduction of the *numerus clausus* put forward within individual university faculties. For instance, in the Faculty of Theology – where aggressive neo-Catholicism had already triumphed – ideological reasons (both anti-Judaism and anti-secularism) were emphasised, whereas in the Faculty of Medicine – where Jewish students were still relatively numerous – the “relevant” issue was “the competition between the elites”.

Militant (right-wing) student organisations and the heads of various universities agreed upon a compromise similar to that already established in the field of macro-policy by right-wing paramilitary forces and the conservative government.

It appears certain that *university governors gave up their beliefs and principles because a failure to do so would have left them unable to reintegrate students* and to re-establish control over university life and the selection of applicants. It is important to note that Professor Bernolák, the author of the incriminating legislation (see below), urged the pacification and supervision of the university student organisations.

The Government needed to find a solution. It needed arguments to counter the consternation caused by the Act in other parts of Europe and to maintain its relations with leading figures in the Hungarian industrial and financial sectors. (The Jewish “faction” formed a majority among both family retailer and wholesaler organisations.) While the Minister of Education was clearly an

antisemitic politician and a supporter of government restrictions against the Jews, he and other members of the Government knew that antisemitism could not become part of an act of law. They knew that while restrictions might be acceptable to western public opinion if they could be explained in terms of a need for “temporary steps vis-à-vis the Jewish population” in order “to prevent antisemitic pogroms stemming from communism and the war”, it would never be possible to demonstrate the necessity of including antisemitic provisions in the *Corpus Iuris*.

The solution was to play some parliamentary tricks. Thus, although the first bill submitted was merely a *socially neutral* restriction enabling the Minister to determine the number of prospective students regardless of their ethnic or denominational background, during the legislative process significant changes were, nevertheless, made to the text of the bill.

The main political force – which disposed of a majority in the Parliamentary Financial Committee under the conservative politician Kunó Klebelsberg and a majority in the Education Committee under a Catholic prebend named József Vass – considered it necessary to include political provisions in the Act. “In the process of attendance, only such persons shall be acceptable whose *national and moral attitudes are reliable*.” Thus the Act became anti-liberal in a *political* sense, because it paved the way for the exclusion of liberals and socialists from entrance exams. Each student needed to obtain a certificate from the *local police* with details of his or her political attitudes.

At a government party meeting, a group supported by Bishop Prohászka suggested a further amendment: “*The percentage of races and nationalities among students shall not be higher than the percentage of the races and nationalities in the general population.*” At the government party meeting, this clause received majority support. (*Ladányi:1979: 152*)

At the plenary session of Parliament, a right-wing university professor, Nándor Bernolák, submitted the amendment. The text was an absurdity under Hungarian law, because the word “*race*” did not represent a legal category. In a logical sense, the situation was a very complicated one: although the real objective was evidently a reduction in the number of Jewish students, the Act could not declare religious affiliation to be one of the selection criteria, because this might have endangered the stability of the Hungarian state. Although Protestants formed only a minority of the total population (with the number of Lutherans being particular small), they were significantly over-represented among both government officials and the intelligentsia, as well as among the urban and rural middle classes and – as for Lutherans - among all social strata that sought university places for their children.

The adoption of the new act – which was obviously antisemitic – provoked a wave of criticism around Europe. *The majority of the MPs were absent at the plenary session of Parliament* when the Speaker asked for a vote.

Ninety percent of the members of Government, including the Prime Minister, as well as Andrássy and Apponyi (two well-known politicians from the

imperial era) and Bethlen, Klebelsberg and Vass (who were to lead Hungary's consolidation in the 1920s) chose not to take part in the vote.

Their absence indicates that it was impossible for them to vote down the legislation against the will of the radical right-wing groups, the leaders of the anti-leftist and antisemitic terror of 1919-20, and the paramilitary forces. But nor did they wish to vote *in favour* of the legislation, given that they were being watched by authorities across Europe as well as by powerful groups in the Hungarian capital, whose support was vital to the consolidation of the regime. Nevertheless – and this is the important point – some of these politicians *really did want* the Act to be adopted, for they knew that it would provide more university places to the children of their middle-class supporters. (In the end, just 57 MPs voted in favour of the Act, with seven votes against. *If opponents of the bill had left the building rather than participate in the vote, the Speaker would have been forced to abandon proceedings, due to a lack of numbers.* Thus, even those MPs who voted against the *Numerus Clausus* – the Minister of Education was among them – actually ended up tacitly supporting its adoption.)

The Act did not mention the words “Jew”, “Jewish”, “Israelite” or suchlike. But the executive decree issued by the Minister of Education after its enactment included a list of the percentages of each of the national groups as well as the Jewish denominational group. The Minister indicated in this decree that the Jewish denominational percentage was to be regarded as a “national percentage”. The decree was a statistical and constitutional absurdity. Statistically, each national census from 1869 to 1920 – and the situation remained the same even later on – had made a distinction between religious denominations and national groups. The “Jewish” category had always been listed among the denominations rather than as a national group – contrary to census practice in Russia and Romania, where the Jews had always been listed among the national groups. Under the Hungarian constitution, church-state relations were based on the principle that *none of the denominations were to be identified as a nationality*. (This was an important issue not just with respect to the Jews, most of whom had been German-Yiddish speakers until their spontaneous assimilation into the Magyar-speaking majority, but also in relation to Orthodox Christians, many of whom belonged to the Serbian or Romanian national groups. An important aim of the Hungarian elite was to “assimilate” – that is, to incorporate into the Magyar-speaking community – the Serbs and Romanians without forcing them to change their religious denomination.)

Hungary's three main Christian denominations, the Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran churches, which had earlier been so adamant that only a parliamentary act – and not a ministerial decree – might change the status of a church, nevertheless tolerated this dangerous precedent.

Implementation and its relative failure

The implementation of the Act was never completely or fully achieved. If the Act had been implemented fully, the national average would have been 6%. The fact was, however, that in 1921 Jewish students accounted for 12.6% of total students, and in 1926 the figure was 9.4%. (MSÉ: 1923, 1927). It was “high”, but much less than before the war when it had reached one half of the students in some faculties and close to a quarter of the whole student body. At Hungary’s provincial universities, above all at Pécs – a new university – the percentage of Jewish students remained relatively high.

Nor was the decree on “nationalist feeling” implemented. We have only sporadic data about left-wing movements at the universities, aside from a statistical survey carried out in 1924. This survey, however, indicates that almost two-thirds (6129) of 9754 students attending universities in Budapest – where the ratio of Jewish students was the lowest – were *not* members of right-wing student organisations. Only 5% of students regularly read right-wing daily newspapers, while 25% *regularly read liberal newspapers – or liberal and right wing ones..* (About 25% read no newspapers.) (SK 54/3, p. 68)

Some students had begun to protest against physical attacks by paramilitary groups against Jews, while other students, who wished simply to study, asked for government assistance in their struggle to avoid being forced into joining certain student organisations (NN 1922-27 17/404 ,26/361). The Minister of Education threatened action against the organisers of antisemitic disturbances in Pécs; he rebuffed the students’ committee of Sopron College and then arranged for the closure of the College, banning forty-two students from the student refectory as a punishment for their antisemitic actions, and ignoring a subsequent national strike by students. (NN 1922-27 24/319,26/265)

In the autumn of 1926, the Rector Magnificus (President) of Budapest University reported that the disturbances had been organised by *outside* groups rather than by students, and that these external elements had received payments from the political right wing. The screening procedure – an institution that in 1920 had been used against the Jews – was now employed against the non-student provocateurs.

Some political forces attempted to extend the sphere of authority of the *numerus clausus*. A right-wing group of MPs tried to prohibit Jews from teaching Hungarian literature and history, while another group sought the exclusion of all Jews from the teaching profession. In 1923 Gyula Gömbös, the right-wing opposition leader (who later served as prime minister - 1932-1936 - and called himself the great mediator between Hitler and Mussolini), proposed that the maximum number of Jewish students fixed by the *numerus clausus* should also include converted Jews – as indeed it was practiced implicitly in several faculties. Such a view represented a direct acknowledgement of racist antisemitism. The majority rejected his proposal. (NI 1920-22 1/381, NN 1922-27 22/189, 18/162)

In 1923 Gömbös also proposed controls on the accreditation of foreign graduations– with the aim of limiting the number of Jewish students leaving or returning to the country. Following political pressure from the right wing, the Secondary School Act of 1924 stipulated that the accreditation of foreign certificates should be subject to the approval of a special committee. According to contemporary estimates, about 20 billion Crowns were flowing out of Hungary each year as the result of a thousand Jewish students having been forced to study abroad by the *Numerus Clausus*. (NN 1922-27 18/162, 27/38, 22/159)

The Ministry of Education also issued a decree on secondary school entrance examinations – but this could never be implemented.

The Bethlen government rejected proposals concerning an extension of the *Numerus Clausus* to secondary and vocational schools. It also ignored demands for the imposition of fines on denominational schools that failed to adhere to the *Numerus Clausus*.

In 1923 the opposition called for the abrogation of the *Numerus Clausus*. The proposal received the support of thirty-seven MPs (socialists and liberals) but eighty-four MPs rejected it, while a further 123 MPs were absent. The vote demonstrated that whereas in 1920 the majority of MPs of centrist views had been opposed to the scheme, by 1923 they were prepared to rescue the Act, which was widely perceived to serve the interests of the middle classes. Nevertheless, one may observe an interesting shift in the arguments put forward in favour of a liberalisation. In 1920 opponents of the *Numerus Clausus* had referred to international public opinion and the long-term aim of a peace treaty revision. But now the liberal and centrist politicians referred to the necessity of facilitating the receipt of international credits. Indeed, *the need for international loans had become a far more important consideration than the risk of outrage at the international political organisations*: the League of Nations had already discussed the *Numerus Clausus* on three occasions without formulating any consequences. (NN 1922-27 8/249, Spira:1972)

The original socio-historical rationale for the introduction of the *Numerus Clausus* – that is, the competition between elites in an impoverished country – became even more grave following the mass migration of members of former elites into Hungary from neighbouring countries. 320,000 persons immigrated to the country from the large territories ceded by Hungary to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania (and, to a lesser degree, Austria and Poland) as well as the training of masses of new university graduates in the 1920s. Comparing the 1920 and 1930 levels, the number of physicians rose to 187% (the percent of Jewish ones declining from 46 % to 34%, the number of secondary school teachers grew to 133%, (the percent of Jewish ones remaining stabilized at 6,5%) the number of engineers grew to 127% (the percent of Jewish ones decreasing from 38,2% to 30,4%) etc, (94.k. 138-140.)

Klebelberg, Minister of Education from 1922 until 1931, however ambiguous he showed himself in this matter, declared that his conservative beliefs would require the total abrogation of the *Numerus Clausus*. In his view, while the

only real objective – the ending of the competition between the elites – had to be accomplished, this should be achieved without antisemitic provisions. Klebelsberg had close relations with Jewish and other capitalist interests, many of which financed the cultural activities of the Hungarian government as well as supported scientific research. The image of cultural superiority of Hungary over its neighbors beyond the borders was a central element in the cultural and foreign policy of the Bethlen government in the 1920s.

Klebelsberg sent a letter to his Prussian colleague Becker explaining the obstacles to the full abolition of the *Numerus Clausus* put up by right-wing elements within the government party. But he knew that the limits on numbers could be raised, thereby turning the *Numerus Clausus* into an illusion. (*OSZK Archives, Letter Section, Klebelsberg to Becker 16 Oct 1928*)

The Government did not, however, propose the full abolition of the *Numerus Clausus*. The members of government had no compelling wish to do so, and they also had to consider the wishes of right-wing forces both inside and outside the party. In private correspondence to the Prime Minister, Klebelsberg wrote: “We do have to revise the Act – *not in order to inflict [the scourge of] thousands of Jewish students on the nation*, but, through rational moderation, to save the essence of the institution [i.e. the *Numerus Clausus*].” (*Romsics 1991:201*)

In 1928 the government submitted an amendment bill with a view to abrogating the most scandalous provisions of the Act. According to voting figures on the amendment, 173 MPs were present in Parliament – a far greater number than in 1920. 139 MPs voted in favour of the amendment and 34 against. Opponents of the amendment included thirteen social democrats and five liberals, as well as several right-wing MPs who wished to retain the original antisemitic formula.

The amendment won the support of members of the government party and a majority of christian socialists. The “mercantile wing” of the government party also supported the amendment. (*KN 1927-32 9/237/*)

More than half of liberal MPs were absent at the time of the vote. Their principles did not permit them to support the amendment, and yet they too were in favour of changing the provisions of the Act. The mercantile wing of the government party, on the other hand, which had been unwilling to vote for the original *Numerus Clausus* Act, was present at the vote, and gave its support to the amendment. This group of MPs realised that to damage the unity of the government party would merely have benefited the racists, thereby enabling right and left-wing opponents of the amendment to scupper the Government’s compromise and prevent any liberalisation of the system.

In the Upper House, Albert Berzeviczy, who had served as Minister of Education from 1903-1905, declared that his belief was in the complete freedom of learning, but that any failure to support the amendment bill would merely leave the old Act in place. (*FN 1927-32 2/114*)

Unfortunately, the passing of the amendment to the *Numerus Clausus* Act represented the “highpoint” of liberalism in Hungary’s consolidation period during the interwar years. The Christian middle classes continued to receive preferential treatment, but this was now based on a more complex system rather than explicit antisemitism. Thus student percentages were set for different professions and different regions. (Jews were concentrated in urban areas and in the commercial sphere – so the discrimination never disappeared.)

In the 1930s the government drafted an extra annual report on the number of Jewish students attending universities and the subjects that they were studying. College and university administrators gradually reduced the ratio of Jewish students from 11.3% in 1931 to 8.9% in 1936. (In absolute terms the decrease represented more than 500 Jewish students.) (*Hét:1:191*)

The aim of the *Numerus Clausus* was not to promote the interests of 95% of the population at the expense of 5% percent of the population. Instead its purpose was to guarantee the interests of 210,000 Christian middle-class families (or 277,000 highly qualified non-Jewish individuals) at the expense of 60,000 Jewish families (or some 78,000 equally highly qualified Jewish individuals). Thus, the effect of the *Numerus Clausus* was to ensure that 77% of the elite should receive 95% of university places.

Nevertheless, it soon became evident that the *Numerus Clausus* was incapable of guaranteeing the Christian middle-class elite the stability that it desired. The great depression resulted in the mass unemployment of public officials, who then attempted to obtain the free-market positions held by Jews.

What were the underlying factors that led to the introduction and retention of the *Numerus Clausus*? In the 1920s antisemitism seems to have been rooted in a kind of coalition of different political and ideological groups: 1/ Modernising bureaucrats, who wished to control society, perceived the Jewish middle class as an alternative force that might threaten their domination. 2/ People that saw antisemitism as an ideal channel for a reaffirmation of both the Catholic and Protestant character of the country. (Compare the Catholic criticism of Prohászka’s theological works in the 1910s with the silence that followed his accusations against the Jews after 1919. By then some people did not hesitate to transform anti-Judaism into antisemitism). 3/ Politicians who realized that the non-market-oriented middle classes felt threatened by the market oriented Jewish competitors for their positions.

Faced with the loss of their former stability, the old ruling elite was increasingly determined to exclude any competition. While the proximity of the Third Reich may have facilitated the adoption of the “anti-Jewish laws” after 1938, these laws were deeply rooted in the underlying structure and ideology of the Hungarian middle classes, the earliest legal expression of which was the Law 1920/25.²

² I express my special thanks to Dr. Mihály Szilagyi-Gal for his stylistical work on my paper

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Andor Ladányi

On the 1928 amendment to the Hungarian *numerus clausus* act

Though 19 March 1944 undoubtedly represents a breaking point in the Hungarian history of the Jewish question—with the implementation of the Endlösung, the form of persecution of Jews practiced in Fascist Germany—its precedents nevertheless reached back across earlier decades. Act XXV of 1920, commonly known as the *numerus clausus* Act,¹ is one of these precedents.

Abbreviations used in the notes

BME L = Budapesti Műszaki Egyetem Levéltára (Archives of the Budapest University of Technology)

BML = Baranya Megyei Levéltár (Archives of Baranya County)

D.F.Ú. = *Debreceni Független Újság*

Dm = *Délmagyarország*

E.K = *Esti Kurír*

ELTE L = Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Levéltára (Archives of the Eötvös Loránd University)

HBML = Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár (Archives of Hajdú-Bihar County)

KLTE It = Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem Irattára (Archives of the Kossuth Lajos University)

MOL = Magyar Országos Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary)

N.Ú. = *Nemzeti Újság*

P.N. = *Pesti Napló*

SOTE L = Semmelweis Orvostudományi Egyetem Levéltára (Archives of the Semmelweis University of Medicine)

Sz.Ú.N. = *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*

¹ Notable works in the literature dealing with the *numerus clausus* Act include Gyula Gábor, *A numerus clausus és a zsidó egyetem* [The *numerus clausus* Act and the Jewish university], (Budapest: Fráter és Társa, 1924); István Haller, *Harc a numerus clausus körül* [The struggle around the *numerus clausus*], (Budapest: Selbstverl., 1926); Andor Ladányi, *Az egyetemi ifjúság az ellenforradalom első éveiben 1919–1921* [University youth in the first years of the counterrevolution 1919–1921], in the series *Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből* [Essays in the field of historical sciences], New series no. 88 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 117–78; Victor Karády and István Kemény, “Antisémitisme universitaire et concurrence de classe: la loi du *numerus clausus* en Hongrie entre les deux guerres”, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* No. 34 (Paris: 1980), 67–99; Nathaniel Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews. Policy and Legislation 1920–1943* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), 60–79; N. Szegvári Katalin, *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon. A zsidó és nőhallgatók felvételéről* [Numerus clausus regulations in counterrevolutionary Hungary. On the admission of Jewish and women students], (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988); Robert Barta, “A *numerus clausus* és baloldali Magyar zsidó politikai közvélemény. Sic itur ad astra” [The *numerus clausus* and left-wing Hungarian Jewish political public opinion. *Sic itur ad astra*], *Fiatal Történészek Folyóirata* Issue 5–6 (Budapest, 1990):1–2; László Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon 1526–1945* [Hungarian Jewry 1526–1945], (Budapest: Osiris, 1992), 200–3; Lóránt Tilkovszky’s unpublished lecture given at the scientific conference of 5–7 April 1994, with the heading, “A zsidótörvények, mint a holocaust előzményei” [The laws regulating Jews, as precedents of the Holocaust].

A product of the period of White terror, this Act came about mainly under pressure from far-right university student organizations. Anti-Semitism was a determining trait of the political ideology of these organizations, which had the support of the extreme right political forces and departmental faculties taking prominent roles, and their main demand was a radical reduction in the numbers of Jewish students. A primary cause of their anti-Semitism can be pinned down to the situation of middle-class youth and their insecurity in regards to subsistence (and the way was distorted).

In 1919, civil servants resettled en masse from the occupied territories in to a Hungary reduced to one-third of its former size. A relative overproduction of intelligentsia that had been, to a certain degree, already the case prior to the war, became an acute problem in the changed circumstances, serious economic situation following the War, even taking into account a proportionately large increase in university enrollment numbers. (A single example, by way of illustration: according to the census of 1920, the number of medical doctors practicing their professions was a little short of 5,000, while the number of students studying at the faculties of medicine in academic year 1920–21 was 4,500.) The national average for the proportion of Jewish students in higher education in the period from the turn of the century to the end of World War One was 23–24%, with somewhat larger numbers in the faculties of medicine and at the University of Technology, and lower in the faculties of arts, as well as institutions of higher learning for agriculture. (The relatively large proportion of Jewish students was naturally not the result of some sort of “racial takeover”, but stood in relation to the way Hungarian society, and Jewry within it was structured, as well as the denominational distribution, and urbanization of the social classes and strata that provided the dominant majority of young people at universities.) Young middle-class Christians considered eliminating, or drastically limiting the number of Jewish students at universities a solution to their problems with finding a living.

The other main reason behind the anti-Semitism of university youth organizations was the role taken by a significant segment of Jewish intellectuals and students in the revolutions of 1918–1919, due to which, vocal demands that collective punishment be meted out on Jewry as perpetrators of, and party to the revolutions were common. The anti-Semitism of far right forces also carried definitively racist traits.

Under the terms of § no. 1 of the *numerus clausus* Act, only individuals who are absolutely reliable where their national allegiance and moral values are concerned may enroll in the universities of the sciences, the faculties of economics, the University of Technology, and academies of law, and only in numbers that can be given thorough instruction. § no. 2 adds that so long as they are absolutely reliable where their national allegiance and moral values are concerned, the future enrollment of students enrolled prior to the Act coming into effect is not effected. According to § no. 3 of the draft law, permission for enrollment must be requested by way of a petition, for arbitration by the faculty

concerned. An amendment proposed by Nándor Bernolák—and signed by 75 members of parliament and adopted by parliament—was appended to this paragraph: “In granting permission to enroll, apart from the demands of national allegiance and moral reliability, attention should be given on the one hand, to the intellectual abilities of the applicant, and on the other, to making sure that as far as possible, the proportion of students belonging to different racial (népfaj) and national groups found within the borders of the country amounts to the proportion of the same racial (népfaj) or national group in the total population, but comes to within at least nine-tenths of the figure.”² This Act was intended—though not stated explicitly—mainly to reduce the number of Jewish students at universities, and in this regard antedated the first laws for racial preservation in fascist Germany by 12 years. But the Act—beyond the anti-Semitic tendency it showed—was also “pioneering” in the sense that through it, Hungary was the first to establish quotas for the number of students that could be accepted to each faculty.

From the legal perspective Act XXV of 1920—and especially its § 3—was rather problematic. It inhibited the substantiation of the principle of free choice of school, and § 3 violated the principle of equality before the law. The notion of “race” (népfaj) did not exist in Hungarian public law. Though the notion of nationality was legally accepted, Act XLIV of 1868 made it clear that “every citizen of the country, regardless of nationality, is a member of the unified Hungarian nation with equal rights”, and the criteria taken as the indicator for national belonging was the mother tongue. Jewry was unequivocally defined as a religious denomination in the period of the Dual Monarchy. The raised issue of public law was “resolved” by the Ministry of Religion and Education by showing the data for the distribution of the population by language in the annex to the regulations of implementation for the law, appending the following note: “Counting the Israelites as a separate nationality.”³

In its original form, this law remained in force until 1928, when Act XIV of 1928 brought amendments to it. Relatively few works⁴ have addressed this

² “1920. évi XXV. Törvénycikk a tudományegyetemekre, a műegyetemre, a budapesti egyetemi közgazdaságtudományi karra és a jogakadémiákra való beiratkozás szabályozásáról” In: 1000 év törvényei, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=7440>

³ *Magyar Törvénytár. 1920. évi törvénycikkek* [Hungarian body of Law. Acts of 1920], (Budapest: 1921), 145–146; *Molnár Kálmán egyetemi tanár összegyűjtött kisebb tanulmányai és cikkei* [Collected short studies and articles by University Professor Kálmán Molnár], (Pécs: 1932), 275–77; *Az egyetemi szelekció reformja Ereky István bizottsági előadó javaslata. Országos Felsőoktatási Tanács 7* [Reform of the selection process for universities, proposal of the István Eleky Committee. National Council for Higher Education], (Budapest: 1939), 3–4; Ladányi, *Az egyetemi ifjúság*.

⁴ József Huszti, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno életműve* [The life-work of Count Kuno Klebelsberg], (Budapest: 1942), 195–7; Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke. A liberális politikai pártok 1919–1931* [The liberal opposition to Bethlen. The liberal political parties 1919–1931], (Budapest: 1980. 189–93.; Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews*, 74–79; Ignác Romsics, *Ellenforradalom és konszolidáció. A Horthy-rendszer első tíz éve* [Counterrevolution and consolidation. The first ten years of the Horthy system], (Budapest: 1982), 243–4; Szegvári, *Numerus clausus rendelkezések*,

amendment—mostly in passing—so the present study seeks to review in greater detail the genesis and implementation of this less well-known object on the basis of more extensive archival source-material.

Weak efforts at revision of the *numerus clausus*

The question of the *numerus clausus* came up again in the first years of the Bethlen consolidation. Social democratic, and liberal members of parliament especially, were repeatedly highly critical of the Act in the National Assembly, and submitted a draft proposal for a decree to repeal the Act (namely Rezső Rupert on 4 February 1922, Győző Drozdy on 5 July 1922, Imre Györki on 12 January 1923, Sándor Propper 19 June 1923, Imre Szabó on 20 December 1923, Pál Sándor on 4 January 1924, Ernő Nagy on 8 January 1924 etc.). Meanwhile, certain extreme right members of parliament fighting for racial preservation (Gyula Gömbös, Endre Zsilinszky, Menyhért Kis, János Zsirkay) considered that the Act needed to be made more “stringent”, and the, in their opinion, too liberal practices of the University of Szeged needed to be curtailed, not to mention those of the University of Pécs—which established the 6% Jewish student intake in proportion to the actual number of students admitted (rather than the total number allocated to the institution, which was often left unfilled), and the recognized the student rights earned by students in their senior years as guaranteed by the law. By 1925, even some parliamentary representatives in the liberal wing of the Unity Party (Egységspárt) took a position aligned with the elimination of the *numerus clausus* (during the National Assembly debate on the 1924/1925 budget, Count Miksa Hoyos, György Lukács, and János Tankovics preferred the annulment of the Act, and at the same time, 24 Unity Party representatives declared their opposition to the *numerus clausus* in a volume titled *A magyar zsidóság almanachja. Numerus clausus* [The almanac of Hungarian Jewry. The *numerus clausus*], published in 1925.⁵

At first the government tried to present the quota system, regulating the number of students that could be accepted, as socio-political measures—and simply stifled the issue created by § 3, which gave the criteria for the proportion of particular nationality and racial groups, in silence.

Reflecting on the draft resolution submitted by Györki for the 26 January 1923 session of the National Assembly, Klebelsberg declared that in essence, it is

167–76; Ignác Romsics, *Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz* [István Bethlen. A political biography], (Budapest: 1991), 201–202; Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon 1526–1945*, 202–3.

⁵ *Az 1920. évi február hó 16-ára összehívott Nemzetgyűlés Irományai* Vol. XIII [Documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 February 1920], 166; *Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 February 1920], Memorandum Vol. I, 269–70., Vol. VIII, 249, Vol. XIV, 223; Vol. XVIII, 263, 392; Vol. XIX, 15, 30, 279; Vol. XXVIII, 148–9, 221, 252; Vol. XXIX, 84; *A magyar zsidóság almanachja. Numerus clausus* [The Almanac of Hungarian Jewry. *Numerus clausus*], (Budapest: 1925).

the socio-political implications of the *numerus clausus* which should be taken into view. “If we train a far broader intelligentsia than is needed” he said, “we may sow the seeds of great social strife.” In regards to the draft resolution proposed by Proper he emphasized, in his speech at the National Assembly session of 31 July 1923, that he stands by free choice of school, and “if we were still tending to our lives in the old Greater Hungary, I would not argue for the *numerus clausus*; but as we live in a “leftover” Hungary, having lost two-thirds of the country with the educated circles collapsing back into the remaining one-third, there is far too large a concentration of intelligentsia compared to what the country is able to support [...]. In these circumstances the *numerus clausus* is still required.” He retraced the same notions in his contribution to the debate on indemnity on 29 January 1924, alluding to the threat posed by the intellectual proletariat (rejecting, at the same time, proposals for the toughening of the law), and then on 3 April 1924, he stated in his speech to the National Assembly discussing the law on secondary education that “when the country will once again have growth, if its economic life prospers, which is not a possibility within the present Hungary, defined by the Treaty of Trianon [...] this law can be erased.” In view of public response to the anti-*numerus clausus* position taken by the three mentioned governing party members of parliament he made clear in a press release that he considers the Act to be a response to a social problem, which is a consequence of the Peace Treaty of Trianon, meanwhile declaring in a pacifying tone aimed at the majority of the Unity Party and supporters of the government in the Christian Party (Kereszténypárt) (as well as the racists): “a repeal or reform of the *numerus clausus* is not even being considered for the agenda, and so no draft law, taking up this issue, is under preparation.”⁶

Somewhat greater emphasis was given to the question of the *numerus clausus* at the end of November 1925 plenary debates of the annual budget for 1925/26 in the National Assembly. This time Klebelsberg stressed not the issue of fighting the overproduction of the intelligentsia with regard to the Act, but the need to give preference to an economically weakened Hungarian middle class, that is, the Christian intelligentsia (adopting for the purpose, the turns of phrase “Hungarian child” and “Jewish child” from racist terminology), denying however, the discriminative nature of the *numerus clausus* Act in regards to Jews. Social Democrat and Liberal members of parliament (Anna Kéthly, Béla Fábián, József Pakots, and Endre Saly) took an even more explicitly critical tone into the denunciations of the prolongation of the *numerus clausus* Act, and pointed to the lack of honesty in Klebelsberg’s position. Anticipation of the meetings of the

⁶ N.Ú. 1–2 February 1925; *Az 1922 évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. DC, 188–9; Vol. XV, 250; Vol. XXII, 219; *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno beszédei, cikkei, törvényjavaslatai* [Count Kuno Klebelsberg: Speeches, articles, draft laws], (Budapest, 1927), 403–4.; Huszti, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno életműve*, 195–7.

League of Nations, shortly to be held, gave the debate an added urgency.⁷

The theatrics at Geneva

The case of the Hungarian *numerus clausus* Act was tabled for the second time by the League of Nations in December 1925. It had been taken up for the first time on the basis of the petition of the Joint Foreign Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association dated 3 November 1921, as well as the Alliance Israélite Universelle petition of 11 November 1921—according to which the *numerus clausus* Act represented a transgression of the decrees of the Peace Treaty of Trianon aimed at the protection of minorities and at insuring the equal rights of racial, national, and religious minorities. In January 1922, the Hungarian government declared that the aim of this law was to decrease the educated proletariat and ensure minority rights, and accordingly, does not contradict the relevant regulations of the Peace Treaty, but to the contrary, in it the government had codified the rights of the minorities with regard to free choice of school. The League of Nations Council proposed in its report on the 30 September 1922 session, drafted by the committee of delegates sent out to review the matter, that the Hungarian government provide a detailed report on the implementation of the law. Foreign Minister Miklós Bánffy promised to do so, but already told the Assembly in session that though Jewish citizens make up approximately 6 % of the total population, the proportion of students of “Jewish faith and race” came to 33.3 % at the University of Szeged and 45.2 % at the University of Pécs (while not mentioning that the explanation for the high rate was the great number of senior students displaced from the Budapest University of Sciences). “Under these circumstances it cannot be said” he concluded, “that the legitimate rights of the Jewish population have been violated.” The Council of the League of Nations took note of both the committee report and Bánffy’s statement.

On 1 January 1925, the Chairman of the Joint Foreign Committee, Lucien Wolf submitted a fresh petition to the League of Nations, which asked for the position of the Hungarian government on the question. Foreign Minister Walko elaborated on the contents of the petition in his extensive review of 19 May 1925, and then the Committee formed in order to probe the issue requested that the Hungarian government reply to three concrete questions framed on 6 July 1925: (1) Does the Hungarian government intend amendments to the implementation of the *numerus clausus* Act in view of the decision of the Hungarian Supreme Court (Kúria) on 23 September 1924, declaring that Jewry is not a nationality (*nemzetiség*), but a religious denomination, and if so, to what effect? (2) Can the number of applicants and the number of those rejected be established and categorized by race and nationality? (3) By what criteria is the Jewish or non-

⁷ Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. XXXV, 377; Vol. XXXV, 433–4; Vol. XXXVI, 18–21, 26–7, 38.

Jewish background of an applicant determined in the course of implementing the law. In its reply of 18 August 1925, the Hungarian government claimed that the need for an amendment to Act XXV of 1920, or its mode of implementation, is not apparent. In regards to the second question, the government was not able to quote actual data (noting however, that there was a strong possibility of the proportion of well-to-do Jewish applicants among those rejected being high). Where question three was concerned, the Foreign Minister—in contrast to the way the issue was obfuscated in his earlier review—replied that documents proving the origins of the applicants formed the basis of determination. Upon consideration of the above, at its meeting of 22 September, the Committee proposed that the question be tabled for the next session of the League of Nations.⁸

The government felt that in face of all the facts, its defense of the *numerus clausus* Act at the next session of the Council of the League of Nations, convened for December, was going to be an uphill task. Towards a successful conclusion of this affair, firstly a decision was taken to invest Klebelsberg with the task of representing the Hungarian government in Geneva, and secondly the government also found it necessary that the official representatives of Hungarian Jewry distance themselves from the action of the foreign Jewish organizations.

In the autumn of 1925, the representatives of Hungarian Jewry were of the same opinion. In an article entitled “Bethlen és az Alliance” [Bethlen and the Alliance], Vázsonyi—who had repeatedly taken a position against citing the Treaty of Trianon or relying on foreign support in relation to the *numerus clausus*—proclaimed: “You will never find a Hungarian Jew who asks for foreign assistance on the issue of the *numerus clausus*. We will never stoop so low as to rest our case upon the Treaty of Trianon.” In its article of 7 November, *Egyenlőség* also emphasized—in Vázsonyi’s spirit—that the struggle against the *numerus clausus* “is an internal issue of Hungarian Jewry, a struggle it wishes to carry through at home, by constitutional means, and within the legal framework provided.” Apart from a skeptical view of the role played by the League of Nations, the reasons behind Vázsonyi’s position were mainly of a legal nature: in line with an approach to public law grounded in the Dual Monarchy he dismissed the definition of Jewry as a “minority”, along with the provisions for its rights formed on the basis of the Treaty of Trianon; he set out—and hoped—to have the *numerus clausus* repealed through a return to equal citizen rights.⁹

Bethlen prepared and sent the draft resolution to be submitted to the plenary meeting to the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Jewish Congress on 17 November 1925. After passionately debating it, the Executive Committee

⁸ MOL K107–III/a; *Société des Nations - Journal Officiel* (1926) 146–8; Haller, *Harc a numerus clausus körül*, 194–203.

⁹ *Egyenlőség* (7 November 1925), 1, 9; *Vázsonyi Vilmos beszédei és írásai* Vol. 2 [Speeches and writings by Vilmos Vázsonyi], (Budapest: 1927), 436–43; Mária M. Kovács, “A kisebbségek jogvédelmének politikai csapdája. Vázsonyi Vilmos és a *numerus clausus*” [The political trap of protecting minority rights. Vilmos Vázsonyi and the *numerus clausus*], *Beszélő* (7 April 1994), 28–30.

adopted not the draft, but a different formulation by Vilmos Vázsonyi, which actually matched the Bethlen formula in all essentials: Hungarian Jewry did not seek any form of foreign assistance in the matter of the *numerus clausus*, and declines any such assistance. The official representation for the Orthodox Jewish community sent a letter with similar contents to the Permanent Secretariat of the League of Nations.¹⁰

In his wide ranging and rather cleverly argued declaration Klebelsberg presented to the League of Nations Council at its 10 December 1925 session, based on both verified and “twisted” facts, and “in which,” as Huszti put it, “he spoke of everything, but kept wisely silent on the point of the issue,” his point of departure was that the Hungarian Jewish organizations solemnly protested against the intervention of the foreign Jewish organizations completely alien to them. Therefore, there was in fact no such minority issue, which the League of Nations was required to deal with; yet in spite of this, in view of the international propaganda the *numerus clausus* had been the subject of, an elucidation of the problem did seem to be necessary.

In leading up the issue he pointed out that the Hungarian government did not consider the *numerus clausus* a permanent measure, but one of a transitional nature. It followed from the impact of the Treaty of Trianon, and could be amended at any point as soon as social and economic life had regained its earlier stability. He cited data showing the explosion of the Hungarian middle class, stressing the need for a halt to further increase in the overproduction of the intelligentsia.

However, he did not include an evaluation of the quota system imposed upon the number of students that could be accepted to institutions of higher education. In his earlier mentioned work on the subject, István Ereky—citing data from Dezső Laky—established that the Hungarian system of selection “had actually only been successful in a few faculties”, “apart from the *numerus clausus* affecting the Jews, which made its effect felt everywhere”. The number of students that could be accepted to the faculties had been set quite high in the first place, and on numerous occasions the limit had even been raised—as a result of social pressure—while the number of applicants remained far below the set limits in certain provincial faculties, and at some institutions—for example, at the Budapest Faculty of Medicine in particular—the number of those accepted remained well below the established limits (while a large number of Jewish applicants were rejected in the process).

In the following, Klebelsberg pointed out that the scope of the *numerus clausus* Act did not extend to the colleges specializing in economics and other some other fields of study. And since the Jews were especially likely to choose vocations of an economic nature, this circumstance in itself is enough to prove, as he put it, that the *numerus clausus* does not target Jews. (In this regard however,

¹⁰ *Egyenlőség* (1 June 1926), 11–2; Szabolcsi Lajos, *Két emberöltő. Az Egyenlőség évtizedei (1881–1931)* [Two generations. The decade of equality (1881–1931)], (Budapest: 1993), 366–7.

Klebelberg kept to himself the fact that in a majority of colleges—primarily on account of the string-arm tactics of the extreme right youth organizations at universities—what had in fact been achieved was not the *numerus clausus*, but the *numerus nullus*. Thus, for example, not a single Jewish student studied at the College of Mining and Forest Engineering of Sopron from the year 1920 onwards, nor did the Academy of Economics in Keszthely and Magyaróvár, or the Academy of Economics in Debrecen have even one Jewish student, with the proportion of Jewish students at the College of Veterinary Medicine remaining far below the national average.)

Klebelberg alluded to the fact that the regulation on the proportional number of each race and nationality was not a part of the original draft law, and was included in the text in the course of parliamentary debate. Nonetheless, it did not in his opinion deprive Jews of their rights, or limit, but rather reaffirmed their rights, because without it a situation may have arisen in which Jewish students, under conditions of academic autonomy, and other given circumstances would not have been accepted at all, or in lower numbers to the institutions. (In this context he raised the example of the Budapest University of Sciences, which had a Catholic background, where in the absence of this law, the faculty may have questioned whether any Jewish students could be accepted.) This was, in fact, a real possibility, at least for a period of time, if the political outlooks of the teaching staff at some of the faculties and the role of the associations of camaraderie were taken into account, but could not be taken seriously where the majority of institutions and faculties were concerned. However, were Jews to be accepted to universities in greater numbers than their proportionate numbers in society—Klebelberg continued—this would infringe on the rights of the majority. On the basis of the above, Klebelberg denied that the Act contradicted §-s 56, 57 and 58 of the Treaty of Trianon, since it provided an equal dispensation of rights for the Jewish minority. With regard to the manner in which belonging to the Jewish community was determined, he remarked that this does not involve anthropological definitions, being based solely on birth certificates. Finally, he drew attention to the fact that the mood in Hungary was still so heightened that repealing the Act would lead to a break between Christian and Jewish societies. The council deferred its decision on the matter to its next meeting.

At its following session on 12 December 1925, the Council brought a resolution on the basis of a proposal by de Mello-Franco, to the effect that since according to the representative of the Hungarian government the *numerus clausus* is only an extraordinary and temporary dispensation, and shows readiness to amend the Act as soon as changes in the social situation allow, the declarations of the Hungarian government are accepted, and amendments to the law in the near future are expected. Klebelberg accepted the draft resolution and gave emphatic

expression to his government's commitment to act fully in line with its declarations.¹¹

According to Klebelsberg's letter of January 1926 to Becker, the Prussian Minister for Culture, during his trip to Geneva "hatte ich eine ganze Odyssee durchzumachen"; in front of the League of Nations "I had to defend the *numerus clausus* Act, a doubly unpleasant task for me, as at the time of its inception... I had not voted for the Act, and indeed, its wording cannot be said to be fortunate."¹²

Following Geneva—prior to the amendment

Klebelsberg's performance in Geneva received a wide range of responses in Hungary. Circles that supported upholding the *numerus clausus* celebrated the results of the debate at the League of Nations enthusiastically. The newspaper *Nemzeti Újság* published his speech in Geneva under the headline "Klebelsberg döntő sikere a *numerus clausus* kérdésében a Népszövetség előtt" [Klebelsberg's decisive victory in the question of the *numerus clausus* at the League of Nations], and Gömbös acknowledged Klebelsberg's speech given in Geneva with "recognition and relief" at a dinner held by the Party for the Defense of the Race (Fajvédő Párt), noting with glee that the Minister had taken a stand in support of the right wing movement.

In a critical appraisal of Klebelsberg's contradictory statements, during his interpellation in the parliamentary session of 16 December Károly Peyer posed the following question: "Does the government have any intention of placing before the House a proposal that repeals this act in the near future, and of taking action in order to wipe this stain of disgrace off the brows of the Hungarian nation?"¹³ In his answer, Klebelsberg essentially repeated the gist of what he had said in Geneva, and cited the psychological factors preventing an amendment to the *numerus clausus*: the anti-Semitism triggered by the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1919—"in which almost the whole of the leadership, and an overwhelming majority of the enforcement authorities were composed of immigrant Galician Jews"¹⁴—as well as the catastrophic situation of the Hungarian middle class mean that an amendment of the Act will only be possible when "this can be achieved without disturbance to the process of consolidation, or any other serious trauma".

¹¹ MOL K 107–III/a; *Société des Nations - Journal Officiel* (1926), 148–53, 171, 489; Haller, *Harc a numerus clausus körül*, 203–11; Ereky, *Az egyetemi szelekció reformja*, 3; Huszti, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno életműve*, 196–7; Thomas Spira, *Hungary's Numerus clausus, the Jewish Minority, and the League of Nation*, *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* (Mainz: 1972), 115–28.

¹² National Széchényi Library Archives, Manuscript Division, The letters of Kuno Klebelsberg to C.H. Becker.

¹³ Nemzetgyűlési Napló, 1922-XXXVIII-190. old., (1925, december 16.)

¹⁴ Nemzetgyűlési Napló, 1922-XXXVIII-193 old. (1925, december 15.)

The following day, Pál Sándor, Rezső Rupert, Vilmos Vázsonyi, Pál Hegymegi-Kiss, and Béla Fábián struck out at the *numerus clausus* and the apparent lack of sincerity on the part of Klebelsberg, as well as the absurdity of his claims (such as the *numerus clausus* giving protection to Jews) in bitterly critical parliamentary speeches. Bethlen also spoke up in the course of the debate. He emphasized that over the past four years the government had been working to “ensure rapprochement, and a peaceful conclusion” to the Jewish question. He declared that though the *numerus clausus* proclaimed Jewry as a race, and a nationality, this was not the position the government took on the matter. “I consider those Jews who identify themselves as one with the Hungarian people [...] Hungarians of Jewish faith, and not a separate race” (adding however that there are also Jews in the country who do not ally themselves with the interests of the nation).¹⁵

The debate about the *numerus clausus* calmed down in the first half of 1926. Though Anna Kéthly did submit a draft resolution to repeal Act XXV of 1920 on 17 May 1926, in the course of the National Assembly debate convened to discuss the budget for year 1926/27, in accord with the standing orders of the parliament this was not put forward for vote—as a draft resolution earlier submitted by her on the same question had already been voted down.¹⁶ Yet in the autumn of 1926, certain signs—seemingly at least—indicated a shift towards an amendment of the *numerus clausus*.

The first of these signs was a degree of “moderation” brought to the *numerus clausus* Act in the form of two measures particularly, instituted by Klebelsberg, with Bethlen’s prior agreement, in regards to its implementation and interpretation. On 9 September he gave orders by telephone (!), for Christianized Jewish applicants to receive equal treatment to Christian applicants, followed five days later by a second order, once again delivered by telephone, specifying that the 6 % of places kept for Jewish students be established not against the number of the students actually accepted to the educational institution concerned, but in relation to the full enrollment figure allotted (which meant an incremental increase in the number of places at faculties where the full bracket allotted could not be filled). An appeal for these two measures had in fact been part of a petition addressed to Bethlen in April 1926 by the Jewish Congregation of Pest.

In his press release dealing with the first of his orders, Klebelsberg emphasized, with reference to his speech in Geneva, that “according to the unequivocal premises of the law on the free practice of religion to be a Jew is a denominational matter”, and he called upon the rectors to follow courses of action in accord with this. He also mentioned that he had no intention to create

¹⁵ N.Ú. 11 December 1925, 3–4; 13 December, 1. *Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. XXXVIII, 187–97, 199–224, 230–3; Haller, *Harc a numerus clausus körül*, 212–8.

¹⁶ *Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. XLIII, 205–6, 214.

propaganda for Jewish conversion to Christianity, and therefore stipulated the lapse of one year after the conversion (in order to exclude the possibility of conversion for the sake of enrollment). The camaraderie associations and some organizations for racial defense were trenchantly critical of these orders. Klebelsberg held consultations first with the faculty members of the Large Committee for Youth (Hekler, Szily, Teleki, Vámosy), and then with the leaders of the camaraderie associations, amending the orders as a result, to state that every faculty independently determines in each case whether the conversion took place “*in fraudem legis*”, that is, in order to subvert the law. This amendment meant a retreat in comparison to the measures of 9 September, leaving it a discretionary decision vested solely in the authority of admissions committees at individual faculties. (According to the statement given by Dezső Baltazár, the democratically disposed bishop of the Trans-Tisza diocese of the Calvinist Church: “It is impossible for anyone to arbitrate what spiritual motives may have led someone to convert to another religion.”) Nevertheless, this manner of “mitigation” in respect of the *numerus clausus* Act—by the declaration of Jewry as a denomination—meant the first breach in Act XXV of 1920 had been made. This interpretation of the orders also appeared in Jenő Rákosi’s lead article of 17 September 1926.¹⁷

As pointed out by Vázsonyi in his earlier mentioned speech to the Parliament, the Hungarian Act only regulates conversion from the religious denomination, but how is it possible to leave race behind? Vázsonyi also cited the fact that the stipulations of the Act with regard to the proportions according to race and nationality were only applied with regard to Jews, and were never taken into account for those of German, Slovak, or other ethnic backgrounds. (It should be noted here that according to the 1920 Census, the proportion of Germans was 6.9 %, and 5.5 % according to the 1930 Census, while Slovaks came to 1.8 % and 1.2 % respectively, and at the same time the proportion of their places in higher education during the 1920s was around 0.6 % for Germans, Slovaks not even coming to 0.1 %.)¹⁸

The question of the *numerus clausus* also came up in relation to the parliamentary elections of December 1926. In order to insure that the *numerus clausus* did not become an election slogan, in his letter to Bethlen, dated 19 October 1926, Lóránt Hegedűs (ex-finance minister, and chairman of the Hungarian Trade Bank) proposed: let the leaders of Hungarian Jewry turn to Wolf with a request that the *numerus clausus* is not tabled by the League of Nations

¹⁷ BME L138/1926-27. R; *Egyenlőség* (4 September 1926), 14; *Egyenlőség* (25 September 1926), 1–2; *Pesti Hírlap* (17 September 1926), 1–2; P.N. (16 September 1926), 3; P.N. (28 September 1926), 1–2; *Pécsi Napló* (29 September 1926), 1; *Újság* (16 September 1926), 1, 3; P.N. (17 September 1926), 1, 6; P.N. (18 September 1926), 2; P.N. (28 September 1926), 1.

¹⁸ *Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. XXXVIII, 219; Kovács Alajos, *A németek helyzete Csonka-Magyarországon a statisztika megvilágításában* (Budapest: 1936), 35, 45; Kovács Alajos, *A tótok helyzete Csonka-Magyarországon a statisztika megvilágításában* (Budapest: 1936), 25, 35.

before the elections. Klebelsberg—who was forwarded Hegedűs's letter by Bethlen—did not agree with the course of action proposed by Hegedűs, and at the same time, outlined his plans for amendments to the *numerus clausus* “in strictest confidence”.¹⁹

Klebelsberg's approach, and position on the *numerus clausus*—as apparent from the foregoing—was rather conflicting. His political duplicity—often referred to by his opponents, both left- and rightwing—also manifested itself in this matter. He himself professed his political views contradictorily. (Thus, for example, he took a stand against both left- and rightwing extremism in his electoral speech of 14 May 1922 in Sopron saying, “I serve the politics of the middle course”, while at the meeting of the League of Nations, held on 26 November 1926, he positioned himself unequivocally in support of conservative, right-wing politics.) However, his position on the *numerus clausus* was also motivated by obvious tactical considerations, the balance of political forces, as well as the political aims prioritizing the support of the middle class that stood for “a racial profile matching historical traditions” (in Bethlen's words), and not lastly by an attention to the role and weight of university student organizations under the sway of extreme right forces. For this reason, the contents of his reply on 3 November 1926 are important, and may be seen to express his actual position. In this letter he set down that phrased as § 3 of the *numerus clausus* was, “the Cour Permanent of the Hague could not be approached with any hope of success [...] The Act must therefore be revised, but not so as to inflict thousands of Jewish university students upon the nation, but in order to save the essence of the institution at the cost of easing it to a well-defined rational degree.”²⁰ He did not however think it would be right to introduce the changes prior to the elections. In his opinion the objective was that the League of Nations does not set the matter on the December meeting's agenda, and that an amendment be only introduced after the elections.

Bethlen, however, believed that it would be expedient to raise the need for modifications to the *numerus clausus* Act in the run up to the elections, primarily in order to divide the liberal opposition, and win as many Jewish voters over as possible, while also appeasing the Christian middle class by framing it in a suitably cautious way. In his electoral speech of 16 November 1926 held in the Vigadó, he stressed that the legally guaranteed equality of the Jewish religious denomination must “be protected from the slightest impairment by all means”, and the government is duty bound to persecute and suppress any agitation against those belonging to the Jewish faith. In this context he also addressed the *numerus clausus*. He repeated Klebelsberg's Geneva declaration of December 1925, defining the institution as a transitory one, and went on to mention the two sides of the question: the sense of resentment on the Jewish side stemming from the

¹⁹ Szinai Miklós és Szűcs László (eds.) *Bethlen István titkos iratai*, (Secret papers of István Bethlen), Budapest, Kossuth, 1972. 256–257

²⁰ Szinai Miklós és Szűcs László (eds.) *Bethlen István titkos iratai*, (Secret papers of István Bethlen), Budapest, Kossuth, 1972. 256–257

unjust treatment, “which will not be spirited away by any type of dialectic or formula however anyone may try”, and the fear on the part of the Christian middle class for the future, the living to be earned by their progeny. However, he did not speak of a date for the amendment of the Act. (As an account by the racist journal later recorded, “though [Bethlen] did promise an amendment to the Act, as usual, he framed the matter not only for the liberals, but also for the nationalist, Christian society at large, so what the government is in fact preparing to do could not be clearly gleaned from his words.”) In the course of the electoral campaign, numerous other representatives of the Unity Party also spoke about an amendment to the *numerus clausus* Act; the journal *Egyenlőség* claimed 74 Unity Party members of parliament promised to repeal the act.²¹

Yet once the elections were over, silence settled once again over the *numerus clausus*. At the parliamentary debate of the 1927/1928 State Budget on 13 May 1927, Béla Fábián commented rather dryly on how those members of parliament “who took to the cities, loudly demanding that the *numerus clausus* be swept out” were now mute, and had not stood by their promises. In his draft resolution he pressed for changes to the *numerus clausus* Act. Klebelsberg’s response in this matter was the following: The Bethlen Cabinet has repeatedly said that when the occasion presents itself the Act should be amended, and revised. As for the time appropriate for this, the government did not make a fix statement, noting only that the material situation of a broad strata of the middle class must improve in a degree that means these wide segments of middle-class citizens do not see their own or their children’s future threatened by the elimination of the *numerus clausus*. This time, so far as the government can appreciate, has not yet come, though we all would welcome its arrival.” On these grounds the parliament—in line with the practice of previous years—rejected the draft resolution.²²

The genesis of the amendment

Albeit an amendment to the *numerus clausus* Act had been made years overdue in terms of what the process of consolidation would have demanded, it actually found its way to the agenda under the force of external factors. For in its petition to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations dated 4 September

²¹ *Sopron vármegye*, (16 May 1922), 3; *Az 1922. évi június hó 16-ára hirdetett Nemzetgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the National Assembly convened for 16 June 1922], Memorandum Vol. XXXVII, 28; *Egyenlőség* (20 November 1926), 1; *Egyenlőség* (18 December 1926), 1; *Magyarság* (20 October 1927), 1; *Bethlen István titkos iratai* [Count István Bethlen. The secret Manuscripts], (Budapest: 1972), 255–7; *Bethlen István gróf beszédei és írásai* Vol. 2 [Speeches and writings by Count István Bethlen], (Budapest: 1933), 152–3.

²² *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója* [House of Parliament Memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. IV, 67–8, 71–3, 93–4. It is worthy of note that in the course of an Italian trip in April 1927, in a statement he made to a journalist, Bethlen said that the *numerus clausus* law would be revoked within a reasonable time. (MOL K 429. Adatgyűjtemény [Collection of data], Bundle 2.)

1927, the Alliance Israélite Universelle drew attention to the fact that though in the period that had elapsed since the December 1925 sessions of the League of Nations Hungary's situation had much improved, the unjust, and so far as a certain category of Hungarian citizens was concerned, detrimental Act had still not been amended. For this reason it asked: would it not be appropriate for the League of Nations to review the question once more? On 14 September 1927, Lucien Wolf also sent a letter with similar contents.²³

The Hungarian government—seeing, as it wanted to avoid the issue being tabled once more by the League of Nations Council—was forced to take steps. In his Geneva talks of October 1927 Bethlen made express promises of a soon to be realized amendment to the Act. Bethlen announced the fact at the Unity Party meeting of 19 October 1927. “Though we do not desire to annul the intentions or socio-political significance of the Act,” he said, “those measures, which have caused rather strong aversion and antipathy among a number of Hungarian citizens for years now, and have also been addressed by the League of Nations must be eliminated from it. This [...] will be legislative work that is necessary and unavoidable, and which signifies a step further in this field, without eliminating the institution itself or its significance.”

Early the following day, Klebelsberg also published a press release on an amendment to the *numerus clausus*. He let it be known that the draft of the amendment “was at such an early stage of inception that at the moment it is plainly impossible to give account of it. From a social perspective, many consider the *numerus clausus* worth keeping in place for the moment; however, the opinion abroad is that the law is targeted against the Jews. In the course of my negotiations abroad I have signaled clearly that at the time at which the government sees it appropriate from a social point of view, it will bring changes to the regulations contained in the law.” He emphasized that he himself never identified with the law, “it had come down to me as one of the arduous tasks inherited by the Ministry of Culture”, and that he considered mainly § 3 of the Act as necessarily to be revoked. In another proclamation within a few days Klebelsberg restated that “there are no plans to repeal the *numerus clausus* itself”, it must be kept in place as a socio-political regulation, while it would be expedient to drop § 3 of the Act.²⁴

The press of the liberal opposition initially received these announcements of the amendment with cautious satisfaction, and considered it a step towards repealing the *numerus clausus*. It shortly transpired however that in this sense, only the preservation of appearances could be expected. According to the lead article of *Esti Kurir*, it was clear from the press releases that “the gentlemen are still disposed towards maintaining the institution of the *numerus clausus*, and are only going to give a few token measures a try,” the words, resounding phraseology is addressed to Geneva. The journal of the social democrats

²³ MOL K 107. III/a.

²⁴ *Magyarország* (26 October 1927), 1–2; *8 órai Újság* (21 October 1927), 1; *Bethlen István gróf beszédei és írásai* Vol. 2, 19.

approached the matter skeptically right from the beginning, “only the aspect is to change, the essence will remain,” it said on 21 October, they will be watching to insure that the denominational limits—which are at the heart of the Act—prevail in the future. In her article of 23 October, Anna Kéthly gave emphasis to the same notions.²⁵

The announcement of the amendment was received, on the other hand, with heated protest by the camp aligned in favor of the *numerus clausus*—including the party for racial defense and other organizations on the extreme right, as well as professors who held the same beliefs as these political movements, a greater part of the delegates of the Christian Economic and Social Party, and last but certainly not least, the associations of camaraderie. Among those who took a stand opposed to the amendment were Gyula Gömbös, István Friedrich, István Haller, Tibor Eckhardt, Károly Wolff, while the associations of camaraderie, which were in close contact with the forces on the extreme right, stepped up their violent actions. They began—on 21 and 22 October—with a series of disgraceful demonstrations against reruns of Dezső Szomory’s play, *A nagyasszony* [The dowager] at the National Theater, even requiring police intervention, followed from 24 October onwards by a continuation of the atrocities on university campuses known already from previous years (identity checks at the entrances to the university buildings, removal, and insult of Jewish students). The resolution adopted at the general assembly held by the Turul Alliance on 24 October called for a “defense” of the *numerus clausus* Act. The Emericana did not participate in the breaches of order, but in its declaration, took a position in opposition to the amendment of the *numerus clausus*. The issue of continued atrocities committed at universities was raised in the parliament by opposition delegates, József Pakots and Károly Rassay. In his reply, Klebelsberg made a formal pledge to halt the “breaches of order”, but found that the use of too strong disciplinary measures inexpedient (emphasizing that these were “our children. And a Minister of Culture must feel tenderly for them under all circumstances.”) The atrocities spread to rural universities as well. Klebelsberg held meetings with the leaders of the associations of camaraderie on two occasions, but order was only restored on university campuses after the four-day holiday at the beginning of November.²⁶

In the meantime, progress had been made at the Ministry in the matter of the amendment to Act XXV of 1920, and Klebelsberg proposed the draft law at

²⁵ E.K. (21 October 1927), 1; E.K. (22 October 1927), 1; E.K. (27 October 1927), 1; *Népszava* (21 October 1927), 1; *Népszava* (23 October 1927), 7.

²⁶ BME L MRT, meeting of 27 October 1927 minutes; ELTE L 1004/1927-28 BX; D.F.Ú. (27 October 1927), 5; D.F.Ú. (28 October 1927), 1–2; D.F.Ú. (29 October 1927), 4; E.K. (25 October 1927), 1–3; E.K. (26 October 1927), 3; E.K. (28 October 1927), 1–2; E.K. (29 October 1927), 5; E.K. (30 October 1927), 2; *Emericana* (November–December 1927), 3; *Pécsi Napló* (29 October 1927), 2; SzÚJM (27 October 1927), 1–2; SzÚJM (28 October 1927), 1; Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója [House of Parliament Memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. VI, 139–42, 197–202; Pál Réz, *Szomory Dezső alkotásai és vallomásai tükrében* [Dezső Szomory as reflected in his works and confessions], (Budapest: 1971), 208–12.

the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 4 November 1927. Klebelsberg outlined the internal and foreign policy implications of the issue. He reflected on the fact that the League of Nations had brought a postponed resolution on the matter, which would be on the agenda again in the December sessions. Foreign Minister Walko, in reply to Klebelsberg's query made it clear: "I do not think the government would be able to take a successful stand in Geneva with the *numerus clausus* at present, or that it could defend the government positions heretofore, with any success." Klebelsberg requested that record of the important reply be kept in the minutes. Bethlen explained that "were Hungary not to follow the resolution of the League of Nations against the *numerus clausus* [...] this would bear serious consequences for the Hungarian minorities torn out of Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon." In course of the debate, Minister of the Interior, Scitovszky expressed an opinion that the Jews were reacting over-sensitively to the *numerus clausus*, while the Welfare and Labor minister, József Vass informed the Council of Ministers that the Christian Party was "committed to the principals of the *numerus clausus* Act." The Foreign Minister let the house know that the League of Nations had given Hungary an extension until 30 November to take steps in the matter. The government therefore had two alternatives: either to ask for another two-month extension, or to resolve the issue immediately. In closing the debate, Bethlen proposed that politically the soundest course of action would be if Klebelsberg would submit a draft law as soon as possible, and accordingly, the Council of Ministers approved the presentation of the draft law to the parliament.²⁷

The first half of November saw animated debate on the draft amendment of the *numerus clausus* Act. In its proclamation of 5 November, the Large Committee for Youth (Ifjúsági Nagybizottság)—signed by a number of teachers in the Large Committee—held it necessary to uphold § 3 of the Act, calling upon Hungarian society to support its struggle. The most intransigent organization under the Turul umbrella, the Csaba Association of Camaraderie took a stand in favor of the *numerus clausus* at its meeting to elect its officials on 13 November. On the very same day, at the plenary meeting of the Committee for Protection of the *Numerus Clausus* formed by the Federation of Civil Associations, passionate speeches were made denouncing the amendment of the Act (and Klebelsberg personally) by Eckhardt, Wolff, Gömbös and Milotay. On November 15, the seven largest youth associations delivered a memorandum to the two Houses of Parliament, demanding that Act XXV of 1920 be preserved exactly as it stood, and also abided by § 3 of the Act.

On 16 November the daily *Esti Kurír* published the text of the amendment, while the newspaper *Nemzeti Újság* reported the planned amendment to the third paragraph of § 3 on the basis of information from "inside sources", adding: "The government seeks, through other measures as well, to insure that careers requiring education are not flooded, and to give opportunities to future generations of the

²⁷ MOL K 27. – MT, meeting of 4 November 1927 minutes, Agenda Item No. 29.

Christian middle class.” At noon on the same day, Bethlen held consultations with ministers Klebelsberg, Vass, Scitovsky and Pesthy on some of the problems with the amendment, and then met Gyula Gömbös in the early afternoon. Bethlen and Klebelsberg presented the draft law at the meeting of the Christian Party in the evening, also making an effort to convince delegates of this Party that they would attend to the protection of “Christian interests” in course of its implementation. The Party did not take a position on the proposed Act, passing a resolution to take a proper stance at a following meeting, after closer study of the draft.

The following day, Bethlen and Klebelsberg presented the proposed law at the meeting of the Unity Party. Klebelsberg referred to the antecedents to the Act (mentioning that the amendment to the text of the incriminated § 3 had been accepted by only 59 of the 219 delegates in the National Assembly), and stressed that both foreign and internal policy give ample cause for the current amendment to the Act. In view of the repeated attacks launched against Klebelsberg by the extreme right, Bethlen emphatically underscored that the amendment to the law is a government proposal, a matter of policy, and he felt complete solidarity with Klebelsberg. Also in arguing for the necessity of the amendment, Bethlen at the same time stated, in order to calm sentiments—but to the consternation of liberal circles—that though there are bound to be changes in consequence of the modifications where the principles of selection were concerned, “they will not be so significant as to satisfy everyone”. He finally repeated that the amendment was an “eminent political proposal,” the government is bound by it, and therefore requests that the Party makes an affirmative vote on it compulsory for its delegates. The Party Assembly adopted the foregoing—without further discussion.

In the early hours of the day on 18 November, Bethlen continued his meetings first reassuring Pál Teleki, the faculty chair of the Youth Large Committee, that the amendment does not mean a neglect for the “interests of Christians”, followed by discussions with Klebelsberg, and later with Béla Túri, one of the leaders of the Christian Party, who intended to add a change to the text of the draft law.²⁸ After this, on the same day, Klebelsberg presented the draft law, which came to only two articles to the Parliament. According to its first section, the following text would replace § 3 of Act XXV, 1920:

“In granting permission to enroll, apart from the requirements of national allegiance and moral reliability, attention should be given on the one hand, to the previous educational record and intellectual abilities of the applicant, and on the other, to ensuring that war orphans and the children of war veterans in the first place, but also the children of public servants and people in various lines of occupations (agriculture, industry, trade, independent professions etc.) enter institutions of higher education in numbers proportionate to the numbers and

²⁸ E.K. (16 November 1927), 1; E.K. (17 November 1927), 1; *Magyarság* (12 November 1927), 1; *Magyarság* (17 November 1927), 1–2; N.Ú. (6 November 1927), 1; N.Ú. (16 November 1927), 3; N.Ú. (17 November 1927), 3; N.Ú. (18 November 1927), 5–6.

significance of those belonging to these lines of work, and their distribution also be equitable by municipality. The Minister for Religion and Public Education is responsible for overseeing that these laws are implemented properly.”

The justification for the draft law argued the necessity for the application of a quota system, which called for a preservation of § 1, Act XXV of 1920 in unmodified form, whilst the third paragraph which “was the cause of numerous misunderstandings [...] both on the part of a segment of international opinion and by Hungarian Jewry”, needs amendment (noting also that it was not a part of the original draft law, and “bears in it the traits of rather desultory legislative work”).²⁹

The—contentious—requirement of “sportsmanlike physical fitness” as a criterion of acceptance was left out of the draft, and so was a covert attempt at reinstating proportional distribution according to racial and nationality numbers encapsulated in the proposed amendment of Túri. The Liberal and Social Democrat opposition trenchantly criticized the, now officially public, draft law. “The draft law was born—said Rassay—of cowardice both outwards and inwards. False in its premise, a mess in its text, and senseless in its content.” According to the social democrat István Farkas, “the government is merely playing politics, and fabricating a showcase law for the international audience.” “Each line of the text and every pathetic sentence of the justification is hypocrisy and deceit,” *Esti Kurír* wrote.

However, a certain measure of calm was brought to the right-wing by the proposal (taking account of the information disseminated with regard to the implementation of the Act, and Klebelsberg’s statements claiming that the number of Jewish students will rise minimally as a result of the amendment). A better part of the delegates of the Christian Party now considered the changes more-or-less acceptable, and the intensity of resistance from the racists had also waned palpably. Albeit a number of representatives of the Christian Party and the racial preservationists declared—if merely for show—that they would vote against the draft law, this was no threat to its adoption, and even seemed an advantage to the government if the changes were embattled both from the left and the right, because “it proves that the middle way it has taken is right.”³⁰

The associations of camaraderie however, were not successfully appeased: on 18 November, upon news of the draft law, the atrocities on university campuses commenced—not for the first, or last time in the history of the Horthy period since August 1919—, beginning at the institutions of higher education in Budapest, and a few days later, at the provincial universities as well (in the case of the latter, as Klebelsberg put it, “like an electric switch turned on, by orders from Budapest”). Klebelsberg consulted with the Minister of the Interior at length on the atrocities committed at the universities, and then declared that in as much as the disturbances continue he will be forced to close the institutions. According to

²⁹ *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére összehívott Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Irományai* [Written material of the Parliamentary session of 25 January 1927], Vol. VI, 434–7.

³⁰ E.K (18 November 1927), 1–2; E.K (19 November 1927), 3.

the 22 November resolution adopted by the council of the Turul Alliance, it only “deems the intention of the law assured if the original text of the Act is left unchanged, and the absolutely mandatory determination of proportional numbers by race are determined”, as for the case if the amendment is accepted, it would apply all its means towards the reinstatement of the original text. The same day, Pál Hegymegi-Kiss denounced the fights breaking out at universities in a speech at parliament. Klebelsberg replied in a pre-session speech in the Parliament the next day, calling the disturbances at the universities “highly regrettable” and promising to restore order. Following this, Pál Hegymegi-Kiss submitted an interpellation in the matter, holding the measures taken by the university authorities, as well as the Minister inadequate. József Pakots also lodged an interpellation on the issue of the atrocities ongoing at universities. The interpellations stressed the role of the associations of camaraderie and the responsibility of Pál Teleki, the faculty chair of the Youth Large Committee. In an order delivered by telephone on the same day, 23 November, the head of the concerned department of the Ministry of Education, Zoltán Magyary let the rectors of the universities know: make it clear to the student body that “unless lasting peace and order are restored” by 26 November, he would order the closure of the university. Klebelsberg also raised the matter of the disturbances in the universities at the Council of Ministers on 25 November. The Council resolved that “in case of continued demonstrations the university must be shut down”, and saw it necessary to carry out a reform of university youth organizations at a later date. Disturbances ceased at the universities by the end of November (with some sources maintaining that Gömbös had a role in this).³¹

It must also be mentioned that in the second half of November, the National Association of Hungarian Doctors, the National Federation of Architects and the recently formed National Association of Hungarian Lawyers took a position for *numerus clausus* to be upheld in unchanged form. The proposal to append the draft law with the Túri amendment came up again at the 29 November meeting of the Christian Party, and Haller had prepared a new text for the draft law, however Under-Secretary of State, Pál Petri made a statement that the government is committed to the submitted text of the draft law, and Bethlen carried this version for debate at the League of Nations to be held in Geneva on 2

³¹ MOL K 27. – MT, meeting of 25 November 1927 minutes, Agenda Item No. 20; BML Az Erzsébet Tudományegyetem iratai [Archives of Erzsébet University] 2426/1927-28. R; *Csaba* (1927): 29; *Csaba* (1928): 1–3; D.F.Ú. (22 November 1927), 1; D.F.Ú. (25 November 1927), 1–2; D.F.Ú. (26 November 1927), 1; E.K. (19 November 1927), 1–2; E.K. (20 November 1927), 1–3; E.K. (22 November 1927), 5–6; E.K. (23 November 1927), 3–4; E.K. (24 November 1927), 1; E.K. (25 November 1927), 3; E.K. (26 November 1927), 3; N.Ú. (22 November 1927), 3; N.Ú. (23 November 1927), 3–4; N.Ú. (24 November 1927), 1; 8 *Órai Újság* (20 November 1927), 1–2; 8 *Órai Újság* (22 November 1927), 1–2; 8 *Órai Újság* (25 November 1927), 3; *Pécsi Napló* (22 November 1927), 2; *Pécsi Napló* (23 November 1927), 1; *Pécsi Napló* (25 November 1927), 2–3; *Pécsi Napló* (26 November 1927), 1; Sz.Ú.N. (22 November 1927), 1–2; Sz.Ú.N. (23 November 1927), 1–4; Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. VII, 22–5, 27–9, 58–61.

December. Meanwhile, on Bethlen's orders, a lawyer from Pest held negotiations in Paris with the leaders of the Alliance, and even managed to contact Lucien Wolf himself. He reported back to Bethlen: the negotiations were successful, the parties had been persuaded not to table the submission for debate at the League of Nations. (According to Wolf's letter: "We can not state that we are completely satisfied with the proposal, however it does remove all references to discrimination by race or religion [...] and this is what we had requested. The new categories which have been added to the law seem uncalled-for [...] and there remains the possibility that they will be used to serve anti-Semitic goals, however we are not at the moment aiming to criticize these." He declared that they are ready to accept the assurances of the Hungarian government, "as given in good faith".)³²

Parliamentary debate on the draft law

Only the delivery of the draft law to the League of Nations before the December summit was a matter of urgency for the government, its debate in parliament was put off until February 1928, in expectation of passions stirred by the amendment of the Act abating by then. Prior to commencing the parliamentary debate, Bethlen repeated his call for the delegates to vote for the draft law at the 9 February meeting of the Unity Party, while the Christian Party had resolved at its meeting on 25 January that its delegates may take positions "dictated by their own conscience and at their discretion" in the parliamentary debate.

The general debate on the draft law began on 9 February 1928, and continued through seven sessions of parliament until 24 February, while the debate on its particulars was held on 28 February. The debate showed a number of peculiarities. One of these was conspicuous disinterest (for example, at the start of the debate on 10 February, a mere 34 members of parliament were present, instead of the 40 required for the parliament to hold council; but even following the first speech after recess, only 41, and even at the start of the next day of parliament in session, on 17 February, there were only 37 present). The absence in government benches was especially conspicuous; on one occasion, for example, there were only two members present. Another peculiarity of the debate was that only five of altogether 25 speakers supported the draft law, while its detractors included 14 delegates, largely belonging to the social democrat and liberal opposition camps—who agreed with Pál Hegymegi Kiss's draft resolution and called for Act XXV of 1920 to be repealed—on the one hand, and 6 delegates who belonged to the Christian Party or the racial preservationists, demanding that the *numerus clausus* be upheld in an unmodified form.

³² National Széchényi Library Archives, Manuscript Collection, 15/141; *Magyarság*, 1927. nov. 30.1-2, dec. 1. 6.; N. Ú. 1927. dec. 14. 6.; 8 Órai Újság, 1927. dec. 1. 3, dec 7. 1.; MONE Orvostársadalmi Szemle, 1927. 229-230.; Technika, 1927. nov. 30.1-2.

Representatives of the democratic opposition placed emphasis primarily on equal rights and freedom of the choice of school, the demands of consolidation, while pointing out the lack of honesty where the draft law and its justification were concerned, as well as the contradiction between the socio-political reasoning behind it and the way things stood in reality.

Thus Dániel Várnai, in a rather thorough speech, gave voice to his conviction that the amendment of the law will not bring change in comparison to the earlier situation. He gave convincing proof to the effect that the sociopolitical considerations had not in the least prevailed in practice, the number of students had incrementally increased until the middle of the twenties—outpacing numbers prior to the World War—and with the proportional increase in the number of law students, the composition of the student body had also taken a turn for the worse, while the growth of the intellectual proletariat can be stopped not by limiting the freedom of choice of school, but by extending the opportunities of employment. In his excellent speech, Marcell Baracs mainly analyzed the legal implications of the matter, the ways in which Act XXV of 1920—and its implementation—contradicted the basic tenets of Hungarian public law in those aspects which violated equal rights under the law, and drew attention to the double meanings, dishonesty, and contradictions present in the draft law. Anna Kéthly spoke about how the *numerus clausus* smites the poor Jews primarily, whose children, having been squeezed out of universities in Hungary, have to study abroad in penurious conditions, while the government, in line with its class policy seeks to reinforce “an intellectual praetorian guard”. She followed this with an elucidation of the problems, unintelligibility and dangers of the criteria for admissions. Other notable words from the leftist opposition worthy of mention are the observations of Géza Malasits, highlighting the need for the mitigation of social conflicts and for change of outlook among young people at universities; while some liberal representatives of Jewish faith—especially Pál Sándor—examined the social causes of anti-Semitism in a way that fell short in terms of nuance and differentiation, their speeches characterized in part by denominational bias.

Representatives of the Christian Party and the racial preservationists who demanded that the law be upheld in unchanged form—Béla Túri, Gyula Petrovác, Aladár Kontra, János Kossalka, Károly Wolff and Gyula Gömbös—engaged primarily with the Jewish question, proclaiming Jewry a race, and asserting their predominance in economic life and in certain intellectual professions, and the interests of the Christian middle class and the demands of racial preservation.

György Lukács, who belonged to the liberal wing of the Unity Party and—as mentioned earlier—had opposed the *numerus clausus* from before, believed the complicated admissions criteria inexpedient, and accepted talent and excellence in the advancement of knowledge alone as the principle of selection, but nevertheless approved the draft law, which in his opinion, “meant a significant step forward in the gradual annulment of the scope of the institution of the *numerus clausus*”. Other liberal representatives of the Unity Party—Gábor Ugron,

István Bárczy and Géza Dési, among others—did not take the floor in the debate on the draft law...

In his speech of 23 February, Klebelsberg essentially repeated the arguments he had set forth in the autumn of the previous year. He alluded to the circumstances in which Act XXV of 1920 had come into being, that the original draft law “had in fact no aspect but the socio-political one [...] The proposal gained a racial, ethnic edge by way of the Bernolák amendment.” He emphasized that with its elimination the draft law reinstates the position of Act XVII of 1867 and Act XLIV of 1895, where in terms of the law, Jewry in Hungary counts as a denomination. He argued the case for upholding quotas as a necessity in the course of admissions (raising the possibility of introducing an examination to sift students at the end of the first year). He referred to the role of foreign policy impacting upon the law (primarily from the point of view of the situation of Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries), and promoted the preeminence of positive measures to be taken in the interest of the further education of the children of the middle class. In speeches he gave later in the course of the detailed debate of the draft law he was not able to substantially refute the objections to the criteria of selection, which he himself considered artificial.

Finally the Parliament adopted the draft law of amendment to the Act of 1920—rejecting the resolutions proposed by the opposition, and adopting the smaller amendment proposed by Elemér Farkas, serving to strengthen the category of public servants—with a majority of 139 against 34 votes. (The following change was made by way of Farkas’s addition: “war orphans and children of men who had performed army service on the front, of people in public service, as well as [...]”).³³

When the parliamentary debate of the draft law began the university students held a “silent strike”—on the initiative of the Turul and MEFHOSZ (National Association of Hungarian university and college students) organizations—and did not attend lectures for a few days; but there was no serious breach of order (with the exception of the events at the University of Technology). (As István Szenteh, leader of the association “Csaba” announced at their commemorative camp on 14 March 1928: “Certain oblique innuendos and ambiguous promises have been made with requests that Hungarian youth remain calm, and wait patiently: for even after the amendment everything shall remain as it had been.”) Klebelsberg had in fact, in his own words, put “rather strong pressure” on extreme right circles to “refrain from any form of demonstration” during the parliamentary debate of the draft law. (At the same time the chief officer of police in Budapest had also banned the assemblies of the Social Democratic Party, claiming that the tense atmosphere generated by the debate of

³³ The Parliamentary debate: *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója* [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. VIII, 438–45; *ibid.* Vol. IX, 1–18, 22–41, 43–61, 71–94, 96–115, 117–37, 140–57, 183–209, 227–37; L. Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 190–193.

the draft law a calm conclusion to the public meetings is not seen to be guaranteed.)³⁴

The debate on the draft law in the Upper House of Parliament took place on 13–14 March 1928. Of fifteen speakers, six were in support of the change, five were against—mainly on grounds of the liberal principles of equal rights and freedom of choice of school—, while four (among them three university professors) stressed the need for the *numerus clausus* Act to be held in place as it stood, and were against the amendment.

The speeches for the amendment are not peculiarly noteworthy. Albert Berzeviczy, President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences appraised Act XXV of 1920 critically, for its dishonesty and inefficacy, and denounced the disturbances at the universities the previous autumn (touching upon the responsibility of the teachers leading the associations of camaraderie) and the lenient approach shown towards the perpetrators of the atrocities and breaches of order, describing the actual application of the criteria set out in the draft law as unfeasible. He nevertheless accepted the draft law, for otherwise the Act of 1920, “which was even worse than this draft”, would remain in force. According to count Pál Esterházy, “the country had seen worse” than this draft, and he accepted it in view of “its being necessary”.

Among the statements of those rejecting the draft law with the requirements of equal rights and the freedom of choice in schooling the speech of Dezső Baltazár is notable for its rejection of racial or religious discrimination, the *numerus clausus* Law for its contradiction of universal human rights, and as a codification of fear and hatred”. Setting the fundamental significance of equal rights before the law in relief, József Pap, Chairman of the Budapest Bar Association pointed out that Act XXV of 1920 was “offensive, injurious and demeaning for Hungarian Jewry”, and “conflicted with Hungarian public law, and Hungarian constitutionalism”, but the proposed change “was just as bad, just as mistaken” as the original Act, contradicting equal rights and limiting the freedom of choice of schools.

Among right wing opponents of the amendment, Pál Teleki detailed the broad conquests of Jewry in the economic sphere in his voluminous speech, emphasizing that a “battle between races was at issue”, rolling out extensive quotes in evidence of Jewry being a race, qualifying the amendment as a “discreditable draft”. The rector of the University of Technology, Kálmán Szily gave precedence to the powerful sense of anti-Semitism after 1919 as the context of the creation of the *numerus clausus* Act, and examined its causes: the role of Jewry during the World War and at the time of the revolutions (especially the

³⁴ BME L Műegyetemi Tanács 1928. Marc. 30-i ülés jkv. [Minutes of the 30 March 1928 meeting of the Council of the University of Technology]; KLTE It E.T. Minutes of the meetings on 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15 February 1928; *Csaba* (1928): 10; Dm. (11 February 1928), 1; Dm. (12 February 1928), 7; Dm. (14 February 1928), 3; Dm. (15 February 1928), 3.; Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. IX, 174–5.

activities of the Galilei Circle). In order to support the Hungarian Christian middle class and halt the free competition which led to the increase of the proportion of Jews in intellectual professions, he stressed the need for upholding the *numerus clausus* Act. Alajos Wolkenberg, Professor in the Faculty of Divinity at the Budapest University of Sciences held the denominational limits reasonable, and in commenting upon its social implications—similarly to Szily—cited the swift growth of Jewry in Hungary and its role during the War and the revolutions, mentioning the mood of Hungarian youth, and considered it in line with the objectives of Christian conservative politics to hold the Act in place.

In his speech, Klebelsberg took a measured stance against the extreme views, explaining the lack of stronger measures against participants of the atrocities, but also taking exception to certain views on the extreme right. (However, in relation to Teleki's remarks he did not on this occasion take a position on the issue of whether Jewry is to be considered a race, or not.) Once again he was not able to rebut the critical comments voiced on the principles of selection in the admissions process, only giving expression to his opinion that "this Act could be implemented equitably". The majority of the Upper House of Parliament finally accepted the draft law.³⁵

Notwithstanding that the acceptance of the draft law in both the Upper and Lower House of Parliament was an assurance as far as the position of the Unity Party was concerned, and the groups opposing the amendment had repeatedly been given promises well publicized in the press with regard to the new law not bringing any significant change compared to the practice of previous years, the question may still be raised, why their delegates took such trenchant positions in the course of the argument. This problem cannot be resolved unequivocally on the basis of information available today. Taking into consideration that their followers—the associations of camaraderie not least among them—expected, as a matter of course, a forceful delivery of their political views as one of the determining circumstances, it is perhaps likely that a sham resistance may be spoken of in this instance.

"The proof of the pudding": implementation of the act

Preparations for the implementation of the Act were under way at the ministry even before the parliamentary debate commenced: on 4 February 1928 the institutions of higher education were requested to urgently provide data for first-year Jewish students in the academic years from 1920/21 to 1927/28. (For official statistics only covered the denominational distribution of the student body as a whole.) Klebelsberg held confidential discussions with the rectors and deans on 28 May regarding the questions raised by the implementation of the Act.

³⁵ Parliamentary debate on the draft law: *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Felsőházának Naplója* [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. II, 101–19, 121–40.

(Although Klebelsberg had explicitly emphasized the confidential nature of the discussion, Lajos Méhely, the dean of the Budapest Faculty of Arts—and father of race theory in Hungary—informed the newspaper of the racial preservationists on the discussion and also reported it in detail at the faculty meeting. The Minister presented the fundamental principles of the implementation, the contents of the executive regulation to be issued. He considered it obligatory that all applicants with excellent high-school results are accepted, at which—at least according to Méhely—he was the only one to protest, pointing out that due to the high number of Jewish pupils with excellent results this would mean a complete lack of attention to the interests of the Hungarian people. This is why he requested Klebelsberg to let high-school results only count as secondary criteria, but the Minister was not willing to accept this (promising nevertheless to give the heads of educational districts orders to draw examinations at the completion of high school under strict inspection.) A number of problems with regard to the application of admissions criteria were however not clarified at the meeting.³⁶

Klebelsberg passed the Decree No. 53,000/1928, regulating the implementation of the Act on 12 July 1928, and had it delivered to the institutions concerned in “strict confidentiality” with the instruction that “in view of its temporary character the decrees should not be published.” Furthermore he required that the institutions give a detailed report in each half of the academic year, detailing the experiences gathered in the course of its execution.

The decree of implementation prescribed that—as previously—institutions annually propose the number of students that could be accepted, for the minister to establish the final admissions numbers in the form of a decree. With appropriate educational backgrounds and unquestionable morals, foreign students may enroll over and above the established admissions figures. Enrollment on the basis of acquired rights—as well as proof of allegiance to the nation and reliability of morals, of course—could only pertain to the faculty at which the given person had studied earlier. Studies begun, or completed in foreign colleges did not insure any rights to enrollment in Hungarian colleges within the scope of the Act. Concerning the admissions criteria, the decree of implementation repeated the formulations of the Act, qualifying those living in the seat of the university or in its neighborhood, as well as in its vicinity for enjoying preference, and ordered that applicants with results of excellent high-school final exam grades “preferably” be admitted. The decree of implementation did not provide substantive “instruction” for the application of the other criteria, but did however introduce the absolute and relative notion of filling the allocation in relation to rejected applicants: the decree required that rejected applicants be informed of whether their appeal “could not be granted on the basis of the absolute (that is, the total allocation of student intake), or relative (that is, the filled quota of

³⁶ ELTE L BX, minutes of the meeting of 1 June 1928; *Magyarország* (31 May 1928), 2.

proportions of professions listed in the Act) exhaustion of the established allocation, or any other reason.”³⁷

As soon as they had begun, admissions for academic year 1928/29 gave cause for no little surprise: Klebelsberg had reduced the allocations that set the number of students to be admitted significantly from the previous academic year. (Thus the figures for the Budapest University of Sciences dropped at the Faculty of Law from 550 to 320, at the Faculty of Medicine from 300 to 180, and at the Faculty of Arts, from 450 to 210.) This elicited a high degree of tension with the number of applicants outnumbering the allocations by a wide margin, which prompted Klebelsberg to permit a raise in the admissions quotas (to 552 at the Faculty of Law, 240 at the Faculty of Medicine, and 410 at the Faculty of Arts, for example). The information provided by the “competent sources” with regard to Klebelsberg’s actions—the significant curb on, and then raise in enrolment numbers—was the following:

“The Minister of Religion and Education, when issuing his decree in order to cut back the number of students that could be accepted at the faculties in the beginning of July, concomitantly announced to the members of the press who had gathered in the corridor of the Upper House that recently, not only the extreme right, but also left wing actors had begun to give voice to notions that with our educational policy we were propagating the intellectual proletariat [...] Since we had no success in refuting this opinion by means of arguments, facts, by way of demonstration had to be allowed to impress the political lesson upon all parties, of what an unmanageable situation is created if this statement is taken seriously, and the *numerus clausus* lowered drastically in an attempt at a realization of this precept. Inevitably, what any reasonable person could foresee then actually came to pass. Those parents, whose children were squeezed out, irrespective of their denominational background, took action in order that the quotas be raised, which is quite natural, for it would be rather difficult to convince a practical person that it is easier to succeed in life without knowledge than with. The Minister of Culture [...] has achieved his goal perfectly, the path indicated by the well sounding phrases has proved untraversable.” Klebelsberg confirmed the semi-official statement: he had indeed said in the company of at least 20 journalists in the corridor of the Upper House, “the situation must be carried through *ad absurdum*, so I can prove its unsustainability. They have crowed on at me for so long about the glut of intellectual proletariat that I had to finally show them the impossibility of these demands.”³⁸

Klebelsberg was undoubtedly motivated to lower the numbers for admissions intake by the opinions—repeatedly voiced even in the course of the parliamentary debate—invoking the dangers of the formation and growth of an educated proletariat. Questioning this course of action—and raising the number of students that could be admitted—however, contradicted one of the declared aims

³⁷ MOL K 636 - 1933 -20 -58 -18947.

³⁸ P.N. (2 September 1928), 9–10; P.N. (4 September 1928), 5.

of the *numerus clausus* (and meant a tacit admission of the fact that the real and fundamental aim of the *numerus clausus* was to restrict the number of Jewish students).

It should also be noted in this context that the reduction of the intake figures—primarily in order to prevent the admission of Jewish students in greater numbers—was also considered necessary by the faculties of medicine. It was initiated by the Faculty of Medicine in Szeged, which had addressed the matter in a closed and confidential meeting in autumn 1927. According to a letter by the dean, to the dean of the faculty in Budapest, there is no prospect of “150 Hungarian students applying for the first year. Of course, this quota would be filled immediately, were it necessary to admit all the Jewish applicants, after all, the petition of 92 Jews has been refused just this year.” The danger of this happening could be avoided in the event that the limit of admissible students were set at 70 or 80. Representatives of the faculties of medicine held meetings on two occasions to discuss the issue, and a passed a resolution at the Second Interuniversity conference in Debrecen in 1928, which advocated that low admissions limits be established, in agreement that the proposed quota of student intake for year 1 should come to 200 at the Budapest Faculty of Medicine and 60 each at the three faculties situated around the country.³⁹

Coming to the implementation of the Act in the course of admissions for academic year 1928/29, available data clearly shows that still, in spite of the amendment, the main concern was to restrain the admission of Jewish students. (For that matter, negotiation continued in the Ministry on the proportion of Jewish students for the intake.) The proportional figures for non-Jewish and Jewish students admitted can be found in Table no. 1.⁴⁰

As demonstrated by the figures above, efforts to restrict the number of Jewish students admitted were manifested most effectively at the faculties of medicine and University of Technology, as well as the faculties of law.

Information about how the criteria of selection indicated by the Act and the Decree of Implementation were applied is only available for the case of the Faculty of Medicine in Budapest. As far as academic progress was concerned: on the basis of the proposal submitted by the Admissions Committee, the Faculty admitted 66 of the 96 applicants with outstanding high-school final exam results, and rejected 30 (most likely Jews), and accepted 66 of the 114 applicants with good high-school final exam results, rejecting 48 of these, while admitting 115 of the 189 applicants with satisfactory results (or students who had retaken the matriculation exams after failing them)... 72 of the 250 applicants resident in Budapest were rejected, while 42 of the 122 rural applicants were admitted. Data for the other criteria are also noteworthy. War orphans and children of war veterans (altogether 16 applicants) were all admitted. Of applicants from families of public servants 82.3% were admitted, from families in the 24 forms of

³⁹ SOTE L O.K. minutes of the meetings of 15 November 1927 and 19 June 1928.

⁴⁰ MOL K 636 - 1928-23-69628.

agricultural labor 70% were admitted, only 47.6% of those applying from families of independent professionals were accepted however, and only 26.7% of applicants from merchant families.⁴¹

Table no. 1

The proportion of Christian and Jewish students admitted in 1928

University, faculty	Christian	Jewish
	Proportion of applicants admitted %	
University of Sciences, Budapest		
Faculty of Law and Political Science	46.8	38.1
Faculty of Medicine	81.5	15.5
Faculty of Arts	81.2	43
Faculty of Pharmacy	97.5	44.4
University of Debrecen		
Faculty of Law	100	36.6
Faculty of Medicine	83.1	18.6
Faculty of Arts, Linguistics and History	98.6	57
University of Pécs		
Faculty of Law	76.9	18.2
Faculty of Medicine	100	4.8
Faculty of Arts, Linguistics and History	97.7	70
University of Szeged		
Faculty of Law	83.3	28.4
Faculty of Medicine	93.2	13.8
Faculty of Arts, Linguistics and History	88.3	50
Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	100	66.7
Faculty of Pharmacy	100	53.3
University of Technology	98	28.3
Faculty of Economics	74.5	57

⁴¹ SOTE L O.K. minutes of the meeting of 6 September 1928. – It should be noted that the category used for the statistics prepared at the time only allow for limited investigation of the social stratification of the populace—and university students among them. (Moreover, the Admissions Committee of the Budapest Faculty of Medicine drew a number of categories together, showing only nine types of profession in place of the 18 used in official statistics.)

Added to the previous proportions of intake from religious denominations, the above percentages of applicants admitted give convincing proof of the real aim behind the complex system of criteria applied to the selection process by the amendment. As Alajos Kovács, the President of Hungarian Central Statistical Office put it a decade later: “the moderated version of the *numerus clausus*, brought to pass on the initiative of the late Minister of Culture, Count Klebelsberg, did not state expressly that each race be admitted to universities according to their proportion in society, but in line with the original concept of the Central Statistical Office it served practically the same purpose. For in fact the new *numerus clausus* law ensured admission primarily to the children of civil servants, invalids of the war, war widows, and the remaining places within the quota were to be distributed among the fields of work in proportion to the their numbers in the census.” This, however, taking the social structure of Hungarian Jewry into account, would have resulted in a situation where “the proportion of Jewish students within the student body would in the end have approximately equaled its proportion to the proportion of Jews in society as a whole.”⁴²

Yet in the course of implementation of the law the admissions committees did not actually tinker with such minutiae (which were not supported at any rate, either with more recent data than those collected by the 1920 Census, or a definition of the significance of each profession), but examined the religion of the applicants in the first place, and secondly took account of their territorial distribution.

Already in his decree of 9 August 1925, Klebelsberg found it desirable that—especially in order to raise enrollment numbers at universities outside Budapest—“where possible, universities accept students primarily from their own regions of Hungary in greatest proximity to the given university, by means of which the opportunity is provided for the youth of every region with intentions of continuing in higher education to do so at the university most easily reached by them.” Exercising the regional principle—as earlier seen—was also a point included in Act XIV of 1928, and Klebelsberg gave the Rector of the Budapest University of Sciences instruction “in summary fashion” to the effect that the “admissions committees only accept applicants from Budapest or its surroundings, resident in Budapest or its vicinity.” Citing issues both of principle and practical considerations, some faculties in the event protested against the “imposition of sectors”.⁴³

The rejection of 70 % of Jewish applicants—with numerous students with excellent results among them—along with the survival of the old Act in spirit and practice understandably elicited great indignation. Democratic delegate József Pakots delivered a list of the names of 29 rejected students with excellent high-school results to Klebelsberg. He also gave a detailed account at the general

⁴² Alajos Kovács, *A csonkamagyarországi zsidóság a statisztika tükrében* [The Jewry of the remaining Hungary], (Budapest: 1938), 39.

⁴³ MOL K 636 - 1925-61160; ELTE L 849/1928-29. BX; SOTE L OX, minutes of the meeting of 25 September 1928.

assembly of the municipal authorities of the capital on 19 September 1928, of the anomalies surrounding the implementation of the *numerus clausus* Act. The assembly adopted the proposed resolution which turns to the government with a petition in regards to the serious problems encountered in the course of the implementation of the Act, requesting that the admissions quotas be raised. On the orders of Klebelsberg, who was fighting to give evidence of an appearance of substantial alterations having been made to the Act, Zoltán Magyary sent a strictly confidential letter to Rector Wolkenberg on 2 October:

“In view of the fact,” he wrote, “that his Excellency, the Minister considers it inadvisable from in terms of both foreign and internal politics that the matter of the rejection of Jewish students with excellent high-school results be repeatedly brought to public attention, and that as a result renewed attacks be launched on the *numerus clausus*”, he raised the number of admissible students once again in a decree he passed on 1 October, and in connection with this, by means of this letter he confidentially requested the rector to admit one excellent student to the Faculty of Law, 10 to the Faculty of Arts, 12 to the Faculty of Medicine, and one to the Faculty of Pharmacy. He addressed a similar request to the rector of the University of Technology, in regard to the acceptance of a few students.

Rector Wolkenberg forwarded Magyary’s letter to the deans concerned, for further arrangements to be made. The Faculty of Arts precluded admitting any further applicants, and the Faculty of Medicine only authorized the admission of three further students. In view of the resistance shown by these two faculties, Klebelsberg gave orders on the authority of his supervisory role for the supplementary admission of five further applicants with excellent results to the Faculty of Medicine, and nine to the Faculty of Arts. (Among the latter, incidentally, was one of the outstanding representatives of the second great generation of Hungarian mathematicians of this century, Pál Turán...) ⁴⁴

The question also came up on 17 October in the session of Parliament. Pakots criticized the behavior of the two faculties in his interpellation, and wished for a more resolute stance on the part of the Minister, in order for him to “impose his will upon the disobedient professors”. In his reply, Klebelsberg declared that the universities would execute his orders, and thus the affair would be “concluded to everyone’s satisfaction”. He also emphasized that “the affair around the *numerus clausus* was a political issue [...] And the political responsibility is born purely and exclusively by me.” Fears were expressed at the meetings of the Budapest Faculty of Arts held on 17 October, that of the Faculty of Medicine on 19 October and the University Council on 20 October with regard to Klebelsberg’s orders, for their broad interpretation of his supervisory authority and their curb on the rights of universities to their autonomy. ⁴⁵

⁴⁴ ELTE L 2810/1928-29. R., 3110/1928-29. R.; SOTE L OX, minutes of the meeting of 9 October 1928; *Fővárosi Közlöny* (1928), 2311–2319; P.N. (20 September 1928), 3–4.

⁴⁵ ELTE L BX, minutes of the meeting of 17 October 1928; MOL K 636-1928-5-82592; SOTE L OX, minutes of the meeting of 19 October 1928; *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett*

But at the same time student groups within the extreme right sphere of influence also took action against Klebelsberg's measures: by 18 October the usual "excesses" (checks of official identification, Jews being insulted, and forcibly expelled) experienced at universities had already begun in Budapest. At their general assembly they demanded the "reinstatement of the strict *numerus clausus* Act, which protected and insured the rights of the Hungarian race", protested against violations of the autonomy of universities and called for a boycott of the Jewish students "admitted over and above their proportion in the population", embarking upon a scandalous street demonstration after the general assembly, in front of the editorial offices of *Az Est* and the bookshop belonging to the daily, *Népszava*.

Klebelsberg summoned the rectors for a meeting that very evening to hand over his confidential decree. Thereby he gave the rectors instructions to uphold order upon their own authority, adding that in the event that these breaches of order continued after 23 October, "he would be forced to take measures for the involvement of the police". The atrocities did however continue beyond 22 and 23 October. Klebelsberg gave the rectors orders in a new confidential letter to close the universities immediately if the disturbances continue, and in recognition of the seriousness of the situation he made the rectors personally responsible for enforcing the measure. The universities in Budapest were indeed, shortly to close. The atrocities spread to the universities of Debrecen on the 22nd, Szeged on the 23rd, and Pécs on the 24th of October; the disturbances lead to the closure of the universities of Debrecen and Pécs.⁴⁶

The matter of the atrocities committed in the universities and the street demonstrations drew heated debate in the parliamentary session of 23 October as well; on part of the opposition, István Farkas, József Pakots and Lajos Szilágyi questioned the activities of the university student groups whipped up by extreme right-wing forces and raised the responsibility of the government (while the Christian Party delegate Gyula Petrovác "defended" the university students, and shifted responsibility for the violence to the left-wing press). Klebelsberg once again emphasized the legitimacy of his actions in his reply, he considered a reform of the university student associations – regulating that only individuals within the scope of disciplinary authorities of the universities should be able to be active members – necessary, also objecting to the public positions taken by certain

Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. XV, 235–40.

⁴⁶ BME L MRT, minutes of the meetings of 20 and 23 October 1928; BML Erzsébet Tudományegyetem iratai [Archives of Erzsébet University] 655/1928-29. R; ELTE L 933/1928-29. B.K.; KLTE It E. T. 1928, minutes of the meetings of 2, 26, 30 October and 5 November; D.F.Ú. (23 October 1928), 1–2; D.F.Ú. (24 October 1928), 1–2; D.F.Ú. (25 October 1928), 1–3; D.F.Ú. (26 October 1928), 1–2; Dm. (24 October 1928), 3–5; Dm. (25 October 1928), 3; Dm. (27 October 1928), 3; N.Ú. (20 October 1928), 1–2; N.Ú. (21 October 1928), 3–4; N.Ú. (23 October 1928), 3–5; N.Ú. (24 October 1928), 3; ; N.Ú. (26 October 1928), 3; N.Ú. (28 October 1928), 1–2; *Pécsi Napló* (26 October 1928), 1–2; *Szegedi Napló* (24 October 1928), 3–4; *Szegedi Napló* (25 October 1928), 3; *Szegedi Napló* (26 October 1928), 3.

professors. (Klebensberg also declared the revision of the statutes of the associations of camaraderie inevitably necessary—citing the agreement of the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior—at the meeting of rectors on 10 November.) It is also worthy of mention that when on 30 October, Foreign Minister Walko sent cuttings of articles dealing with the Hungarian student demonstrations from the more important foreign newspapers, he added an emphatic request: “please take it upon yourself to add your weight for such movements to be avoided in the future, for they are disadvantageous for our efforts to clarify our situation abroad.” Teaching only recommenced at the universities on 12 November (except at the Faculty of Medicine in Debrecen, where the leaders of the association “Csaba” could not guarantee that order would be upheld.)⁴⁷

Implementation of the Act in the course of admissions for the academic year 1929/30 were in many respects characterized by the same traits described for the previous year. Thus the Ministry once again set the quotas for the intake rather low—albeit, by now the grounds were the beginnings of the worldwide economic depression—in some cases even lower than the original figures given for the previous year. (For example, at the Budapest University of Sciences the intake of first-year students was 300 at the Faculty of Law, 160 at the Faculty of Medicine, 200 at the Faculty of Arts, and 200 each at the faculties of law in the countryside.) As the number of applicants—especially in the case of the institutions of higher education located in Budapest—was much higher than the number that could be admitted, an organized movement aiming for the raising of the enrollment quotas got under way. A general assembly was held on 1 September, whose resolution was delivered to Klebensberg by a delegation, which was shortly followed by the raising of the admission quotas (in Budapest, they were raised to 450 at the Faculty of Law, to 200 at the Faculty of Medicine, to 300 at the Faculty of Arts, while in Debrecen the Faculty of Law was allowed to admit 250, and the Faculty of Law in Szeged was allowed an intake of 300, etc.)⁴⁸

There was no change in the situation with regard to the real objectives and preferences of the implementation of the *numerus clausus* either. Albeit, no comprehensive data are available on this academic year, it can be established on the basis of the partial data that is available that a significant number of Jewish applicants—among them a number of applicants with excellent high-school results—were not admitted this year either. For example, 30 applicants with excellent results out of 58 (10 from Budapest and 20 from out-of-Budapest) were not admitted to the Budapest Faculty of Medicine (according to a letter by the chair of the admissions committee, Balázs Kenyeres, probably addressed to

⁴⁷ BML Erzsébet Tudományegyetem iratai [Archives of Erzsébet University] 899/1928-29. R; MOL. K 636 - 1928-23-84258; *Az 1927. évi január hó 25-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Képviselőházának Naplója* [House of parliament memorandum for 25 January 1927], Vol. XV, 285–304.

⁴⁸ MOL K 636 - 1929-410-5; *Hivatalos Közlöny* (1929), 245; P.N. (3 September 1929), 10; P.N. (5 September 1929), 11.

Magyary, “another reason could be given for each rejection” of the twenty provincial applicants); 90.5 % of Jewish applicants to the Faculty of Medicine and 55.5 % percent of the applicants to the Faculty of Arts in Debrecen were rejected (albeit, the allowed quota was not filled at the latter, even this year); while 87.8 % of the Jewish applicants to the Faculty of Medicine in Szeged were rejected (six among them with excellent high-school grades). The National Office of Hungarian Israelites put forward the list of the names of rejected students with excellent educational records—with reference to Klebelsberg’s promise—in two petitions.⁴⁹

The Ministry took a number of measures in order to mitigate the above problems. Klebelsberg raised the quota of students that could be accepted in a decree of 6 September 1929, and at the same time he called upon the Rector of the Budapest University of Sciences to “be so kind as to make admission possible for all those applicants who have all-round excellent results from their previous education.” Apart from applicants from Budapest and its immediate vicinity, applicants from the country can only be taken into consideration if there is a possibility to do so within the allocated admissions figures. Klebelsberg gave the Rector of the University of Technology similar instructions in person. In his other decree of the same day, Klebelsberg took steps to insure that all those students resident in Budapest who were studying at universities located outside the capital and had been rejected in Budapest the previous year could continue their studies in Budapest. On the other hand, on 16 September, in another decree Klebelsberg stipulated that those applicants not from Budapest who had applied in the capital but were rejected, could be admitted to any university countrywide above the quota, and residents of Budapest with excellent high-school results, who could not be admitted within the specified quota, could be admitted to the Faculty of Economics. The reason for this last measure was quite clearly that on the basis of experiences from the previous year, he was doubtful about the enforcement of his 6 September decree. (In this context it should be noted that the Rector’s Council at the University of Technology had empowered Rector Szily to request the Minister to “make allowance for the instructions of 6 September regarding the admission of applicants with excellent high-school results not being strictly applied, as it would be against the intentions of the *numerus clausus* for all the Jewish petitioners to be given admission, there being among Jews an extraordinarily high percentage of those who were advanced academically early.)⁵⁰

The number of admitted Jewish students increased somewhat through the above measures, which once again gave rise to atrocities at the Budapest University of Sciences, the University of Technology, and to some degree at the

⁴⁹ HBML A debreceni tudományegyetem iratai [Archives of the University of Debrecen], 100/1929-30. R; MOL K 636 - 1929-410-5/126, K 636 -1929-410-5/253.

⁵⁰ BME L MRT, minutes of the meeting of 2 September 1929; MOL K 636 - 1929-410-5/118, K 636 - 1929-410-5/119, K 636 -1929-410-5/137.

University of Debrecen in October 1929.⁵¹ The disturbances also came up as an issue at the 25 October 1929 meeting of the Council of Ministers.

The statement of the Foreign Minister concluded: “yes, they are harmful [...] the continuously repeated persecution of Jews and disturbances created by student groups affect the prestige of the country.” The Finance Minister reaffirmed this fact by confirming that “in the course of our negotiations on loans the disturbances committed by the students at universities are constantly being made a point of.” Bethlen brought to Klebelsberg’s attention that a “serious resolution to the issue” was required, and declared that he “would not brook any further continuation of these terroristic phenomena”. (According to the handwritten manuscript of the memo for the meeting of the Council of Ministers Bethlen called upon Gömbös—who had returned to the bosom of the Unity Party in September 1929, and first became a Secretary of State for Defense, and the Minister of Defense from 10 October 1929—to make his influence felt among the students in order to effectuate the matter.) Klebelsberg alluded to the overproduction of intellectuals, in light of which “the *numerus clausus*, if not for long, would still have to be kept in effect.” He also reported that an agreement had been reached in regards to the admission of applicants with excellent prior education results, “the Faculty of Medicine however, is not willing to accept it”, he nevertheless remains committed to his stance on the matter of their admission. Finally he promised to take the actions required.⁵²

The problems that came up in the course of admissions for academic year 1930/31 were similar to those that had blighted those of 1928/29 and 1929/30. A significant proportion of Jewish applicants still did not gain admission (according to data published by *Egyenlőség*, only 106 of the over 900 Jewish students finishing high-school in Budapest in 1930 were admitted to the universities). Klebelsberg’s attention this year was also directed at the acceptance of students with excellent prior results and at enforcing the regional principles. Overall, nevertheless, less tension was experienced around the admissions process this year than in the previous ones, and disturbances were also only seen at the University of Szeged, but even this was not directly connected to admissions. (As a matter of fact, the demonstrations in Szeged were directed in part against Albert Szent-Györgyi, who had said: “The gentlemen would do better study, rather than demonstrate.”)⁵³

⁵¹ BME L MRT 1929, minutes of the meeting of 24 October, and addendum 226/1931. R.; ELTE L 802/1929-30. R.; HBML A debreceni tudományegyetem iratai [Archives of the University of Debrecen], 380/1929-30. R.

⁵² MOL K 27 – MT, minutes of the meeting of 25 October 1929. Agenda Item No. 31.

⁵³ MOLK 636 - 1930-410-5/110, K 636 -1930-410-5/113, K 636 -1930-410-5/160; Dm. (11 November 1929), 1; Dm. (12 November 1929), 1–2; Dm. (14 November 1929), 3; Dm. (15 November 1929), 3; *Egyenlőség* (19 September 1930), 33.

Taking a measure of the numerus clausus

In an overview of the circumstances in which Act XIV of 1928 came into being and came to be implemented, the balance of what followed the amendment must be drawn.

The new law—as outlined in the foregoing—after § 3 of the original Act was dropped on grounds of foreign and internal policy considerations, still aimed to restrict the admission of Jewish students to institutions of higher education. The proportion of first-year Jewish students undoubtedly grew over the years from 1928 to 1932 (with their proportion on the national average rising from 9.4 % in 1928/29, and once again 9.4 % in 1929/30, to 9.5 % in 1930/31, then 14.1 % in 1931/32, to fall in 1931/33 to 11.6 %) primarily as a result of the acceptance of most of those with excellent educational results from high-school in spite of difficulties. Yet from 1933 onwards their proportion gradually decreased as an effect of political changes (from 8.4 % in 1933/34 to 5.5 % in 1934/35, then falling below 5 % in 1937/38). The decrease was even sharper in terms of absolute numbers; falling from 672 in 1931/32 to 228 in 1934/35, and then 188 in 1937/38, a decrease of 72 % over a period of six years. (In a comparison of these figures with the number of Jewish students completing their high-school education: 1,666 finished in 1931, 1,185 in 1934, 1,278 in 1937; so the proportion of Jewish students admitted to universities in relation to those completing high school decreased from 40.3 % to 14.7 %).⁵⁴

It should be mentioned that the data would change somewhat if only those institutions are taken into account, which fell within the scope of the *numerus clausus* law, and those taking the one-year public accounting course of the faculties of law and law academies (which were also not affected by the law), and of course the faculties of divinity at the universities. These figures can only be gleaned fully for the second semester of academic year 1929/30 on the basis of the statistical source databanks: the proportion of first-year Jewish students in institutions within the scope of the Act, not counting the faculties of divinity and the public accounting courses came to 12.4 %.⁵⁵ For the other academic years the data for the public accounting courses cannot be treated separately within the faculties of law and law academies; but since the number of participants in these courses were relatively small, and the proportion of Jewish students at those institutions of higher learning that were not drawn under the *numerus clausus* Act was rather low, the proportion of first-year Jewish students at the universities of science and the universities of technology and the law academies can be taken to be somewhat higher than the published countrywide data.

⁵⁴ See years 1929–1938 of the *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv* [Hungarian Statistics Annual]. It should also be noted that the data dealing with years 1928/29–1930/31 deal with the first semester, while those following 1932/33 deal with the second semester.

⁵⁵ Dezső Laky, *A magyar egyetemi hallgatók statisztikája 1930* [Statistics for Hungarian university students in 1930], (Budapest: 1931), 10–15.

Where the application of the regional principle—repeatedly urged by Klebelsberg—is concerned: the number of students admitted to Hungarian universities outside of Budapest increased by 20 % in the early 30s, but then gradually decreased, until 1937/38 by more than 30 %, outpacing the countrywide average. The success, both limited and temporary, of the imposition of “regionalization” can also be explained by a number of circumstances. One of these was that the Ministry had not defined the regions “naturally belonging” to the universities, except in the case of the Budapest University of Sciences, for which it specified in 1928 that its immediate vicinity, (Kispest, Újpest, etc.) count as part of Budapest, but not Vác or Kecskemét, while in 1929 it considered those cities and towns to be part of the Budapest region that could be reached from Budapest by tram, or local trains. It should also be taken into consideration, furthermore, that a number of departments in the humanities and natural sciences could only be found in Budapest, and that many young people from the country had the option available of staying with relatives in Budapest during their studies, and that Budapest in general held greater attraction. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that most of the ministers for religion and education following Klebelsberg in his position—especially Hóman—did not give priority to the development of provincial universities and increasing their student numbers.⁵⁶

The requirement of “national allegiance” and “moral reliability” in the Act of 1920 was directed manifestly at obstructing the university admission and continued studies of students who had participated in the revolutions of 1918–1919. Upholding this requirement—nearly a decade after the revolutions—did not have any practical significance. (National allegiance and moral reliability was to be proved, incidentally, by a certificate of good conduct to be provided by the principal of the school concerned according to the decree of implementation.) The greatest problem encountered in the course of admissions—as earlier explained in the discussion of the parliamentary debate on the draft law and in connection with its implementation—was the application of the principle of admitting students for the various branches of professions in proportion to their prevalence and significance; this was emphasized by many of the institutions and faculties in their reports on the admissions.

According to the report submitted by the Budapest Faculty of Arts on 12 December 1928, whilst the numbers pertaining to each branch of profession can be established on the basis of statistical data, “the way the significance of each professional branch should be considered to bear upon the distribution in percentage is rather problematic”, and for this reason the “absolute and relative notion of filling the allocation” mentioned in § 14 of the Decree of implementation “becomes an illusory concept”.

The majority of institutions and faculties—as noted—did not attempt to resolve this issue, but nor was there a need to do so, for this complex system of

⁵⁶ ELTE L 849/1928-29. B.K., 589/1929-30. R.; KLTE It E.T., minutes of the meeting on 7 December 1928; for details on first-year student numbers, see the appropriate volumes of the *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv* [Hungarian Statistics Annual].

expectations in fact only served to cloak the fundamental objective of the *numerus clausus* Act. In his monograph on Klebelsberg, Huszti noted in this regard: “the exact implementation of the Act would require such intricate statistical calculation, and give way, perhaps deliberately, to such murky, impenetrable and discretionary application that hardly anything could be brought out of it in practice. The praxis remained largely as it had been before the new law.”⁵⁷

However, the ministerial justification for the draft law of 15 November 1940 on the regulation of student admissions to universities and colleges may be cited just as well. The general justification presented the main objectives of Act XXV of 1920 highlighting that the applicable dispensation of the Act “was the first legislative measure worldwide instituted to defend against the dangerous expansion of Jewry.” He outlined the circumstances surrounding the amendment of the Act, and went on to emphasize that in its implementation “my predecessors in this office essentially upheld the restriction on the university and college admission of Jews through measures taken on a case-by-case basis until the matter came to be regulated in a more comprehensive manner by legislation in Act IV of 1939.” (Namely, Act IV of 1939, on the restriction of Jewish encroachment in public life and the economy reinstated once more the 6 % limit on the university admission of Jewish students.)

The actual nature of Act XIV of 1928 was seen in an essentially proper light by the historical works that deal with the subject (such as the literature by Zsuzsa L. Nagy, Nathaniel Katzburg, Ignác Romsics, László Gonda etc.), establishing the fact that the consideration of religion continued to play a determining role in the process of admissions.⁵⁸

In taking stock of Act XIV of 1928, attention must also be directed at the professional-pedagogic aspect of the issue, namely the question of how the implementation of the *numerus clausus* influenced the composition of those admitted in terms of quality, and the standard of the education they received. In this regard, however, certain fundamental circumstances must be emphasized. One of these circumstances is that taking the whole of the Horthy period into

⁵⁷ ELTE L 1089A928-29. B.K; Huszti, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno életműve*, 197; *Az 1939. évi június hó 10-ére hirdetett Országgyűlés Nyomtatványai* [Printed documents of the session of Parliament convened for 10 June 1939] Parliament - TE.K.ts Vol. V, 231–233; *Magyar Törvénytár 1939. évi törvénycikkek* [Hungarian body of law, Acts of 1939], (Budapest: 1940), 134. A mention should be made in this context of the fact that according to the Ministry regulations of 1935, the number of Christian converts had to be shown separately.

⁵⁸ L. Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 192; Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews*, 78; Romsics, *Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz*, 202; Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon 1526–1945*, 203. In contradiction to the above, a TE.K.tbook supplement published in three editions based on steps taken by the Ministry of Culture and Education states: “The *numerus clausus* clauses, introduced in 1920, which determined admissions to universities based on the country-wide proportion of given ethnic groups and was, as such, discriminative, was repealed by Bethlen in 1926.” Péter Rubovszky, *Történelem IV. Vázlatok a XX. század történetéről* Vol. 1, for fourth grade students of secondary school. Third edition. (Budapest: 1994), 51. But Miklós Szabó, a great expert on the period, also used the term repeal, rather than amendment in regards to the *numerus clausus* in journalistic pieces. Miklós Szabó, “A Klebelsberg-legenda” [The Klebelsberg legend], *Kritika* (1993): 12, 30.

consideration, the scale of secondary school education, the number of students completing it successfully—grounded in the country's general social, economic and cultural conditions, an in view of the effective chances of children from laborer and poor peasant backgrounds continuing their studies—did not ensure an adequate recruitment base for higher education in Hungary. This factor only became more exacerbated in the '30s, as a demographic turn—the low number of births during the War—ensured that the number of those completing secondary school in the first half of the '30s decreased gradually by 20 %, until 1935/36. The deficiencies of the educational system in a number of fields of education proved to be the other important circumstance. Finally, it is also not a negligible factor that a not so insignificant segment of the admitted students was not able to apply themselves to their studies with the appropriate diligence due to financial difficulties—that forced them to take up any jobs the situation permitted, on the side. The application of the *numerus clausus* however, undoubtedly exacerbated the problems related to these circumstances.

As far as the prior education and preparation of students, and their secondary school results are concerned, data shows that the number of those with excellent results from high school grew incrementally after the amendment, rising above 20 %. At the same time, the proportion of satisfactory results was rather high until the middle of the '30s, at a national average of 40 %. Wide margins of difference appeared in the quality of prior preparation students showed at various universities and faculties: the proportion of students with satisfactory grades from high school was relatively low at the faculties of arts, the faculties of economics, and from the '30s onwards, at the University of Technology, while they were rather high, above 50 % at the faculties of law, and over 60 % at the law academies and the Faculty of Pharmacy. There were rather pervasive differences on this score between the universities in Budapest and provincial universities as well.⁵⁹

The high rate of students with only satisfactory high-school degrees made for one of the gravest problems of Hungarian higher education. Klebelsberg himself plainly perceived the problems related to the quality of prior training students received: “overproduction is caused by the weak majority”, he wrote in an article that was published on 26 August 1925, while he pointed out in his article of 19 June 1927, entitled “Intellectual proletariat” that “a good two thirds of those who receive a diploma are in possession of a minimal degree of knowledge.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See the appropriate volumes of the *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv* [Hungarian Statistics Annual], as well as volumes 87, 88, 89, 90 and 92 of the new series of the *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények* [Hungarian statistical bulletin].

⁶⁰ *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno beszédei, cikkei, törvényjavaslatai 1916–1926* (Budapest: 1927), 649; Count Kuno Klebelsberg, *Neonacionalizmus* [Neo-nationalism], (Budapest: 1928), 45.

Table no. 2*The Proportion of passes on Examinations and Comprehensives in %*

Exam, or Comprehensive	1928/29	1930/31	1933/34	1935/36	1937/38
Faculty of Law – Foundational Exam I	68.2	71.5	75	71.2	69.2
Faculty of Law – Foundational Exam II	69.7	70.5	70.1	69.2	63.4
Faculty of Law – Foundational Exam III	63.9	67.2	69	65	67.1
Political Science Comprehensive Exam	63.9	66.1	71.3	66.1	64.6
Jurisprudence Comprehensive Exam	68.7	70.1	74.7	75.3	72.1
Comprehensive Exam in Medicine I	55.5	62.4	57	59.7	56.9
Comprehensive Exam in Medicine II	65.8	72.7	70.2	61	66.5
Comprehensive Exam in Medicine III	82	83.1	78	67.3	61.3
Comprehensive Exam in Medicine IV	91	93.1	76.7	86.9	75.4
Secondary School Teacher's Foundational Exam	77.8	70.6	58.5	53.3	52.8
Secondary School Teacher's Board Exam	86.8	73.9	63.6	64	62.8
Secondary School Teacher's Exam in Pedagogy	91.4	75.4	78.3	76.6	69.5

The low average grade achieved by a considerable segment of the student body was also expressed in the results of the exams and comprehensives. Table no. 2 shows that the number of successfully taken exams and comprehensives rose to a certain degree at the beginning of the '30s, but then gradually decreased. In 1937/38, over 30 % of those taking the Foundational Exam I in Law, 43 % of those taking the Comprehensive Exam in Medicine I, and nearly half of those taking the Secondary School Teacher's Foundational Exam failed.⁶¹

The highly interesting debate about questions posed by the situation evolved at the meeting of the Budapest Faculty of Medicine on 16 February 1932 during the discussion of a proposal to lower enrollment numbers. Balázs Kenyeres proposed a significant decrease in the number of students admitted—to 150 in

⁶¹ See the appropriate volumes of the *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv* [Hungarian Statistics Annual].

Budapest, and 40 each at the three provincial schools of medicine—and that students who had begun their training abroad be admitted only if they begin their studies from the first year, and count as part of the allocated number. Pointing out that at least 30 % of the students enrolled are “wholly unsuitable for the profession”, Emil Grósz suggested that a strict selection on the basis of ability and diligence be instituted. Sándor Korányi concurred, saying that “the number of those who have only the extremely low demands of the comprehensive exams to thank for their gaining a diploma after, in most cases, trying a number of times and then barely scraping by with minimal knowledge can be placed at approximately 30 %.” Sándor Korányi also spoke at length on the consequences of the selection process of the *numerus clausus* in his speech to the Upper House of Parliament on 24 June 1933.⁶²

Due to the implementation of the *numerus clausus*, a relatively large number of young Jews studied in foreign institutions of higher education even after 1928. The number of Hungarian students studying in universities and colleges abroad moved around 1,800 at the end of the '20s and beginning of the '30s, but then—due to political, economic and demographic reasons—this figure gradually dropped to below 1,000 as early as 1935/36. Their main body was obviously composed of Jews who had not been accepted to universities in Hungary (their exact number cannot be established on the basis of official statistical data, which does not contain information on denominational affiliation). The proportion is estimated at 80 % by Alajos Kovács, but according to more recent research by Viktor Karády, this figure was somewhat higher. The statistical data available also does not permit conclusions as to the number of students who only undertook a few years of higher-level education abroad, and how many completed (that is, were allowed to complete) their education at Hungarian universities, but the fact that only 164 diplomas completed by Jewish students abroad were nostrified between 1920/21 and 1934/35 allows it to be surmised that a considerable number of them did not go on to practice their professions in Hungary. In the words of Viktor Karády: “In terms of replenishing the community of the Hungarian intelligentsia, the results of the *numerus clausus* [...] proved to be a great loss [...] It robbed the country of a not insignificant segment of a potential intellectual reinforcement for the Hungarian government.”⁶³

⁶² SOTE L OJC, minutes of the meeting on 16 February 1932 and its annE.K.; *Az 1931. évi július hó 18-ára hirdetett Országgyűlés Felsőházának Naplója* [Memorandum of the Upper House of Parliament session of 18 July 1931], Vol. II, 349. The deficiencies of the preparedness of a significant section of university students had been E.K.plored through a questionnaire-based survey of the Magyar Humanisztikus Gimnázium Híveinek Egyesülete [Association of Believers in the Hungarian humanistic secondary school system] already in 1927. József Balogh, “Középiskolai kérdések - az egyetem szemszögéből” [Secondary school issues—From the perspective of the university], *Magyar Szemle*, Vol. I, 253–263.)

⁶³ Alajos Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon” [Hungarian Jewish students at universities in Hungary and abroad], *Magyar Statisztikai Szemle* [Hungarian review of statistics] (1938), 897–902; Viktor Karády, “Egyetemi antiszemitizmus és érvényesülési kényszerpályák. Magyar-zsidó diákok a nyugat-európai főiskolákon a *numerus clausus* alatt”

In spite of the limited measure of short-lived changes brought about by the amendment, the endurance of the fundamental objective of the *numerus clausus* had serious socio-political consequences: it continued to poison political perceptions, strengthening anti-Semitism, and reshaping the political image of significant intellectual strata. The main motive of anti-Semitism among university students and the educated youth graduating from universities in the '20s and '30s was signified by their existential problems. A detailed examination of the question of overproduction of intellectuals would lead beyond the frames of this study.⁶⁴ But undoubtedly the employment of young graduates with fresh diplomas came up against mounting challenges already by the second half of the '20s, in consequence of the level of economic development and social structure in Hungary, as well as the disproportions of the country's infrastructure. A census of workers in intellectual professions in 1928 showed 1,848 unemployed individuals with higher level education (which only came to 3.5 % of wage earners with qualifications from higher education at the time), but the same census also specified that another 5,252 persons with degrees in higher education were not employed in "what could actually be called intellectual labor". As of the late '20s, a whole series of studies and articles dealt with the crisis of the intelligentsia, and the increasingly hopeless situation of young graduates especially; with the solution normally seen as the elimination of "the overproduction of intellectuals". It is common knowledge that the unemployment of intellectuals grew in leaps and bounds as a result of the economic depression. As the number of Jewish graduates decreased significantly in consequence of the *numerus clausus*, this spate of unemployment affected—as Viktor Karády pointed out—the non-Jewish intelligentsia finishing their university education, amplifying their need to eliminate the "Jewish competition", for a "change of guard". At the same time, the racist traits of anti-Semitism became palpably stronger. The circumstance that violent actions and atrocities at the universities were all but a constant phenomenon attendant upon the implementation of the *numerus clausus* must also not be forgotten.

The socio-political effects of the *numerus clausus* also caused changes in the way the situation of Hungarian Jewry evolved. The *numerus clausus* and manifestation of anti-Semitism halted the assimilation of Hungarian Jewry, which had been greatly advanced in the period of the Dual Monarchy, engendering their isolation in significant part, as well as tendencies of nationalist exclusivism and de-assimilation. The *numerus clausus* altered the social mobility of Hungarian Jewry essentially. A considerable—though decreasing from the mid-'30s—segment of young Jews aiming for careers as educated professionals continued their education abroad, as discussed earlier, and after completion of their degrees,

[University based anti-Semitism and force career trajectories. Hungarian Jewish students at Western European universities during the *numerus clausus*], *Levéltári Szemle* (1992): 3, 21–40.

⁶⁴ On This question see Tibor Hajdú's essay "Az értelmiségi 'túltermelés' és társadalmi hatásai" [The overproduction of intellectuals and its social impact], in *A két világháború közötti Magyarországról* [About Hungary between the two World Wars], (Budapest: 1984), 47–98.

a majority found jobs suitable to their abilities in Western Europe and the United States of America. The best qualified applicants from middle-class and educated families (or those suitably placed to pull strings) managed to gain entrance to Hungarian universities, while in comparison to the earlier period—as demonstrated by Alajos Kovács already in 1926—the majority of those from merchant or artisan families were forced out.⁶⁵

To conclude, it can be established that the *numerus clausus* increased the divisiveness, and the antinomies of Hungarian society, it impacted detrimentally upon the standards of the composition of the Hungarian intellectual world, and was in no small part a political and intellectual preparation for the Jewish laws, and the national tragedy of 1944.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Alajos Kovács, *Értelmiségünk nemzeti jellegének biztosítása* [Ensuring the national character of our intellectuals], (Budapest: 1926), 12–13; Viktor Karády, “A *numerus clausus* és a zsidó értelmiség” [The *numerus clauses* and the Jewish intelligentsia], the manuscript of a lecture given at the Vázsonyi Conference held on 25 March 1994, let me E.K. press my gratitude to the author for making it available.

⁶⁶ I express my special thanks to Bálinth Bethlenfalvy for his stylistical work on my paper

Victor Karady

The restructuring of the academic market place in Hungary

In¹ a former study² I attempted the evaluation of the direct impact of the *numerus clausus* law introduced in Hungarian universities and Law academies since the Autumn term of the 1920/21 academic year on the enrollment or, rather, the admission of Jews in various institutions of higher education. This overall study concerning every university, academy and college of post-secondary education outside theologies had to do already with the transformations of the academic market place as far as it confronted in a strictly comparative manner the statistically measured presence of Jews in student bodies before and after 1920. The forthcoming essay will implicitly refer to the results obtained, only to focus particularly on developments and changes implemented among students of university faculties and academies of nation wide recruitment (mostly but not exclusively established in Budapest) to analyse the internal shifts of the composition of those clusters – both Jews and non Jews – engaged in higher education and effected by the consequences of the first anti-Jewish law as well as probably also the first one introducing arbitrary limitations (independent from the specific dynamics of the educational market) to enrollments in modern European history. (The last remark holds true for countries where Jews had enjoyed already the benefit of formal civic equality for several decades: this did not apply, as we know, to Russia and Romania before the end of World War I.)

I am going to dwell here exclusively on the student side of the academic market while neglecting the staff side. This is because Jews had only exceptionally received appointment already in the pre-1919 'liberal' Dual Monarchy in the teaching body of higher education. A meticulously documented study of university professors in the inter-war years has found only 8 (1,4 % of the total) of Jews by religion and altogether 29 (5,1 % of the total) persons of Jewish background out of 568 academics, none of the former having been appointed after 1919 and all being born before 1890.³ In my study of the whole teaching staff of

¹ The study has been achieved in the framework of the international cooperative project on 'Elite Formation in Multi-Cultural East Central European Societies' funded by the European Research Council in Bruxelles.

² "A *numerus clausus* és az egyetemi piac. Társadalomtörténeti esszé, /The *numerus clausus* and the academic market place, an essay in social history/, " in *Jogfosztás - 90 éve. Tanulmányok a numerus claususról, /Disenfranchisement – 90 years ago. Studies on the numerus clausus/, Szerk. (ed.) Molnár Judit, Budapest, Nonprofit Társadalomkutató Egyesület, 2011, pp. 181-195.*

³ See Kovács I. Gábor, Kende Gábor, Egyetemi tanárok rekrutációja a két világháború közötti Magyarországon, /The recruitment of university professors in Hungary in the inter-war years/, in Kövér György (ed.), *Zombékok, középosztály és iskoláztatás Magyarországon a 19. század elejétől a 20. század közepéig. Társadalomtörténeti tanulmányok, /Rush-bed, middle class and*

the two Arts and Sciences faculties of the country during the Dualist period (in Budapest and Kolozsvár/Cluj) altogether 8,5 % were identified as Jewish (7 % in Budapest and 15 % in Kolozsvár).⁴ Such, though somewhat higher proportions of Jews in one group of faculties suggest that Jews could indeed reach not infrequently teaching positions of lower rank in the provinces during the liberal reign, but hardly a prestigious status of full professorship in the capital city, the main academic centre. Obviously enough, a drastic limitation was set to academic careers of Jews in a period when - especially at the turn of the century - around one fourth of the rank and file secondary school or/and university graduates in the country (and often much higher proportions in the free intellectual professions) were Jewish or of Jewish background. In 1909/10 for example Jews by religion represented in Budapest 35 % of students at the classical University and 36 % at the Polytechnics as well as 15 % at the University of Kolozsvár.⁵ In 1885 already Jews made up one fifth (19,9 %) of secondary school pupils⁶ and among secondary school graduates (*érettségizők*) 22,8 % were Jewish in 1901-1905⁷ and still 21,1 % in 1908/9-1912/13⁸ (which hides in reality an age specific growth of the Jewish share, given the closing of the demographic scissor between Jewish and other birthrates since the 1890s⁹). The disproportion between the minimal presence of Jews in the staff and their remarkable over-representation among students may be an initial statement about a most early form of anti-Jewish discrimination in the academic market place, to introduce this study of the consequences of the *numerus clausus* on academe. But before doing that, one has to look at the more general trends in the transformation of this market, produced by the intervention of the Christian Course legislators.

Cultural superiority or regression ?

The *numerus clausus* was initially meant to be a general measure to regulate the enlarged reproduction of the educated middle class at the expense of women and Jews after the multiple perturbations generated by the war : disappearance of large male clusters of the youngest adult generations as war casualties, the mounting tide of the presence of women in institutions of higher

schooling in Hungary since the early 19th century till the middle of the 20th century, studies in social history/, Budapest, Századvég Kiadó, 2006, 417-506, particularly 426-427.

⁴ See „A bölcsészkarok oktatói és az egyetemi piac szerkezete a dualista korban (1867-1918)“, /The recruitment of the Arts and Science faculties under the Dual Monarchy/, *Educatio*, 16/3, (Ősz /Fall/), 393-417, particularly 414.

⁵ Cf. *Magyar statisztikai évkönyv*, /Hungarian statistical yearbook/ 1910, 387.

⁶ Cf. *A vallás- és közoktatási miniszter jelentése a kormánynak*, 1894/5, /Report of the minister of cults and public instruction to the government/ 1894/5, 343.

⁷ *Ibid.* 1912, 407.

⁸ Data calculated from the precedent source for the years concerned.

⁹ Between 1881-85 and 1891-95 the difference between the Jewish (36,6 % and 35,7 per thousand) and the general (44,6 and 41,7 per thousand) birth rates diminished significantly. (*Hungarian statistical yearbook*, 1895, 56.)

education, the return from the trenches of several generations of potential students overcrowding temporarily the benches of some places of advanced learning, immigration of masses of middle class refugees in the rump state after the dismemberment of the historic kingdom. Thus the conception of the *numerus clausus* law derived from three rather clearly discernable and interconnected motivations, to which antisemitism was added as a fourth and may be the most decisive one – at least for those who voted for the law or were directly concerned.

First and foremost – or most directly - it aimed at the diminution of the ‘overcrowding’ of universities after 1919, especially that of Budapest. Provincial universities remained indeed quite small, student numbers in Kolozsvár/Cluj reaching hardly more than one fourth of those in the capital city and the two new universities in Debrecen and Pozsony, founded in 1912 but opening their doors in 1914 only, started to operate without medical faculties or most of the Science departments. They had a hard time to fill their benches in the war years and during their post-war predicament (entailing the transfer of the Hungarian University of Kolozsvár to Szeged and the University of Pozsony to Budapest first and later to Pécs). In 1914/5 Pozsony gathered merely 184 students in its Faculties of Philosophy and Law. Overcrowding in Budapest arose from the postwar juncture due to a multiplicity of causes besides the flowing back of discharged servicemen and the arrival of young intellectuals and students fleeing the lost territories. Another factor of overcrowding was the growth of intellectual unemployment due to the economic depression of the first post-war years as well as the conjunctural congestion of the intellectual markets of the rump state. This could, paradoxically enough – as a transitional existential choice –, send many secondary school graduates to universities instead of the occupational markets.

Second, the policy to limit overcrowding was directly linked to the fight against the further expansion of the ‘intellectual proletariat’, a crucial socio-political issue in the postwar years, given the large number of repatriates belonging to the educated middle classes (especially civil servants) and the fact, evoked above, that the rump state hosted already the majority of civil servants, professionals and intellectuals of the dismembered monarchy, earlier in charge of a sizable empire and henceforth deprived in part of their original functions. The growth of this new ‘proletariat’ appeared to continue dangerously enough, given the inflation of academic enrollments since already the Spring term of 1917/18.

Thirdly, in this context, the restriction of the female presence among would-be intellectuals surfaced as a simple solution both on the strength of the indeed visible development during the war years in relative as well as absolute numbers of the female constituency liable to pursue higher studies and take positions in the intellectual professions¹⁰ and in compliance with the heavily

¹⁰ From 1913/14 to 1917/8 the number of girls graduating from secondary schools jumped from 249 to 645 and their proportions among all the graduates increased from 4,3 % to 10 % (and up to 14,5 % in 1918/19, a school year of serious perturbations). Data from *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

traditionalist conception of womanhood and women's social roles carried by the conservative ideology of the 'Christian Course'.

Fourth and perhaps foremost came antisemitism as a central target of the *numerus clausus*. This antisemitic drive had of course its own political dynamics. It was supported equally by a mixture of ideological arguments – like scapegoating of Jews for the defeat in the war and the outburst of the revolutions¹¹ – and clear economic calculations objectified in the idea of the 'change of the guard' : to pass over to (or to expropriate for) Gentile practitioners part of the market shares of Jews in the main intellectual professions. Nevertheless, it was also a corollary of the three preceding motivations, since the share of Jews in the student body and in the intellectual professions had reached historical heights before and during the war years¹², even among women¹³.

One has to add that these apparently convergent objectives went straight against a major target of the Christian Course – to provide for the 'cultural superiority' of the rump state compared to their new neighbors. As regularly formulated by political protagonists of the regime, among them Kuno Klebelsberg, in charge of the ministry of education (1922-1931), the 'superiority' had to be expressed by both the internationally recognized quality of Hungarian scholarly accomplishments and the elevation of the level of education of the population, the production of "masses of educated heads".¹⁴ Such reform ideals of conservative ideologues were actually implemented by relatively large scale educational investments. They comprised the extension of the primary¹⁵ and secondary school¹⁶ networks, the equipment of new university premises both in the capital and in the provinces, as well as the foundation or the modernization of new institutions (economic faculty, academy of sports, college of therapeutical

¹¹ See to this problem – among other publications – the recent book by Attila Pók, *The Politics of Hatred in the Middle of Europe, Scapegoating in Twentieth Century Hungary : History and Historiography*, Szombathely, Savaria University Press, 2009.

¹² In 1917/8 Jews made up 24,9 % of secondary school graduates and as much as 30,5 % in 1918/9. This can be related largely to conjunctural geo-political reasons, since most of the Jewish clientele of secular advanced learning was located in the Western and central regions of the country, while the rest was in the months of graduation mostly occupied by foreign military. Data from *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

¹³ Girls constituted 8,2 % of Jewish secondary school graduates in 1913/14, a proportion which increased to 15,3 % in 1917/8, 20,1 % in 1918/9 and as much as 25,1 % in 1919/20. Among Christians in the last year girls made up only 14 % of the graduate constituency. Data from *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

¹⁴ See János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok. A magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története*, /This is what your Hungarian homeland has become. History of the Hungarian idea of nation and nationalism/, Budapest, Osiris, 2007, 312-315.

¹⁵ There were already 8103 primary schools in 1938/9 in the rump state as against 5906 in 1919/20 (an increase of 37 %). Cf *Hungarian statistical yearbook* 1939, 177 and *ibid.* 1919-1922, 155.

¹⁶ There were already 263 secondary schools granting the *matura* in 1938/9 as against 137 only in 1919/20 (an increase equal to almost the doubling of the network), even if this was not exclusively due to state funding proper. On the contrary, the share of the state sector in the secondary school market diminished from 40,9 % to 35,7 % in terms of school numbers between the two dates above. Cf *Hungarian statistical yearbook* 1919-1922, 181 and *ibid.* 1939, 185.

pedagogy, normal school in Szeged for teachers in upper primary schools – all starting after 1919).

Let us shortly examine the actual outcome of the various aspects of these in part contradictory governmental policies. In concrete terms, how did the *numerus clausus* fare with the policy of ‘cultural superiority’ ?

The problem of ‘overcrowding’ concerned essentially the two universities in Budapest, because the provincial ones were recently founded and still fighting to secure a sufficiently large clientele to justify their subsistence. Throughout the inter-war years the student body of the three classical provincial universities in Debrecen, Pécs and Szeged remained altogether much inferior to that of Budapest. In 1923/23 the University of the capital city held 72 % of all university students and in 1929/30 still some 60 %¹⁷ (outside the Polytechnic University). In Budapest the ‘overcrowding’ could be a real concern in the immediate aftermath of the war, but it subsided following the graduation (or the dropping out) of those enrolled after the end of the hostilities. This can be seen in the following table.

Table 1.

Enrollment in institutions of elite education in Hungary (selected years, 1913/4-1930/31)

	University of Budapest	Budapest Polytechnics ¹⁸	Provincial universities	Academies of Law ¹⁹	Vocational Academies ²⁰	All higher Education	Graduates of secondary schools	All pupils examined in classical secondary schools ²¹
1913/14	7513	2450	2119	1511	2078	17492	5564	84316
1915/16-1917/18	5797	1465	1514	853	?	?	6577	89435
1918/19	12203	4727	691	411	?	?	3824	56533
1919/20-1922/23	7254	3886	2439	846	2380	19 023	4445	56559
1923/24-1926/27	5549	3650	3030	903	2062	15783	4738	60344
1927/28-1929/30	6786	2716	3817	873	1801	15877	5342	60207
1930/31	6595	2824	4589	914	1586	16053	6117	64218

¹⁷ Calculated from data in the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of relevant years.

¹⁸ Together with the newly established (1919) Faculty of Economy.

¹⁹ Source : *Beszélő számok*, /Telling figures/, II, Budapest, 1934, 85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

²¹ Before 1915/6 gymnasiums and *Realschulen*, in 1916/7-1924/5 the latter and girls’ highschoools, afterwards all the latter plus ‘real gymnasiums’. Though vocational highschoools (especially the popular ‘higher commercial school’) also granted graduation (*érettségi*, *Matura*) carrying the essential middle class entitlements (notably the right to shorter military service), only the graduation from classical secondary schools conferred the (before 1920 automatic) right to enter all university faculties, vocational and law academies.

It displays the changing global number of students registered in the second term in various institutions of higher education affected by the *numerus clausus* as well as in secondary schools.

Table 2. shows clearly the two apogees of the postwar recruitment in 1918/19, the first peace year (however turbulent it proved to be with the turmoils of the October Revolution and the Soviet Republic), and 1921/22-1922/23, the years when most middle class repatriates and their offspring were already settled in the rump state, so as to get enrolled in a university. It is worth to remark that the ebb of inscription by the mid 1920s was not much below the pre-war level of the last year of peace (exceeding it actually till 1923/4, included). The post-war upsurge of the demand for higher education was, hence, a reality in the longer term, since the level of the demand remained in absolute numbers of the same order in the rump state as erstwhile under the dual monarchy, with a close to three time bigger population. The only institutional network losing weight was that of the academies of Law. This was a 'normal' development due to the doubling of Law Faculties and their easier accessibility due to their dispersion, that is location in three very different parts of the territory. The three regional faculties outside Budapest were at much easier reach in the rump state than earlier Kolozsvár/Cluj. (Still, it is well known that the latter could become the major training agency – some called it a 'factory' – of law graduates in the country in the 1900s.²²) Thus, the remaining three law academies after 1919 (out of a dozen earlier) tended to attract a rather small clientele only. One can conclude that the overcrowding in the capital city – if this was the problem to be solved - was efficiently controlled under the *numerus clausus*. But this also involved that the potential Jewish candidates – forcibly squeezed out of universities in the country – were not 'replaced' by Christian ones, at least not completely, in the years following the enactment of the ominous legislation.

What about the global results of the still relatively high level of student enrollments in the 1920s and the objectives of the targeted 'cultural superiority' dearly paid by heavy investments in schooling and the development of academic institutions? A good indicator to this effect is the number of secondary school graduates, the pool of selection of future students and members of the intellectual professions. These numbers are much less subject to conjunctural or cyclical variations, since graduation must be preceded by eight years of schooling and secondary education hardly suffered any perturbation during the war, (unlike the number of post-secondary students due to the draft of male alumni for military service). Moreover there were no global anti-Jewish restrictions neither in secondary education in the inter-war years, in spite of various trends of segregation. If the Catholic schools were practically closed to non Catholics in

²² Andor Ladányi, *A magyarországi felsőoktatás a dualizmus kora második felében*, /Hungarian higher education in the later period of the Dual Monarchy/, Budapest, 1969, 74. In the years 1901-1910 the Budapest Law Faculty granted altogether 3359 degrees while the Kolozsvár faculty 6685, almost the double. Cf. *Hungarian statistical yearbook* 1910, 392. But for other study branches the faculties of the capital city kept the upper hand.

places where there was an option for other types of schools, the State sector as well as the Protestant and the few private schools remained open to Jews (up to the 1939 extension of the *numerus clausus* over new entrants into secondary education too). Thus the yearly size of the secondary graduate group is among the best indicators related to the trends of training the upcoming educated middle class. See hereafter the successive yearly figures or multi-annual averages in short periods marked here by similar yearly numbers of graduates. It must be noted that these figures are only slightly but not dramatically affected by the decline of birth rates around 18 years before the dates concerned, since the generations cited belong all to the pre-war years, lacking any abrupt demographic changes.

The upshot is clear. If we compare the first cohorts of secondary school graduates of the rump state with the prewar figure, it represented some 80 %, or a decrease of one fifth. Compared to the war years, the figure is 68 %, a decrease of just one third. This decline is in the same region as observed in the absolute size of the educated middle classes compared between the censuses of 1910 – related to ‘Big Hungary’ – and 1920 – related to the ‘Rump State’, that is around 70 %.²³ Thereby we have an additional demonstration that the bulk of the established as well as the would-be educated elites of the country were residing or actually got resettled (via exodus from detached territories) in the rump state. This provided a structural potential of sorts for further educational expansion. Indeed, it is clear from the above figures that the absolute number of *Maturanten* continued to gradually grow throughout the 1920s, so much so that by the end of the decade it reached and then exceeded the prewar levels, in spite of the demographic depression which had started to rarify the size of the new generations since the late 19th century, especially in the most urbanised Western and central regions of monarchic times becoming Trianon Hungary after 1919.²⁴

Thus, the training effort of the rump state appeared to be effective indeed on the level of secondary schooling. This should have been, logically, expressed in constantly enlarged proportions of the educated strata as well. It is all the more interesting to observe that - globally - instead of an expansion, the proportions of the highly educated continued either to decline – this applied essentially for men -, or stagnate or else only slightly increase - for women - throughout the interwar decades. There was a general expansion to be true, practically in every age group, of the literate population and even of those having completed at least 6 primary school classes. The figures of the latter grew globally for men from 54 % in 1920 to 58,5 % in 1930 and 64 % in 1941 and for women from 47 % to 54 % and 61 %

²³ Lumping together lawyers, medical doctors, pharmacists and the teaching staff of secondary and higher education, the figure of 1920 is exactly 69,4 % of that of 1910. Cf. *Magyar statisztikai közlemények*, /Hungarian statistical reports/, 76, annexe 123.

²⁴ In 1895, approximate date of birth of those liable to graduate in 1913/4, the general birthrate was 41,4 per thousand inhabitants. (*Hungarian statistical yearbook*, 1895, 56.). In 1912, the approximate date of birth of the generation liable to graduate in 1929/30, the comparable figure was only 36 per thousand. (*Hungarian statistical yearbook*, 1912, 31. But these rates were much lower in the cities, especially in Budapest, but also in Transdanubia and the central counties making up the bulk of the territories of the later rump state.

respectively.²⁵ There was a clear expansion of the bottom level of the educational pyramid. Moving higher though in the same hierarchy, the decline was all but general for the young ages groups, especially for young men. Among the latter aged 18-19, the proportion of secondary school graduates was 5,9 % in 1920, 5 % in 1930 and only 4,8 in 1941, while among girls the comparable figures were 2,5 %, 2,3 % and 2,8 % respectively.²⁶ We get quite similar results for those with higher educational degrees proper, aged 25-29. The relevant figures were successively 3,6 %, 2,9 % and 2,9 %, while for women 0,4 %, 0,4 % and 0,6 %.²⁷

How could the above demonstrated expansion of elite training produce such mediocre global results, all the more that the further decline of the number of children per family and the simultaneous development of the supply of elite training must have significantly contributed to enhance per capita investments in education ? It is not the place to enter into an in-depth analysis of the data cited. Let us simply refer to two (and a half) explanatory factors. One has to do with the possibly enormous demographic weight of young middle class refugees in the 1920 figures, which disappeared from among the young age groups of later censuses. The second concerns the real decline or stagnation of even age-group specific enrollments in elite education after the economic crisis of the early 1930s, which had a negative repercussion on the depressed 1941 figures. Finally, for 1941, the re-annexation of already earlier less developed territories of the former monarchy meant that populations of lower levels of education were incorporated into the rump state, generating a more modest average intellectual score for the whole population. However it was, the general educational balance sheet of the Christian Course proved to be altogether negative.

Women under the numerus clausus

What happened with the third objective, the control and indeed minimization of women's educational promotion. Girls' educational advancement actually started at the turn of the century and accelerated decisively on the eve of the war as well as during the war years, especially in territories which would remain in the rump state after 1919. It is well known that the first secondary school for girls was founded by the National Association for Women's education in 1896 in Budapest, that is just one year after the admission of the first women to two university faculties, Medicine and Philosophy (Arts and Sciences, 1895).²⁸ It was followed by a number of new school foundations. Responding to the

²⁵ See the comprehensive table of data collected by Barbara Papp in her study : *Nőoktatás és „képzett nők” a két világháború között*, /Women's education and 'educated women' in the inter-war period/, in György Kövér (ed.), *Zsombékok, op. cit.* 720.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 722.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 723.

²⁸ See István Mészáros, *Középszintű iskoláink kronológiája és topográfiája 1906-1948*, /Chronology and topography of our secondary schools, 1906-1948/, Budapest, Akadémiai, 1988, 108.

expanding demand, in Budapest five new girls' secondary school opened its doors between 1914 and 1918. Moreover, out of the 31 schools for girls operating in 1917/18, not less than 22 remained in the rump state,²⁹ and their numbers grew rapidly further on. By 1927/28 there were 30 girls' gymnasiums and lyceums in the country with 13 of them concentrated in Budapest.³⁰ At the end of the period in 1938/9 the number of girls' gymnasiums and lyceums was 87 out of a total of 263. One third of the whole provision of secondary education granting the *matura* (*érettségi*) was at that time reserved for women, in Budapest almost half of it (28 out of 61).³¹ In larger towns there was no obstacle for girls to complete a secondary school itinerary in institutions of their own, where the same entitlements could be obtained as in boy's secondary schools, besides the fact that girls could also sit for the exam and take their *érettségi* degree as 'private pupils' in boy's gymnasiums and *Realschulen*. Till 1915/6 women actually could only take the graduation exam in boys' schools, but afterwards girls' highschoools progressively took over the graduating functions for girls, so much so that by the end of the inter-war years most female graduations took place in girls' highschoools.³²

Table 2. The girls' share (%) in elite education (1913/14-1925/26, selected years)³³

	% among secondary school pupils having passed an exam	% among graduates of classical secondary schools	% among all students of higher education
1913/14	7,9	4,3	
1918/19	15,0	14,5	8,3
1919/20	16,8	16,8	6,3
1920/21	17,2	17,3	8,1
1921/22	17,4	15,2	8,5
1922/23	17,6	16,0	8,2
1923/24	17,3	15,1	8,5
1924/25	17,1	15,6	9,0
1925/26	17,1	14,6	8,8

²⁹ See the relevant map in Mészáros, 316.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 327.

³¹ *Hungarian statistical yearbook*, 1939, 177.

³² In 1918/19 almost half of graduating girls (48 %) took their grades in boys' secondary schools, but this proportion diminished to 20 % or less as of 1922/23. Data from *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*. In 1930/31 already only 10 % of girls graduated from a boys' school.

³³ Data from the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*.

One can say that the supply for women's secondary education developed fast and indeed disproportionately, given the limitations opposed to their clientele to gain access to higher education and – as it will be apparent in the table below – given the specificity of women's demand for restricted elite training, including secondary education and even *matura* but less often further studies, as compared to male graduates. The reason for such disproportion had to do with relatively low scale public investments in this sector. The state and local governments apparently tended to follow the demand – which was 'structurally limited' under the *numerus clausus* – and contributed moderately only to the establishment of new girls' schools. This was may be also due to the fact that Jewish girls took an even larger share in the demand than Jewish boys. The churches, on the contrary, made women's education a field of outright competition for winning the souls. This can explain why only 7 public (and secular) girls' schools opened their doors from 1918 to 1940 in the capital city as against 10 Church schools.³⁴ On the country level in 1919/20 almost half of girls' schools (14 out of 29) were still run by the state or by municipalities. Their numbers hardly increased and their proportion sharply decreased one third only (16 out of 49) by 1938/39.³⁵ If Budapest was certainly the biggest territorial unit of the educational market in the country, the developmental dynamics of the supply of girls' secondary education certainly anticipated the growth of the demand in the inter-war years. This is what Table 2 clearly demonstrates.

There we find indicators of the expansion of the female educational demand. In 1913/4 there were only 249 girls graduating from secondary schools, a mere 4,2 % of all graduates. This proportion reached 10 % in 1917/8, grew to 14,5 % in 1918/9 and attained 16,8 % in 1919/20 (with 687 female graduates). The figures oscillated around 15 % till the last years of the 1920s as shown on Table 2, when they made a new jump upwards with 16,4 % in 1928/9, 18,6 % in 1929/30 and 19,3 % in 1930/31.³⁶ This indeed quite significant growth shows both the progress of the educational modernization of the country, whereby women's elite education became an accepted norm in some middle class milieus, as well as its drastic limitations, especially if we compare the above figures with the extension of the network of girls' educational facilities. Girls were always somewhat more often present among rank and file pupils than among graduates of secondary education,³⁷ and they appeared much less often among university students.

This is a clear indication of their constantly hampered or inhibited educational mobility, compared to boys, especially when we know that they were

³⁴ Mészáros, 167-174.

³⁵ *Hungarian statistical yearbook* 1919-1922, 181 and *ibid.* 1939, 185.

³⁶ Figures from the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

³⁷ In the years 1920/21-1925/26 the proportion of girls exceeded regularly 17 % among secondary school students, while their average representation among *maturenten* was only 15,6 %. Data calculated from the relevant issues of the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*.

extracted on average from much higher, more 'bourgeois' social circles³⁸ and much better endowed with cultural and intellectual assets.³⁹ In 1913/14 for example half of the pupils of higher girls' schools with Hungarian mother tongue knew German, while only 18,3 % of comparable pupils of boys' gymnasiums and *Realschulen*.⁴⁰ In 1925 some 67 % of female students in Budapest spoke a foreign language, 35 % even two or more, while only 48 % of male students had the same skills (with only 14 % possessing several languages).⁴¹ Not independently from their family background, they appeared to display on average significantly higher scholarly achievements, as witnessed by their mean grades at *Matura* exams. In the years 1908/9-1914/15 not less than 38,2 % of graduates from a girls' secondary school obtained their *Matura* with the best grade as against close to half that proportion among male graduates.⁴² The fact that in spite of all this the women's share among university students hardly exceeded in the initial years of the *numerus clausus* half of their proportions among *Maturanten*, demonstrates the combined consequences of their lesser demand for higher education and the drastic efficiency of the *numerus clausus* directed against women in universities.

The primary consequence of such limitation of the admission of women was to be found in indices of their better academic performances,⁴³ a direct outcome of their initial over-qualification as against male *Maturanten* and their intellectual over-selection among the best graded secondary school graduates. But their exclusion from most faculties and vocational schools also generated a sometimes spectacular concentration of women students in a few study tracks, above all in Budapest and especially in the Philosophical faculties, but also – though to a much lesser extent – in the artistic academies (music, fine arts, industrial arts, theatre) and in the commercial sector of the recently founded Faculty of Economy – the latter all in Budapest –, besides the Faculties of Medicine.

The concentration of women in the University of Budapest (instead of Kolozsvár) was quite spectacular before the war, up to 92 % in the years 1911/12-1913/14⁴⁴. This can be connected to the much more heavily urban (and Budapest based) middle class selection of female students, as against their male

³⁸ Following a survey in 1925 only 4,4 % of female students belonged to lower class families, while 14,2 % of their male counterparts were extracted from lower class social categories. Cf. *Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Évkönyve*, /Statistical yearbook of the residential capital Budapest/, 1926, 650.

³⁹ Cf. Viktor Karády, "A társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon a nők felső iskoláztatásának korai fázisában", /Social inequalities in the first phase of development of higher education among women in Hungary/, *Férfiuralom /Masculin domination/*, ed. by Miklós Hadas, Budapest, Replika-könyvek, 1994, 176-195.

⁴⁰ Calculated from data in *Hungarian Statistical Yearbook* 1914, 273-274.

⁴¹ Source line in note 35 above.

⁴² Calculated from data in relevant years of the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*.

⁴³ The 1925 survey in Budapest found for example that only 41 % of female students had not sit this year for an oral exam (*colloquium*) as against 54 % of male students. *Statistical yearbook of the residential capital city Budapest*, 1926, 652.

⁴⁴ Data from *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of relevant years.

counterparts. This could not continue under the *numerus clausus*, as witnessed by their enrollments in the 1920s in the medical faculties, for which detailed surveys are at our disposal. While in Budapest serious restrictions prevailed against women's inscription throughout the years 1920-29, to the effect of limiting female presence in the student body to 7,2 % (very close to the figure of Jewish representation), the more liberal inscription policies of provincial universities benefited to women as well. In the years 1919-1929 some 23 % of medical students were women in Pécs, 16,5 % in Szeged and 13,5 % in Debrecen. Altogether 70 % of female medical students studied on the benches of provincial faculties at that time.⁴⁵ Later on this unbalance must have changed, though, and the capital city regained the majority of its female medical clientele. By 1938/39-1939/40 Budapest retained 55 % of them and the rest was dispersed in smaller groups in the provincial faculties.

But the majority of female students gathered progressively more and more in the Philosophical faculties. Indeed till 1923 women studied essentially the Arts and Sciences and Medicine in fairly equal numbers, up to above 90 % of all female students. The remainder was divided between pharmacy and the recently (1919) opened Economic Faculty in Budapest, the latter too admitting women, while Law, Theology and Polytechnics were kept closed to them for most of the inter-war years (at least as 'regular students'). But in the first five years of the *numerus clausus* female students were specially targeted by restrictions in medical faculties, especially in Budapest, so that by 1926/7 some 61 % of women students were enrolled in Philosophical Faculties and in 1927/8 more than 65 %. As a consequence, by 1930/31 women constituted already close to half (49,1 %) of the student body of the latter (including the sciences), a proportion which declined but not decisively in the 1930s. In 1934/5 it stood at 44 % and in 1937/8 at 40 %.⁴⁶

The relatively less restricted entry of women to Philosophical faculties could only increase the global share of Budapest in the female student population on the strength of specific conditions prevailing in this sector of the academic market. The educated middle classes of the capital city by themselves produced a good part of this female educational demand. But such demand was particularly captured by the presence of the main scholarly celebrities in the humanities and the natural sciences in Budapest, the end station of academic careers in fields of advanced learning, where teaching was less standardized, that is much more personalized than in medicine or in technical disciplines. By the end of the period in 1938/-1939/40 women represented 44 % of Arts and Sciences students in Budapest as against 37 % in provincial faculties.⁴⁷ This relative overweight of women in the Budapest Philosophical Faculty, combined with the fact that all the teaching institutions of other major study tracks open to women either in a university (like pharmacy and economics) or in an academy (especially for artistic training) were located in Budapest (with the unique exception of the Normal

⁴⁵ Survey results from the project quoted in note 1.

⁴⁶ Calculated from data in the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of relevant years.

⁴⁷ Calculations following data in *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of 1939 and 1940.

School for teachers in higher primary schools, transferred to Szeged in 1928), preserved (and by the end of the period enhanced) the status of the capital city as the absolute center of women's higher education in the country in the inter-war years. While in 1925/6 only 52 % of all female university students were studying in Budapest, this was the case of 68 % of them by 1938/9.

But between the two last years mentioned one can observe hardly any general progress as to the participation of girls in higher education. Globally, student numbers in universities decreased gradually and significantly – by one third - during this period in Budapest (from 4515 in 1925/6 to 3006 in 1938/9) and oscillated in the three provincial universities around 1000 students with ups and downs in each. The share of women stood at 11,7 % in 1925/6 to reach 13,8 % only in 1938/9 in universities proper (excluding other institutions of higher education).⁴⁸ This quasi-stagnation can be interpreted as a visible impact of the policy of *numerus clausus* on the participation of women in higher education.

Exclusion and escape for Jews

The most direct outcome of the repressive law can be observed, obviously enough, in the diminution of the share of Jews in the student body of universities and law academies, but also in a number of other institutions of higher education which, though officially not affected by the law, also applied – sometimes with a vengeance, quite arbitrarily – the limitation of Jewish enrollments. This was the case particularly of the so called Eastern Commercial Academy (which used to have a quasi-majority of Jews in the student body before the World War), the Academy of Industrial Arts and the Veterinary College – all in Budapest -, as well as - in the provinces – that of the Mining Academy (transferred from Selmecbánya to Sopron after 1919) and the three remaining Agricultural academies.⁴⁹ One may remark here that, contrary to the law itself, the restrictions to the enrollment of Jews were often (irregularly though in the various institutions and years) extended over two categories officially not concerned by the text of the law : baptized Jews – a not infrequent cluster after the antisemitic crisis years of 1919-20 – and Jewish students engaged already in a higher semester of studies. This scheme was applied for example in 1920/21 at the Budapest faculties of Arts and Sciences as well as Medicine.⁵⁰

The first escape route for Jews who were refused admission in a home institution of higher education was, understandably enough, the departure abroad. The target of this new type of forced peregrinations was the network of universities and academies either in neighboring countries (Austria,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See an interpretation of these excesses of the anti-Jewish legislation in my study, *A numerus clausus és az egyetemi piac*, *op. cit.* 189-190.

⁵⁰ See Andor Ladányi, *Az egyetemi ifjúság az ellenforradalom első éveiben (1919-1921)*, /Academic youth in the first years of the counterrevolution – 1919-1921), Budapest, Akadémiai, 1979, 177-178.

Czechoslovakia, but also, more exceptionally, Croatia, Transylvania under Romanian rule or Serbia) or Germany and Switzerland, where members of the Hungarian Jewish intelligentsia were accustomed to spend their academic *Wanderjahren* already before 1914. Vienna was a central place for earlier peregrinations⁵¹ where the proportion of Jews among students from Hungary – some 23 % altogether in all institutions of higher education – was similar to that studying in contemporary Hungary.⁵² In 1910 among students from Hungary at the University of Vienna Jews represented as much as 48 % in the Medical Faculty, 23 % in the Law Faculty and 14 % in the Arts and Sciences Faculty.⁵³ Higher studies abroad had moderate or tolerable financial costs before 1919, and the countries cited above offered favorable human conditions sharing the Central European urban culture and an academic system modeled on the Prussian pattern, which was that of Hungary too. The last aspect could be important since study terms (semesters) could be validated, sometimes without reservation, in a curriculum liable to be crowned by a Hungarian graduation or, failing this, foreign degrees granted in these countries could be easily recognized as equivalent (via *nostrification*) to a national diploma.

Vienna continued to be important for expatriated Jewish students after 1920 for some years, but less and less so, due to the increase of living costs and the growing anti-Jewish tide. The *Technische Hochschule* adopted a 10 % ‘Jewish quota’ in 1923 and there were anti-Jewish restrictions in the classical University of Vienna too.⁵⁴ German universities offered usually better reception in the Weimar Republic, though the mounting tide of Nazism by the end of the 1920s and the high costs of living made life more and more difficult for the ‘refugees of the *numerus clausus*’⁵⁵ till it made it eventually impossible after the Nazi take-over in January 1933. At that time France and most particularly Italy became major choices for studies of Hungarian Jews abroad.⁵⁶ The Italian fascist government prepared a hearty welcome to foreigners, including Jews, notably by abolishing tuition fees in 1923. This policy was reversed though in 1938, when Mussolini sacrificed his formerly philosemitic stance on the altar of the alliance with the Third Reich.⁵⁷

⁵¹ See Gábor Patyi, *Magyarországi diákok bécsi egyetemeken és főiskolákon, 1890-1918*, /Hungarian students in Viennese universities and academies, 1890-1918/, Budapest, 2004.

⁵² *Ibid. op. cit.* 34.

⁵³ See my study, Funktionswandel der österreichischen Hochschulen in der Ausbildung der ungarischen Fachintelligenz vor und nach dem ersten Weltkrieg, in Victor Karady, Wolfgang Mitter (ed.), *Education and Social Structure in Central Europe in the 19th and 21th century*, Köln-Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 1990, 177-207, especially 188.

⁵⁴ Michael L. Miller, From White Terror to Red Vienna, in Frank Stern, Barbara Eichinger (ed.), *Wien und die jüdische Erfahrung, 1900-1938*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 2009, 307-323.

⁵⁵ See Michael L. Miller’s study in this volume.

⁵⁶ See the relevant data in Funktionswandel..., 198.

⁵⁷ See Andrea Camelli, Présence et caractéristiques des étudiants étrangers en Italie, 1945-1998, in Hartmut Rüdiger Peter, Natalia Tikhonov (ed.), *Les Universités : ponts a travers l’Europe*, Frankfurt/M, etc., Peter Lang, 2003, 113-135, particularly 115-116.

There is no reliable information about the quantitative scope of the Jewish student body abroad under the *numerus clausus*, though contemporary and subsequent estimations put it to a very high level. Taking into account classical universities and the Budapest Polytechnics in the years 1910/11-1913/14 some 3,5 % of the Hungarian student population was studying abroad. This figure was 5 % in 1920/21-1922/23 and 6,5 % in 1923/4-1925/26 following official data.⁵⁸ If proportions did not show a dramatic change, the absolute figure of peregrines abroad jumped from an average of 516 in the years 1910/11-1913/14 to a mean number of 898 in 1920/21-1922/23 and 1071 in 1923/24-1925/26. But the big difference between the pre-war and the post-war period was in this respect that the proportion of Jews among students abroad became preponderant after 1919 from a minority of may be just one quarter or one fifth earlier.

My survey results on enrollments in the University of Vienna for sample semesters between 1920/21 and 1930/31 indicate that among students from Hungary 91 % were Jewish in the Medical Faculty and 71 % in the Philosophical (Arts and Sciences) Faculty.⁵⁹ One of the main authorities of the statistical services of inter-war Hungary (an author of right extremist orientation) evaluated quite similarly the Jewish share among Hungarian students abroad at 80 % for the whole period.⁶⁰ This statistical study set the proportion of those abroad among all Jewish students from Hungary between 25 % and 45 % following different years (with a summit of 51 % for 1927/28), that is, an average of one third of all Jewish students at one time.⁶¹ But all this does not say anything about the real numbers concerned, whether in absolute or relative terms. Another source (from an author passionately committed against the discriminatory law) mentioned for the years around 1925 some five thousand Jewish academic exiles⁶² - a most probably excessive figure, though it is often taken for granted by several authors (included some in this book). A different contemporary source, favorable to the incriminated *numerus clausus* law, referred to official statistical data on Hungarian students abroad in the years 1920/21-1923/24, stating that these numbers oscillated around 1100 with a probability that some three fourth of them - 7-800 - were Jewish.⁶³ It also cited a Jewish source stating that in the years under scrutiny the Central Committee of Student Assistance in Budapest cared for 760 Hungarian Jewish students abroad.⁶⁴ This figure appears to be consistent with the estimation above, following which those abroad might represent one third of all Jews from Hungary engaged in higher studies in and outside the rump state,

⁵⁸ Published in *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

⁵⁹ See the relevant table in *Funktionswandel...*, 202.

⁶⁰ Cf. Alajos Kovács, *Magyarországi zsidó hallhatók hazai és külföldi főiskolákon, /Jewish students from Hungary in Hungarian and foreign institutions of higher learning/, Magyar statisztikai szemle, /Hungarian statistical review/, 1938, 9, 897-902, particularly 899.*

⁶¹ Alajos Kovács, *loc.cit.*

⁶² Pál Bethlen (ed.), *Numerus clausus*, Budapest (no date, 1925 ?), 139, 146.

⁶³ István Haller, *Harc a numerus clausus körül, /Fight around the numerus clausus/, Budapest, 1926, 154.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

since in the years between 1920 and 1930 Jews identified among students in Hungary proper were around 1500-2000. It is also consistent with official data on students abroad, a yearly average of 898 in 1920/21-1922/23 and as many as 1071 in 1923/4-1925/6,⁶⁵ if the above estimation is confirmed that four-fifth of them were Jewish. Further research is still needed to arrive at definitive results in this matter, but the main conclusions, drafted above, are certainly credible.

Provincial universities represented, nevertheless, another route of escape for Jews under the *numerus clausus*, however restricted this proved to be, especially in the 1930s, following the rise of right extremism. The arguments and demonstrations put forward is Maria M. Kovács' study in this book convincingly explain the conjunctural conditions in which provincial universities acted, sometimes voluntarily, in favor of the admission of Jews rejected in Budapest. The particularly liberal policy of the University of Pécs in the 1920s – a borderline case in this matter – is rather well known, especially in its Medical Faculty during the immediate aftermaths of the introduction of the *numerus clausus*. Among parents of Jewish medical students enrolled in Pécs in 1919-1929 some 41 % were living in Budapest against 20 % of parents of Christian students. Comparable proportions were 23 % against 5,6 % in Szeged and 15 % against 4 % in Debrecen for the same years.⁶⁶ As to students of the Arts and Sciences for the same years the comparable proportions of parents living in Budapest were in Pécs 15 % for Jews as against 4 % for others, in Szeged 24 % for Jews and 4 % for others, in Debrecen 7 % for Jews and 4 % for others.⁶⁷ Manifestly, the peregrination of Jewish students from the capital city to the provinces affected above all Pécs and Szeged, much less Debrecen. Anyhow, the transfer of many Jewish students of Medicine and the Arts and Sciences to the provinces who, earlier, would have logically sought enrollment in Budapest, is well attested. Table 3 carries other results to the same effect.

The contrast for Jews is indeed strongly marked between the pre-war situation and the years under the *numerus clausus*. Rejection of Jews from Budapest was obviously decisive under the repressive legislation, while only quite limited in the provinces, especially in Pécs.

There the Medical Faculty would take up Jewish candidates in the beginning without much hesitation, since they contributed irreplaceably to the legitimization of the very subsistence of the new institution. Later on this special position of Pécs manifestly faded away to the benefit mostly of the two other provincial universities and also, to some extent, on behalf of Budapest. By the end of the 1920s Budapest University (probably due to the 1928 attenuation of the *numerus clausus*) regained up to one half of all Jewish university students in the country, but not more, contrary to the pre-war situation. In the same time Szeged but also Debrecen came up each with some one sixth of the Jewish student body admitted to university studies inside Hungary. For non Jews, a contrary

⁶⁵ Data calculated from the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of the years concerned.

⁶⁶ From my survey results of graduates and students in Hungarian higher education cited in note 1.

⁶⁷ Survey results as in the precedent note.

development can be observed with the progressive diminution of the overcrowding of the capital city – which was more pronounced, as we have seen above, in the early 1920s than before the war - and the increase of the intake due to the provincial universities.

Table 3. The territorial distribution of Jewish and non Jewish students before and after the introduction of the *numerus clausus* in Hungarian classical universities and law academies (selected years)⁶⁸

JEWS	Budapest University	Kolozsvár/Szeged University	Pozsony/Pécs University	Debrecen University	Law Academies	Altogether	Number of students
1913/14	85,4	8,7	-	-	5,9	100,0	3 043
1920/21	34,6	28,4	25,9	2,1	8,8	100,0	1 427
1921/22	31,7	12,4	43,0	4,5	8,4	100,0	1 941
1922/23	34,5	10,7	40,6	5,5	8,6	100,0	1 980
1923/24	39,4	10,0	38,8	7,1	4,7	100,0	1 527
1924/25	45,8	10,6	28,9	8,2	6,4	100,0	1 256
1925/26	48,3	11,6	22,0	8,6	9,6	100,0	1 107
1926/27	51,4	13,1	17,3	9,3	8,7	100,0	1 027
1927/28	56,0	14,2	13,5	8,8	7,5	100,0	1 037
1928/29	52,3	15,8	12,0	14,3	5,6	100,0	1 121
1929/30	49,5	16,1	11,4	17,3	5,7	100,0	1 213
1930/31	48,5	17,0	11,1	16,9	6,4	100,0	1 427

CHRISTIANS	Budapest University	Kolozsvár/Szeged University	Pozsony/Pécs University	Debrecen University	Law Academies	Altogether	Number of students
1913/14	60,7	22,9	-	-	16,4	100,0	8 100
1920/21	73,4	10,5	3,3	4,9	7,9	100,0	8 418
1923/24	71,0	8,8	7,0	6,9	6,9	100,0	10 013
1927/28	62,0	11,0	9,7	9,1	9,1	100,0	10 232
1930/31	55,3	11,4	22,1	10,8	10,8	100,0	10 671

Table 3 offers a clear picture in its last column of the indeed brutal global outcome of the *numerus clausus* for Jews. In 1920/21 the Jewish student body was less than half of the pre-war number – one fifth only in Budapest -, in spite of the fact that the rump state with its capital (the latter alone holding after 1919 close to half of Jews in the country) was harboring the bulk of ‘modernised’ and ‘assimilated’ Jewish middle classes, the offspring of which were filling the benches of universities. Among Jews inscribed in the Medical Faculty of the capital city in 1870-1920 almost half (48,6 %) were born in Transdanubia and between Danube and Tisza,⁶⁹ while only 41 % of the Hungarian Jewish population was living in these regions in 1900.⁷⁰ In 1910 the two Western and central regions of the country hosted 55 % of Jewish members of the liberal professions and civil servants, the staple sources of those engaged in educational

⁶⁸ Data from the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks*.

⁶⁹ Results of the prosopographical survey of Hungarian students and graduates cited in note 1.

⁷⁰ Calculated from data in *Hungarian statistical report* 5, 538-539.

mobility via higher studies.⁷¹ Without *numerus clausus* Jews should have logically increased their relative share among students in the rump state, following pre-war trends of educational proclivities. Though Jewish student numbers grew somewhat in the years 1921-1923, then they went down to as low as one third of the pre-war level for several years, exactly till the 1928 upturn (abolition of the explicitly anti-Jewish bias of the *numerus clausus*). But even after this, their numbers hardly attained the 1920 level in 1930/31. Nothing comparable happened for Christian students of classical universities, whose numbers exceeded the pre-war level throughout the 1920s with a visible tendency to grow.

Obviously enough, the escape route to the provinces was also a straight one for Jews, like that of studies abroad. It mobilized only a part of an utterly decimated potential Jewish student population. Still one can cautiously estimate that in the first years of the anti-Jewish legislation there were as many or even more Jewish student exiles in the provinces than abroad, following the estimations of those forced to expatriate themselves in the early 1920s. In later years, the number of those beginning their studies in foreign countries must have taken the upper hand, as compared to Jewish students in provincial faculties in Hungary proper.

Transformations of the Jewish student population

This central topic of any study of the consequences of the *numerus clausus* can begin with the examination of the destiny of Jewish women in academe which, paradoxically enough, appears to have developed less unfavorably than that of male students.

Though in doubly touched by the *numerus clausus* (as women and as Jews), still, may be paradoxically, Jewish women fared somewhat better under the repressive legislation than Jewish men. In the survey cited above on the Budapest student body in 1925, Jewish women made up 13,3 % of female students against only 8 % of Jews among male students.⁷² The implication of this result is fully confirmed if we consider the medical faculties in the years 1918-29. In the first troubled academic year after the end of the war hostilities Jews represented 61 % of the female students and 53 % of the male students in the Medical Faculty of Budapest, where teaching was the less perturbed, given the fact that the two new provincial medical faculties were not yet operational at that time and the Kolozsvár/Cluj Faculty was Romanized precisely in December 1918, in the midst of the academic year. Though this was an exceptional year, witnessing the return of masses of former soldiers from the trenches back to the benches of universities, the high proportion of Jews among female students was not so exceptional. In the first period of women's admission to higher studies the representation of Jews

⁷¹ Calculated from data in *Hungarian statistical report* 56, 712-781.

⁷² Cf. Note 37 above.

among female students oscillated close to 50 %.⁷³ Now, the disproportion observed in this exceptional year between the representation of the two sexes can – *mutatis mutandis* – be identified throughout the later years of the *numerus clausus*. In 1919-1929 Jewish women made up 27,7 % of the female student body in the Budapest medical faculty as against 12,3 % of Jews among males. The comparable proportions were less dramatically diverging, but still significant in two cases out of three : 25 % and 24 % in Szeged, 16,2 % and 13,2 % in Debrecen and – exceptionally enough – 39,5 % and 57,3 % in Pécs.⁷⁴

On the whole, with the notable exception of Pécs, Jewish women thus appeared to be relatively less severely hit by the *numerus clausus* than Jewish men. The explanation of this difference is certainly worth a more in-depth investigation. Still, among possible factors, one can refer to the above mentioned higher social extraction of women students in general, shared most probably with a vengeance by Jewish female students (even if as yet we have no precise information in this matter), which could facilitate the circumvention of hindrances at admission, thanks to the ‘social capital’ of those concerned, that is their nexus to academic decision makers. The fact that the best qualified secondary school graduates had official priority for admission could also confer relative facilities to Jewish female candidates, since they belonged to the best performers at *Matura* as witnessed by their average grades. In 1927/8-1930/31 for example both Jewish boys and girls scored the highest average academic achievement among their mates at graduation from secondary schools, but the boys with 19,1 % of those obtaining grade 1 and the girls with 30,2 %.⁷⁵ It may well be also that Jewish girls – hit by the *numerus clausus* – were less liable to be allowed by their families to leave for universities abroad than boys, following moral conventions of the contemporary middle classes, offering much less liberty to girls to move out of the household. Their family could thus put up more resistance to the exclusion from higher studies in the country than the family of the young men concerned.

Returning to the problem of differential educational excellence, the *numerus clausus* appears to have maintained the relative preeminence of Jews, though our surveys in this matter are not yet sufficiently elaborated for a clear demonstration for those admitted to higher education. For secondary schooling however there are some quite significant research results at our disposal. One can for example compare the ‘survival rate’ of Jewish and Christian male pupils of secondary schools from class 1 to class 5 (between 1927/8 and 1932/3) on the country wide level and find 89,5 % Jewish boys in class 5 as against only 56,8 %

⁷³ In 1896/7-1904/5 it was indeed not less than 48,6 % in the University of Budapest, where some 90 % of female students were enrolled. (cf. *Statistical yearbook of the residential capital city Budapest*, 1905, 270) and as much as 53 % in the year 1904/5 (*Acta regiae scientiae universitatis Hungariae*, Budapest, 1905, 85). In the years 1908/9-1914/15 Jews made up 40,2 % of women in higher education in the whole country. (Data from the *Hungarian statistical yearbooks* of relevant years.)

⁷⁴ Survey data from the study cited in note 1.

⁷⁵ Sándor Asztalos, *A magyar középiskolák statisztikája*, /Statistics of Hungarian secondary schools/, 114.

of Christian boys. For female pupils the similar proportions were as high as 95,9 % for Jewish girls compared to only 80 % for Christian girls.⁷⁶ In higher education the achievement differences may have proved to be enhanced by the strong intellectual pre-selection of Jews admitted in spite of the *numerus clausus*.⁷⁷ Most of these relatively privileged Jews had to display the best grades at secondary school graduation to have a chance to gain admission, hence a degree of academic excellence must have been 'structurally conditioned' by their standing as the best alumni of secondary education. This may be the reason why the proportions of Jews graduating from the Budapest Medical Faculty appear to have significantly higher than the 6 % quota of the *numerus clausus* – 7,9 % in 1924-1930, as much as 10,4 in 1931-1938 and 7 % even in the calamitous years of the anti-Jewish laws 1939-1944.⁷⁸

Such differences cannot be attested though in drop-out rates between the first and the second semesters of first year students, as some authors suggest. It has been indeed alleged, that raw proportions of Jews exceed often the 6 % official quota even after the mid-1920s because of the differential drop-out rates to the benefit of Jews between the two semesters of the academic year. At that time all Jews having been enrolled before the introduction of the *numerus clausus* could already finish their studies, hence they could not contribute to Jewish student numbers. In reality there is no empirical evidence to attest this. Drop-out rates did not much differ among Jews and non Jews, oscillating indifferently around 6 % from the first to the second semesters throughout the years 1920-1934, the Jewish rates exceeding sometimes those of their Christian counterparts. The risk of dropping out between semesters was manifestly governed by contingencies, alien from the dispositional disparities typical of the two opposing clusters - Jews or non Jews - in academe.

The social profile of Jewish students enrolled in Hungary under the *numerus clausus* seems to have undergone a rather significant change. One aspect of this had to do with their social background. Though, for the moment, our survey results concern in this respect the medical faculties only, a marked evolution seems to have taken place as compared to the pre-war situation.

In Budapest the socio-professional extraction of students suffered a visible deficit in terms of 'democratisation' in the rump state during the inter-war years, compared to 1918 and 1919. In the last years the pool of student recruitment of the Budapest Faculty still more (in 1918) or less (in 1919) extended over the former territory (in 1919 mostly via the arrival of refugee students from the regions lost for the rump state). These were also the only academic years before the *numerus clausus* for which the parents' profession can be empirically

⁷⁶ Calculated from data in Sándor Asztalos, *op. cit.* 62-64.

⁷⁷ See the differences of the rates of admission between Jews and Christians in Table 2 presented in Andor Ladányi's study, above in this book.

⁷⁸ Survey results on students of the Faculty of Medicine in Budapest.

documented.⁷⁹ For Jews the proportions of medical students with fathers belonging to the lower classes (peasants, manual workers) and the petty bourgeoisie (traders, craftsmen) decreased from a 50,4 % high in 1918 to 33,4 % in 1920-29 and to 31,4 % in 1930-1944. (No Jewish students were admitted to the Pest Medical Faculty in the Autumn term 1919 during the ravages of the White terror.) As to Christian medical students in Budapest, only 27,5 % of them had lower or petty bourgeois ascendancy in 1918, 31,5 % in 1919 as well as 31,9 % in 1920-29 but only 28,8 % in 1930-1944. The decline is quite important indeed for Jews, though practically inexistent for Christians.

For Jews the rather obvious explanation lies in the impact of the *numerus clausus* which was if not withstood, at least better avoided or eschewed by those young people from middle class or educated families liable to have ties with the establishment of the Christian Course.⁸⁰ But one also has to take into account the fact that the major social brackets of their academic clientele – *neologue* or secular middle class Jewry – was remaining in the rump state, especially in its Western and Central parts (including Budapest – representing henceforth close to half of Jews in Hungary), so that there was a sudden artificial ‘embourgeoisement’ of sorts of Jewry living in the country. All this was consistent with and also contributed to the growing relative representation of the Jewish educated middle classes among students in Budapest to the detriment of the lower strata with less formal schooling. As to Christians, the main line of interpretation should follow the influx of masses of middle class refugees in the country, whether sons (and daughters) of the former Hungarian administrative staff or students of the University of Kolozsvár/Cluj as well as the law academies and other institutions of higher learning in detached territories (Pozsony University, Academy of Mining and Forestry in Selmecbánya), emanating mostly from the same civil service or professional circles.⁸¹ They contributed by their own weight in the new student body to continuously restrict the participation of the lower classes in higher studies.

The message of the above data reasserts the differences between the social recruitment of Jews and Christians in Budapest, the former showing a much

⁷⁹ Data on the professional standing of parents (father or guardian) of students can be found in semestrial inscription sheets in universities of the Habsburg Empire and some successor states. The latter perished for the faculties of Budapest for the pre-1918 period in the fire of the National Archives during the Soviet attack of the capital city following the 1956 October Revolution. In the framework of the Project cited in note 1 we are attempting the reconstruction of this prosopographical information via similar data of secondary school pupils in the graduating 8th classes since the existence of the *matura* as a condition of admission to higher studies (1850-1917).

⁸⁰ This was already remarked by contemporary observers. See Alajos Kovács, *Értelmiségünk nemzeti jellegének biztosítása* /Ensuring the national character of our intellectuals/, Budapest, 1926, 12–13.

⁸¹ As an indication to this effect one can cite the survey result on the social background of students in the Budapest Medical Faculty in 1920-1929. On the whole 32,3 % of them emanated from the lower classes and the petty bourgeoisie as against only 28,3 % of students born in Transylvania. The difference is not decisive, but significant. Further survey results must clarify this issue.

‘lower’ social and educational profile. While for most Jewish students of medicine higher studies constituted before the war an avenue of upwards social and educational mobility, and this was apparently maintained for a third of them even under the *numerus clausus*, while the same applied to a significantly smaller portion of their Christian counterparts. In this respect provincial and gender specific developments as presented on Table 4. help to qualify this interpretation.

Table 4. Proportions of medical students by confessional clusters with fathers in the lower classes or the petty bourgeoisie under the *numerus clausus* (1920-1929)⁸²

	University of Budapest	University of Szeged	University of Debrecen	University of Pécs
Jewish men	35,3 %	56,4 %	47,2 %	53,4 %
Christian men	22,5 %	34,1 %	33,3 %	39,6 %
Jewish women	26,4 %	33,3 %	41,2 %	43,6 %
Christian women	17,4 %	30 %	17,1 %	26 %

The table confirms though the systematic differences between the social recruitment of Jews and Christians in medical studies during the inter-war years, but also demonstrates the equally significant disparities between medical faculties of the capital city and the provinces as well as between the two genders. There was a relative over-representation of the upcoming Jewish lower strata in the medical schools even under the *numerus clausus*, compared to Christians. The lower strata among Jews formed a majority in provincial faculties and (as seen before) over a third of students in Budapest. This fact complies with the analysis above about the more severe application of the *numerus clausus* in the capital city, where membership in the Jewish upper strata could be instrumental in neutralizing its effects. The same less educated milieus were much less represented among Christian students, making one fifth only in Budapest and one third approximately of the provincial medical students. The fact that women in both clusters present much higher social profiles with much less students emanating from the lower classes confirms earlier findings. But the differences between Jews and non Jews are strongly marked in both genders at the expense of the Christians - female students being far less ‘democratically’ recruited than males in each social category concerned. It is quite clear that lower class candidates to the medical profession could in general gain much easier access to provincial universities than

⁸² The social category concerned include manual workers of all sorts, independent craftsmen, shopkeepers and associated clusters (traders, restaurant and café owners, hoteliers) not liable of having much educational capital. Data from the prosopographical survey cited in note 1.

in Budapest. This applied both to Jews and non Jews as well as for men and women, but much more to Jews and for men than for Christians and women. The evidence of Table 4. thus suggests that Jewish medical students (there again men more than women) maintained their rather low social profile in the inter-war years, while Christians in their large majority profited essentially from the trend of self-reproduction of the middle classes (especially Christian women) when entering the Medical Faculties.

A closer look of the regional background of medical students reveals another interesting difference between Jewish and Christian students under the *numerus clausus*. While a significant proportion of Christian students hailed in the years 1921-1929 from Transylvania, there were very few Jews coming from territories lost for the rump state. In Szeged not less than 33 % of Christian medical students were born in Transylvania, this was the case of 6,9 % of Jewish students only. This can be connected both to the generally lower representation of Jews in the University of Kolozsvár before the war, as compared to their presence in Budapest universities, and the lesser proclivity of Transylvanian Jews to emigrate after 1919. In Budapest the proportions of Transylvanian born students proved to be much lower – 9,3 % for Christians and 1,4 % for Jews – but the absolute numbers concerned much larger.⁸³ (The differences were significant enough between Jews and Christians in this respect but less sharp in the two other provincial faculties.) With finer tuned statistical methods one could most probably find similar results via the comparison of students from other detached territories (like Western Slovakia), but for the moment we do not have the necessary raw evidence to implement such an investigation, since many county level data refer to territories cut across by the Trianon borders, unlike Transylvania.

Lastly it is worth to mention a considerable development of ‘assimilationist’ indices displayed by Jewish students under the *numerus clausus*. The basic facts are not easy to illustrate since evidence is rare about ‘strategic apostasy’, mixed marriages, residential mixity, education in Christian schools, etc. though the further elaboration of our survey data already referred to may shed light on such occurrences. One has already information on surname nationalizations. When comparing, for instance, inscriptions between the end of the Dual Monarchy (1912-18) and the first years of the *numerus clausus* (1920-24) the proportion of Jewish students with Hungarian surnames increased in the Budapest Medical faculty from 37,4 % to 45,1 %, in the Polytechnical University from 39,9 % to 53,5 % and in provincial medical faculties from 34,8 % to (only) 36,8 %.⁸⁴ Manifestly the ‘assimilationist pressure’ on would-be Jewish intellectuals was significantly less heavy in the provinces as compared to the capital city. But for the rest, the interpretation of these changes are far from being simple, in spite of appearances. Obviously enough the movement to Magyarize surnames was, in Hungary, a major vehicle of ‘nationalization’ of Hungarian

⁸³ Survey results, as cited in note 1.

⁸⁴ Survey results as cited in note 1.

Jewry, responding to more or less explicitly compelling government policies exerted upon those in state employment or benefiting from connections with the state since the 1867 Compromise.⁸⁵ But such pressures affected Christians of non Magyar stock as well. Moreover the pressures in question were not inescapable even in the civil service, especially for families obtaining high level public distinctions, like knighthood. Out of the 281 ennobled Jewish families before 1919 some 122 actually kept their alien sounding surnames, combined as they could be with Magyar titles of nobility referring mostly to the location of their landed or industrial properties.⁸⁶ The same can be observed for Jewish students under the *numerus clausus*. A large proportion of them apparently resisted the temptations, pressures and the chance to exploit the symbolic and occasionally even material profits of surname Magyarization. One must also keep in mind that the Magyarization movement was a permanently developing and more and more publicly supported process in the last decades of the Dualist period as well as – though to a more limited degree – the first decade of the Christian Course after 1919. The latter did not support through promotional policies Jewish Magyarizations, but did not restrict it forcibly neither (till 1938). One cannot thus prove that Jewish students admitted to higher studies under the *numerus clausus* were more often than earlier inclined to seek Magyarization as a strategic action to achieve admission to a university. They could simply belong to those assimilated middle classes where – since much earlier onwards –, surname Magyarizations was a common practice. Probably both factors played a role in the statistical fact that Jewish students under the *numerus clausus* bore more often than earlier Hungarian family names.

⁸⁵ See my book with István Kozma, *Családnév és nemzet. Névpolitika, névváltoztatási mozgalom és nemzetiségi erőviszonyok Magyarországon a reformkortól a kommunizmusig*, /Surname and nation. The policy of naming, the movement of surname modification and relations of ethnic forces in Hungary from the Vormärz till Communism/, Budapest, Osiris, 2002.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* /Hungarian Jewish Encyclopedia/, Budapest, 1929, 642-647.

Róbert Kerepeszki

“The racial defense in Practice”. The activity of the Turul Association at Hungarian universities between the two world wars

I. Development and ideology of the Turul

In Hungary, following World War I, the main basis of right radical movements was the youth, especially university students. This generation witnessed the defeat in the war, the collapse of the dual Austro-Hungarian Empire and the loss of Hungarian territories. Besides – under the critical social and economical circumstances of the country – they could not continue their studies, and they were unable to find employment. In addition to the huge number of the “soldier-students” getting home from the fronts, the situation was aggravated by masses of young people escaping from the lost territories.¹ This moral collapse was followed by the Hungarian Soviet Republic between March and August 1919, which further strengthened the animosity of this generation towards the leftist movements and communism. In 1919/1920, these political and social circumstances generated the right radical mentality and orientation of university students, so it is not accidental that the protest against the peace treaty of Trianon, the influence of Jews (“the Jewish Question”) and anti-communism represented a cohesive force among them. After the collapse of the Soviet Republic in August 1919, this youth established several student associations which became important agencies for the mobilisation of the student population at Hungarian universities between the two World Wars. The so-called “fraternal association” was entirely new, without traditions, so the right radical youth might freely form the features of such societies. Besides, the quick development of these associations was mainly due to the strengthening of the so-called “Christian-national” frame of mind, but this was also furthered by the “vacuum” that arose in the social and association life of young people: the leftist or liberal university organizations (for example the *Galilei Kör* – Galilei Circle) being banned after the revolutions, and

¹ It should be noted that the circumstance were the same in the other loser countries of the World War, especially in Germany: in 1921, twice the number of students enrolled in the German universities and colleges, as the last year of peace before the war. See Jarausch, Konrad H., “The Crisis of German Professions 1918–1933”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1985), pp. 384–385.; Wehler, Hans-Ulrich, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. Vol. 4. *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten 1914–1949*. Munich 2003. pp. 235–236., 462–472.; Laky, Dezső, *A magyar egyetemi hallgatók statisztikája 1930* (*Statistics of the Hungarian University Students, 1930*), Budapest 1931, pp. 20–21.

the old, traditional societies (the *Egyetemi Körök* – University Circles²) being not suitable to embody the spirit of the emerging new era, as well as the interests and views of right extremist students.

The first one was the *Turul Szövetség*³ (Turul Association) established in August 1919, only a few days after the fall of the communist dictatorship. In the same year, the second fraternal student association, the *Hungária Egyesület* (Hungária Society) was founded by Hungarian technicians at the Technological University (*Műegyetem*) in Budapest, after that the short-lived Christian-socialist *Centrum Szövetség* (Centrum Association) was called into existence in 1920. The next in line was the catholic and often legitimist (supporter of the Habsburg Dynasty) *Foederatio Emericana* in the next year, and the last one was the expressly legitimist *Szent István Bajtársi Szövetség* (Szent István Fraternal Association) formed in 1927. These formations had become the top student organizations at Hungarian universities, and though their organizational structure was based on the German model (*Burschenschaften*) and their ideological basis was very similar (the “Christian-national” idea, militarism, anti-Semitism and irredentism), their main features were different, so they were often hostile to each other.⁴

These officially politically neutral associations had an important place between the age-class societies (the Scouts or the specifically Hungarian *Levente* movement) and they were very close to the famous nationalist organizations of this period like the *Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület* (MOVE, Hungarian National Defence Force Association), the *Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* (ÉME, Association of Awakening Hungarians)⁵, the *Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti*

² Related to the traditional Hungarian student associations see Viczián, János, *Diákélet és diákegyesületek a budapesti egyetemeken 1914–1919* (Student Life and Student Associations at the Universities of Budapest 1914–1919), Budapest 2002.

³ The *turul* was a mythological bird (falcon or vulture) in the Hungarian legends which led the people in the Carpathian basin. According to another myth, the *turul*-bird played a role in the origin of the Árpád Dynasty, as well. Papp, Julien, “L’oiseau *turul*. Du totem des anciens Magyars aux héritages controversés de la Seconde Guerre mondiale”, in *Öt Kontinens*, 2009. 385–406.

⁴ Related to these fraternal associations in the recent Hungarian historiography see Ujváry, Gábor, “Egyetemi ifjúság és katolicizmus a neobarokk társadalomban. A Foederatio Emericánáról” (“University Youth and Catholicism in the Neo-baroque Society. About the Foederatio Emericana”), in Id., *A harmincharmadik nemzedék. Politika, kultúra és történettudomány a neobarokk társadalomban* (The thirty-third generation. Politics, Culture and Historical Science in the Neo-baroque Society), Budapest 2010, pp. 413–493.; Szécsényi, András, “A Turul Szövetség felépítése és szerepe a két világháború közötti ifjúsági mozgalomban” (“The organization and role of Turul Association in the Interwar Youth Movement”), in *Fejezetek a tegnap világából* (Chapters from the Yesterday’s World), ed. Gergely, Jenő, Budapest 2009, pp. 214–232.; Kerepeszki, Róbert, “A Turul Szövetség” (“The Turul Association”), in *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány, 1900–1948* (The Hungarian Rightist Legacy, 1900–1948), ed. Romsics, Ignác, Budapest 2009, pp. 341–376.

⁵ The Association of Awakening Hungarians was the most notorious rightist radical organization in the first decade of the Horthy era. According to some sources, the university students played an important role in the formation of this association, as well. See Kozma, Miklós, *Az összeomlás 1918–1919* (The Collapse 1918–1919), Budapest 1933, p. 69.

Szövetsége (MANSZ, National Association of the Hungarian Women), as well as the *Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége* (TESZ, Federation of Social Associations).⁶

Among these fraternal associations of the rightist radical Hungarian university students, the Turul achieved the greatest impact and played the most significant role. Its dominance was due to many reasons. First of all, the Turul was not restricted by only one institution of higher education, like the *Hungária* whose members were just the students of the Technological University in Budapest. Besides, because of its undenominationalism, the Turul stood opposite the *Emericana* where only Catholics might join. In contrast to legitimism, the members of Turul were “free electors”, a point of view arising from the significant and well established contemporary opinion, that the “liberalism of the Habsburg-policy” had great responsibility for the territorial losses of Hungary after the World War. This current was more popular among university students than the Habsburg friendship within the Szent István Association. In addition, the importance of Turul was increased by its great influence in the other university associations (the religious and relief organizations), because their leadership was in the hands of Turul-members. It follows from this that the Turul determined basically the public feeling at the universities and the life of youth.

However, initially only a relatively small proportion of the university students joined its sub-societies, organized separately at each faculty (for example, in the mid-1920s, app. 15% of the student body or some 1,400 undergraduates).⁷ The growth and expansion of Turul picked up after 1928, when the government of Count István Bethlen modified the anti-Semitic *numerus clausus* law. Already in the next year, the association had nearly 9,000 members among the university students, and its 48 sub-societies operated throughout the country.⁸ The number of members and sub-societies rose continuously in the 1930s (see the table), and according to some sources the Turul had more than 40,000 members. This apparently improbably high number was due to the membership of the graduates, who remained in the association (they were called “dominus”), the supporters and many university professors (named “patronus”

⁶ Related to the Interwar Hungarian social associations see Kerepeszki, Róbert, “A politikai és társadalmi élet határán. A Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége a Horthy-korszakban” (“On the Verge of the Political and Social Life. The Federation of Social Associations in the Horthy Era), in “...nem leleplezni, hanem megismerni és megérteni.” *Tanulmányok a 60 éves Romsics Ignác tiszteletére* (“...not to reveal, but to recognize and to understand.” *Studies in Honour of 60-year-old Ignác Romsics*), eds. Gebei, Sándor, Bertényi, Iván Jr., Rainer M., János, Eger 2011, pp. 373–388.

⁷ Molnár, Olga, *A főiskolai hallgatók szociális és gazdasági viszonyai Budapesten* (*The Social and Economic Conditions of the University Students in Budapest*), Budapest [1925].

⁸ Magyary, Zoltán, *Emlékirat az egyetemi ifjúság szociális gondozásának megszervezése tárgyában* (*Memorandum to the Organization of Social Care of the University Students*), Budapest 1929, p. 133.

and “magister” by the Turul), besides the regular students (named “daru” or “levente”).⁹

The number of Turul’s sub-societies, 1929–1943.¹⁰

Year	The number of sub-societies
1929	48
1930	54
1931	56
1932	68
1933	74
1934	78
1935	95
1936	104
1938	112
1943	165

It is necessary to mention that in the Turul’s 25-year history, there were some differences in time and space because of the conflict between its regional chapters¹¹ and its national centre in Budapest, as well as the generational gap between the Turul’s members of 1920s and the university students of 1930s. Besides, it is important to note that by joining a social association or a political party the new member usually identifies himself with the ideology, the social and political views of the organization. However, it was more complex set of motivations that guided membership in the Turul Association. It was recommended for the first-year students to join the Turul, especially for those of poor social background, because - following the Turul’s fundamental rules -, the association often provided its members in need with financial aid or loan, and its management helped them to obtain scholarships and accommodations in students’ hostels.

The ideology of Turul was called “fraternal idea”, which consisted of many components among which antisemitism was only one element.¹² The

⁹ Erdélyi, Ernő, *A mi utunk. A Turul Szövetség története, útja, célkitűzései* (Our Way. History, Way, Aims of the Turul Association), Pécs 1940. p. 16.

¹⁰ Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL, National Archives of Hungary), Documents of Turul Association, P 1364, Box 1. The Lists of the Officials and the Member Societies of the Turul Association (1936–1943)

¹¹ *A Turul Szövetség (...) Alapszabályzata* (Statutes of the Turul Association) Budapest 1927, pp. 5–20. The Turul’s sub-societies constituted regional chapters. At the end of 1930s, there were 10 chapters with the following centres: Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, Kecskemét, Szolnok, Miskolc, Gyula, Győr, Kaposvár.

¹² In the 1930s, the leadership of Turul published many ideological “guidelines” explaining the “fraternal idea” for the younger members. For example: *Bevezetés a bajtársi életbe* (Introduction to the Fraternal Life), Debrecen 1934; *A Turul világnézeti irányelvei és bajtársi útmutató* (Guide-

problem of land reform in the country, territorial revisionism (irredentism), the “Hungarian Imperial Idea”¹³, anti-communism – all this had important roles in this worldview besides hostility to legitimism. In the Turul’s view, the Habsburg era bore great “responsibility” in particular for the assimilation and the “expansion” of Jewry¹⁴ due to the facility with which these “newcomers” could occupy important positions in Hungarian public life and the middle class. So, the most significant part of the “fraternal idea” was the “protection” of the Hungarian “race” from the foreigners, especially the Jews, the Slavs and the Germans. The latter aspect of this ideological construction is most remarkable, because although many Turul members would later become admirer of Nazi Germany and join the Hungarian National Socialist parties, but the official leadership of the organization often issued pronouncements against Germans in Hungary. One of the Turul journals wrote in all sincerity: “our race (is) menaced by two dangers: the Jews and the Germans”, so in their view, both represented the same threat. Therefore, it is understandable that the Turul members happened to riot against German ethnic organizations (*Volksbildungsverein*, *Volksbund*) and their politicians (Jakab Bleyer, the former minister) or their university professors (Richard Huss), just like they did against Jewry.¹⁵

In spite of this, the most important element of the Turul ideology in terms of “racial defense” was anti-Semitism. The anti-Jewish feelings of the Hungarian university students can be dated back to the age of dualism. From this point of view, the most significant event of this period was the so-called “Cross-movement”. This happened in May 1900, when unknown perpetrators broke down the crosses from the coat of arms in the building of University of Budapest, which therefore had become the symbol of the movement. Jews were accused of the aggression and its damages, and an openly antisemitic atmosphere developed in the university, with a strong impact on many “Christian” students’ thinking and worldview. This event led to an ideological polarization, which was previously unknown to Hungarian university students, and the so-called “Jewish question” was constantly on the agenda in contemporary youth organizations. Although the

lines of the Turul Worldview and Fraternal Instructions), Budapest 1937. See also Kerepeszki, “A Turul Szövetség”, cit. pp. 354–369.

¹³ The “Hungarian Imperial Idea” evolved in the dualist era, when its first representatives desired the age of Árpád Dynasty or king Mátyás Hunyadi, and they wanted a great power role for Hungary. See in detail Bertényi, Iván Jr., “A magyar birodalmi gondolatról – Az I. világháború előtt” (“About the Hungarian Imperial Idea – Before the World War I.”), in *Kommentár*, No. 4 (2007), pp. 40–56.; Romsics, Ignác, “A magyar birodalmi gondolat” (“The Hungarian Imperial Idea”), in *Nem élhetek birodalom nélkül (I may not live without an Empire)*, eds. Gombár, Csaba, Volosin, Hédi, Budapest 2002, pp. 41–81.

¹⁴ Related to the Hungarian and European Jewry see Karády, Viktor, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era. A Sociohistorical outline*, New York-Budapest 2004.

¹⁵ MOL, Ministry for Home Affairs, Reserved Documents (K 149), no. 1942–7–6006. Report of the Police Office of Pécs about the regional German ethnic movements and the extreme-right parties. Pécs, September 5, 1942.; About the German ethnic organizations see Spannenberger, Norbert, *A magyarországi Volksbund. Berlin és Budapest között (The Volksbund of Hungary. Between Berlin and Budapest)*, Budapest 2005.

“Cross-movement” was short-lived, its aftermath is undeniable for long. Many of the leading politicians of the Horthy era began their public activity in this anti-Jewish action (for example, László Magasházy, Regent Horthy’s aide-de-camp and Nándor Bernolák, the Minister of Labour and Welfare of Bethlen-government, who proposed the racist paragraph of the *numerus clausus* law in 1920).¹⁶

The most dangerous enemies for Turul were the Jews and this evolved also from the widespread antisemitic conception that the Jews were responsible for the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 – as well as, by the way, the loss of the war (*Dolchschnitt* legend).¹⁷ Besides, in the 1920s, the policy of “racial defense” (due among others to Gyula Gömbös) and studies produced in the same vein by the founder of Hungarian eugenics, Lajos Méhely, made a powerful impression on the formation of the “fraternal idea”.¹⁸ So it is not surprising that the *numerus clausus* was one of the most important questions raised by the Turul, because this law affected the very area in which the association was operating, the Hungarian universities.

II. The *numerus clausus* and the student riots

The Hungarian scientific literature has shown that the history of Turul and the *numerus clausus* were inseparably intertwined. The beginning was that the right radical youth founded veritable security forces (so-called “university battalions”) besides the fraternal associations as early as August 1919.¹⁹ The membership of these two types of organization was almost the same, they complemented each other’s activity which resulted in the so-called “semester without Jews” in the second half of 1919. In these weeks, the university battalions set up “certifying committees” in the institutions of higher education. Their permission was necessary for enrolment, so they could use their quasi official competences against Jewish, leftist and all other students who were not sympathizing with the emerging new “Christian-national” system. Besides, members of Turul Association and university battalions were eager to organize

¹⁶ Szabó, Miklós, *Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldal radikalizmus története 1867–1918* (*The History of Neo-conservatism and Rightist Radicalism 1867–1918*), Budapest 2003, pp.184–213., 265–270.; Kornai, István, “Magyar ifjúsági mozgalmak 1849–1919” (Hungarian Youth Movements 1849–1919), in „*Werbőczy*” Évkönyv 1928 (“*Werbőczy*” Almanac 1928), ed. Lendvai, Béla. Budapest 1928, pp. 7–11.

¹⁷ Gyurgyák, János, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* (*The Jewish Question in Hungary*), Budapest 2001, pp. 102–109.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 387–397.

¹⁹ The university battalions were officially disbanded by the Bethlen-government in 1921. *Egyetemi zászlóaljok* (*University Battalions*), compiled and published by Dér, Vilmos, Budapest 1938.; Igaly, Béla, *Egy műegyetemi zászlóaljtag naplója 1919–1921* (*Diary of a Member of the Battalion at the Polytechnical University 1919–1921*), Budapest 1942.; Ladányi, Andor, *Az egyetemi ifjúság az ellenforradalom első éveiben 1919–1921* (*The University Students in the First Years of Counterrevolution 1919–1921*), Budapest 1979, pp. 73–93.

demonstrations against Jews and busy to beat up Jewish students whenever there was an occasion at the universities during 1919/20.²⁰ With these actions, they wanted to exert pressure on the political elite to legalise an anti-Jewish paragraph in the new admission system of universities.

Initially, after the adoption of *numerus clausus*, the Turul Association and the battalions did their bit in making the law observed, because they thought that the university leadership had not taken it rigorously enough. On October 14, 1920, Jenő Farkass, the leader of Turul wrote an extensive editorial in the *Szózat*, the newspaper of “racial defenders”. According to him and the “Christian-national” youth, the *numerus clausus* had not been applied consistently, and demanded that the right radical students should control again university enrolments.²¹ Even on the same day, Sándor Tőrös, one of the founders of Turul, led a delegation to István Haller, the Minister of Religion and Public Instruction to present him directly the views of the organizations. Then, the Turul members wanted the *numerus clausus* to be extended to all higher educational institution in the country. Haller held justifiable the demands of the youth, and promised to take measures for their implementation.²² Although atrocities of “racial defence” occurred in the universities during the first half of 1920s, still student life continued more peacefully afterwards.

However, there was an increase in the mid-1920s of antisemitic turbulences in higher education was, because the government of Count István Bethlen wanted to modify the *numerus clausus*. This was mainly due to international protests (initiated especially by the British journalist, Lucien Wolf) against the original law in the League of Nations²³, but also to the fact that the legislation did not really work in its original form, and it certainly did not help children of the “Christian” middle class to finding employment.

Of course, after the government revealed its plans, the Turul protested immediately against the amendment. In February 1928, when the Hungarian Parliament started to discuss the new *numerus clausus* law without the antisemitic paragraph, the sub-societies of Turul organized demonstrations in the universities for the observance of the original law, therefore, the institutions had to be closed for several days. The incidents resumed seriously in October 1928, when the

²⁰ “A főiskolai ifjúság tüntetése” (“The Demonstration of University Youth”), in *Nemzeti Újság* (National Journal), March 3, 1920.

²¹ Farkass, Jenő, “Az egyetemi kérdés” (“The University Question”), in *Szózat*, October 14, 1920.

²² “Haller miniszter teljesítette a főiskolai ifjúság kívánalmait” (“Minister Haller Fulfilled the Requirements of University Youth”), in *Szózat*, October 15, 1920.

²³ For example, in 1923, Lucien Wolf expressly declared in one of his reports to the Directors of the Jewish Colonization Association that the *numerus clausus* in Hungary had an impact on the surrounding countries, and it strengthened antisemitic attitudes in Eastern and Central Europe. Wolf, Lucien, *Russo-Jewish Refugees in Eastern Europe. Report on the Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the High Commissioner for Russian Refugees of the League of Nations*, London 1923, pp. 15–16.; see also Mazower, Mark, “Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe”, in *Daedalus*, Vol. 126, No. 2 (1997), pp. 47–63.

modified Act entered into force.²⁴ Jewish students were checked and beaten by Turul members who almost every day demonstrated against the Bethlen government. Their leader, György Bánsághy even called on the Minister of Religion and Public Education, Count Kuno Klebelsberg to resign, because he was the one to have drafted the new legislation, and the emotions often broke out from the universities to the streets. The most interesting aspect of these demonstrations was that according to the Turul's view, the proportion of Jewish students was much higher in some faculties (especially in provincial universities), as listed in the official statistics. The Turulist university students made namely their own counting of the number of their Jewish classmates. Although members of the association considered the *numerus clausus* extremely important, but they thought that the law was a mistake because it did not concern baptized Jews, so by including them too, the Turul tried to compile relevant data of its own.²⁵

There is no doubt that the amendment of the *numerus clausus* law opened a new era in the life of Turul. After 1928, the antisemitic student demonstrations²⁶ and brawls became inseparably from its everyday activities, the intensity of which being amplified by the existential hopelessness deepening because of the Great Depression in the meantime. Anti-Jewish actions and incidents were staged thus in the same way in every university town (Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs, and Szeged). At the beginning of the academic year, the "Christian" students prevented the Jews to enter in university buildings or the classrooms. They organized demonstrations in the streets, and held great assemblies where they accepted memorandums to demand the restoration of the original *numerus clausus* scheme or the aggravation of anti-Jewish restrictions, going as far as the *numerus nullus* (total admission ban for Jews) and - in the end of 1930s²⁷ - even the stigmatisation of their Jewish classmates with yellow stars. During the incidents, the Jewish students were systematically aggressed in a well organised way: from their own faculty, the Turul members went to an other university building to act. For example, the Turulist law students "visited" the Faculty of Arts and attacked Jews there, so that they could not be recognized as aggressors. A most serious aspect of these attacks was that Jewish women were similarly assaulted than men. However, the antisemitic student demonstrations were motivated not exclusively by demands relating to the *numerus clausus*, but also due public appearances of Jewish personalities, like for example in 1937, after the first performance of the

²⁴ "Hungary Closes 4 Colleges in Riots", in *New York Times*, October 24, 1928.

²⁵ Kerepeszki, Róbert, "A *numerus clausus* 1928. évi módosításának hatása Debrecenben" ("The Effect of 1928 Amendment of *numerus clausus* in Debrecen"), in *Múltunk*, No. 4 (2005), pp. 42–75.

²⁶ The international scientific literature has also reported about some aspects of the Hungarian student riots. For example Klein, Bernard, "Anti-Jewish Demonstrations in Hungarian Universities, 1932–1936. István Bethlen vs. Gyula Gömbös", in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1982), pp. 113–124.

²⁷ MOL, K 149, No. 1933–4–9121. Report of the Police Office about the Student Movements. Szeged, December 4, 1933.; Ladányi, Andor, "A *numerus clausus*tól a *numerus nullus*ig" ("From the *numerus clausus* to the *Numerus Nullus*"), in *Múlt és Jövő*, No. 1. (2006), pp. 56–74.

Lovagias ügy movie (*Chivalrous Case*) starring the famous Jewish actor, Gyula Kabos.²⁸

Of course, the universities were frequently closed down for shorter or longer time due to these incidents, so the classes had to be cancelled. The university councils and the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction promised harsh penalties to participants and organizers of demonstrations. However, the official investigations of the authorities ended with few results, and when they were successful, so the verdicts were usually mild (amounting sometimes merely to the exclusion of influential participants from the university for one or two semesters).²⁹

Besides the restoration or the aggravation of *numerus clausus*, the Turul's other important and permanent claim was the abolition of so-called "nostrification" (naturalization and validation of diplomas obtained abroad). This was resorted to by Jewish students who had completed their studies at a foreign university because of the Act in force. However, when these young Jewish graduates returned home and succeeded to have their diplomas validated, these academic credentials turned out to be more competitive in the labour market than the Hungarian ones. The Turul press did not fail to inveigh against them and to suggest that the Jews had come off well with the *numerus clausus*.³⁰

It is necessary to mention that the role of Turul leaders in such student demonstrations was not always entirely clear, because it happened several times that they forbade members to participate in the incidents.³¹ The foreign press has also reported about such occurrences.: "On November 21, 1935, anti-Jewish students at the Budapest University demonstrated and 32 of them were arrested and fined. The Ministers of Education and of the Interior issued statements deploring the incident. The president of the Turul Academic Union, whose members were reported to have taken part in the outbreak, declared that irresponsible elements had made use of the group's name to mobilize students. He

²⁸ Szécsényi, András, "Lovagias ügy. Epizód az antiszemitizmus történetéhez az 1930-as években" ("Chivalrous Case. Episode in the history of Anti-Semitism in 1930s"), in *Múlt és Jövő*, No. 1. (2009), pp. 133–138.

²⁹ Kerepeszki, Róbert, "A zsidókérdés és az egyetemi bajtársi egyesületek a két világháború közötti Magyarországon" ("The Jewish Question and the University Fraternal Associations in Interwar Hungary"), in *Tradíció és modernizáció Európában a XVIII–XX. században (Tradition and Modernization in Europe in the 18th–20th Century)*, eds. Bodnár, Erzsébet, Gábor, Demeter, Budapest 2008, pp. 224–237.

³⁰ "A nosztrifikánsok" ("The Nostrificants"), in *Új Vetés*, April 18, 1933.

³¹ For example the leader of Turul in Debrecen, Nándor Liszt who published his command in the local press in 1932. This is especially interesting in light of Liszt's membership in the local organization of Awakening Hungarians. A year later, in autumn 1933, the Turul leadership in Debrecen repeated this order. At the same time, according to a police report, the fraternal associations in Szeged also wanted to keep away their members from the demonstrations. MOL, Hungarian News Agency, "Lithographic" Daily News, K 428, Series A, November 15, 1933.; MOL, K 149, No. 1933–4–9121. Report of the Police Office about the Student Movements. Szeged, November 29, 1933. "A Turul vezérség határozata" ("The Order of the Turul leadership"), in *Debreceni Újság Hajdúföld*, November 18, 1932.

declared that the Turul Union was against illegal measures.”³² Since some of the Turulist students noticeably did not obey the orders, it seemed as if the protests had slipped out of Turul leaders’ control. The archival sources indicate that the Hungarian National Socialist (so-called “Arrow-Cross”) parties often provoked these incidents, and many Turul members joined these movements of the extreme right.³³ However, the majority of the Turul leadership actually opposed the National Socialists and their influence.³⁴

The issues raised in the university students’ demonstrations clearly showed that the *numerus clausus* had played a crucial role in the thinking of the right radical youth in inter-war Hungary. During the era, a veritable “cult” was formed around the law, not least because *numerus clausus* had also appeared in the Turul’s literature. The first editor of the association’s central journal (*Bajtárs*), István Eszterhás published his book titled *A gébic. Regény a numerusz klauzus mellől* (*The Shrike. Novel from beside the numerus clausus*) in 1928, in the year of the Act’s amendment. The novel has not much literary value, and, curiously enough, that the Act was mentioned only once in the story which is about the rivalry of a “Christian comrade” and a Jewish young man for a job, and eventually it almost ends up in tragedy. The author only alluded to the antisemitic student movements, and he primarily wanted to present the fraternal way of life and its difficulties (especially the existential problems involved). The readers of Eszterhas’s novel were mostly Turul members, but it is assumed that his primary intention was to explain the motivations of fraternal associations to the larger public and to influence thus political decision makers. It is indeed probably not just a coincidence that the book was published in the year of amendment. Besides the novel, the “cult” of the *numerus clausus* is identifiable in the way the Act was labeled in the Turul press and in its memorandums, because it was considered the “fairest of Hungarian laws”³⁵ or the “law of the Hungarian youth”, which the rightist radical association always wanted to protect and enforce, as well as they struggled for its “consistent implementation”.³⁶

The factors described in connection with the *numerus clausus* and the demonstrations provide important cues to understand what the Act meant to the right radical student movements as a representative issue of sorts related to the “spirit of the age”.

³² Schneiderman, Harry, “Review of the Year 5696”, in *The American Jewish Year Book 5697. September 17, 1936 to September 5, 1937*, ed. Schneiderman, Harry. Vol. 38. (1936–1937), Philadelphia 1936. p. 281.

³³ MOL, K 149, No. 1933–7–2590. Police report about the activity of National Socialist Hungarian Labour Party. Debrecen, June 25, 1932.; MOL, K 149, No. 1937–6–4007. Report of Lord Lieutenant. Sopron, January 8, 1937.

³⁴ MOL, P 1364, Box 1. Minutes of Turul National Assembly. Miskolc, November 5–9, 1936.

³⁵ “Harc a magyar értelmiség védelmére” (“Fight to protect the Hungarian intelligentsia”, in *Bajtárs*, December, 1932. pp. 11–19.

³⁶ MOL, P 1364, Box 1. Minutes of Turul National Assembly. Miskolc, November 5–9, 1936.

III. International contexts

As we mentioned above, in spite of conflicts among them, some common features united the Hungarian fraternal associations and one of them was the impact of foreign patterns in their organizational structure. For the Turul the most important models were the traditional German student associations, the *Burschenschaften*, but we it referred to other German parallels as well. Similarities can be observed between the Hungarian fraternal associations and the university organization of the German Nazi party (*Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, NSDStB), especially due to their strongly militarist and antisemitic character.³⁷ However, resemblances can also be discovered with other European youth organizations, for example the French *Jeunesses Patriotes* (Patriotic Youth), the Spanish *Sindicato Español Universitario* (Spanish University Association) or the Romanian *Asociația Studenților Creștini* (Association of the Christian College Students). The latter served as one of the important antecedents for and created a basis of the extreme right movement, the *Garda de fier* (Iron Guard).³⁸

In spite of the model role of the *Burschenschaften*, the Turul and its sub-societies were primarily not looking for a relationship with the German student organizations, but rather with the university “groups” of the Italian Fascist Party, the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* (GUF). This is by no means a coincidence, since the foreign policy of the so-called “Weimar Republic” was more peaceful and oriented towards Western democracies than in Italy, which was directly dissatisfied with the peace treaties of Versailles. Thus the fascist state became the primary partner for the Hungarian political elites and, consequently, for the Hungarian rightist student movement, as well. This was especially true after 1927, when closer political relations started to develop between the two countries following Prime Minister Bethlen’s negotiations in Rome. The rapprochement was mutual, which was evidenced by the fact that the GUF had an official

³⁷ The NSDStB was founded in 1926, and its first leader was Wilhelm Tempel. Its importance increased after 1931 when Baldur von Schirach was appointed Reich Youth Leader of the organization. About the NSDStB see Grüttner, Michael, “German Universities Under the Swastika”, in *Universities Under Dictatorship*, eds. Connelly, John, Grüttner, Michael, Pennsylvania 2005, pp. 75–112.

³⁸ In relation with these associations see Soucy, Robert, “Centrist Fascism. The Jeunesses Patriotes”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1981), pp. 349–368.; Passmore, Kevin, *From Liberalism to Fascism. The Right in a French Province 1928–1939*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 152–153, 213–226.; Kalman, Samuel, *The Extreme Right in Interwar France. The Faisceau and the Croix de Feu*, Aldershot 2008, pp. 145–184.; Carnicer, Miguel Ángel Ruiz, “Spanish Universities Under Franco”, in *Universities Under Dictatorship*, eds. Connelly, John, Grüttner, Michael, Pennsylvania 2005, pp. 113–138.; Vago, Raphael, “Eastern Europe”, in *The Social Basis of European Fascist Movements*, ed. Mühlberger, Detlef, Kent 1987, 281–319.; Ioanid, Radu, “Nicolae Iorga and Fascism”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1992), pp. 467–492.

representative in Hungary, and the leaders of Italian and Hungarian student associations often visited each other.³⁹

Besides ideological and formal resemblances⁴⁰, some differences are also worth to be mentioned between the Turul and the Italian GUF, as well as the German NSDStB. Primarily, in the Italian and German totalitarian dictatorships, the dominant Fascist and Nazi state parties established university student associations of their own, which helped to maintain their power over the youth and the higher education. However, Turul had never become a part or a “satellite” of any political party, although, similarly to the totalitarian systems, the leaders of the Hungarian rightist establishment considered it important to win the youth and control its ideological education.⁴¹

It is important to emphasize that antisemitic student demonstrations in universities were not only Hungarian events in the inter-war years. The contemporary press reported about such atrocities in Eastern and Central Europe almost every month. For example, in December 1929, the *New York Times* published a long report and analysis about the anti-Semite incidents in the university of Prague, connecting the events with the general dissatisfaction.⁴² The main issue of other European demonstrations was often same as in Hungary, notably the demand for *numerus clausus* against Jews. The atmosphere of these days was terrible and awesome for Jewish students in several countries. Let’s see how relevant Polish incidents were described in a Canadian newspaper in November, 1935: “Hardly a day passes without reports of Jews being assaulted in the streets, Jewish students being attacked in their universities and Jewish shop windows smashed. On top of this violence the Jewish population is also confronted with a rapidly growing anti-Jewish boycott. (...) Refusal of the authorities to grant the anti-Semites’ demand that Jewish students in the Warsaw Polytechnique Institute be segregated led to a riot during which nationalist students threw Jewish students out of windows. (...) More than a score of the anti-Semites were arrested.”⁴³

It can also be highlighted that the Hungarian demonstrations had also external influences, which caused problems for the government working on the revision of Trianon and trying to gain the sympathy of foreign powers. Many politicians (especially the liberal, social-democratic and conservative members of the opposition) also pointed out in Parliament that these events severely damaged

³⁹ For example, in December 1929, Mussolini received the Turul leaders in audience. “Mussolini’s Message”, in *Bajtárs*, January, 1930, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁰ An outward similarity consisted in clothing (for example, wearing the service cap), which was completely taken over from Germany. In the 1930s, the Turul leaders replaced the German service cap for the Hungarian “Bocskai cap” emphasizing their organization’s national character.

⁴¹ *Fascism*, ed. Griffin, Roger, Oxford 1995, pp. 61–62, 67–68, 148–149.

⁴² “Anti-Semitism Laid to Poultry Abroad”, in *New York Times*, December 22, 1929.

⁴³ “Polish Jewry Fears Pogroms as Anti-Semite Riots Sweep Country”, in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, November 22, 1935.

the reputation of Hungary abroad.⁴⁴ However, in spite of their complaints, these incidents of “racial defence” staged by right radical students repeated themselves almost every year, even after the introduction of the first properly anti-Jewish laws from 1938 onwards. Antisemitic student demonstrations were specific phenomena of the era.

IV. Summary

It is not to be disputed that Turul members kept antisemitism alive in contemporary public opinion with their demonstrations for the *numerus clausus* and other anti-Jewish restrictions. These incidents affected not only the general atmosphere at universities, but the whole public life, too, and this was the reason why the leftist political establishment after 1945 tried to present the Turul as a properly “fascist” and national socialist organization. Obviously enough antisemitism was an essential ingredient of the dominant contemporary public discourse, a leading idea of the so-called “Christian-national” establishment taking power after the revolutions in 1918/19. This anti-Jewish mood was strengthened by the negative impact of the Great Depression, and almost every significant protagonist of the ‘Christian Course’ shared this view with more or less radicalism and aggressiveness. The Turul remained relentless and consistent as to this question.⁴⁵

Though Turul cannot be regarded as a “satellite” of political parties or movements, however, it is not to be disputed that Turul members actually joined several political parties of the right or the extreme right. As a social and university organization, the Turul tried nevertheless to maintain its independence, consequently it often got involved into ambivalent connections with rightist political parties. From this point of view, the most interesting is its opposition to the Hungarian Arrow-Cross movements. This also proves the anti-German bias of the Turul. The association rejected the Arrow-Cross ideology owing to the latter’s obedient relations with Nazi Germany.

⁴⁴ The importance of this problem for the Hungarian political elite is clear from the article published in the semi-official newspaper of Hungarian government about the antisemitic student demonstrations. Its apologetic tone and content show how the Hungarian governing elite tried to minimize the effects and consequences before the international public opinion. “Zu den antisemitischen Studentenkrallen”, in *Pester Lloyd*, November 23, 1932.

⁴⁵ It is important to emphasize this because of the connections with Gyula Gömbös, who took a position of leadership in the early period of racist movements in the country, in the 1920s, but when he became the prime minister of Hungary in 1932, he publicly “revised” his point of view. Dividing Jews into two groups, he thought that there were also “good” Jews, who accepted the community of fate with the nation. The Turul did not want to categorize Jews in this way, thus a significant part of its membership withdrew its support from Gömbös, who proclaimed in vain that he was the “protagonist of the same world view”. This is how it could occur that during the demonstrations in 1933, the students hollered slogans against Prime Minister Gömbös as well. MOL, K 149, No. 1933–4–9121. Police Report to the Ministry for Home Affairs about the youth movements. Budapest, November 27, 1933.

The association's unquestionable purpose and function was to make the young intelligentsia loyal to the "Christian-national" Horthy Regime and form their worldview in conformity with its very militarist, irredentist and racist ideology. Its political orientation was defined and formed by some young people, who were not qualified political ideologists, but the social and political circumstances of Hungary embittered them after their military experiences in the World War I, so as to develop a need for 'a new guiding spirit' in the country. The Turul Association was formed immediately after the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and officially dissolved in 1945. It was suppressed by the Interim National Government together with many former right extremist political parties and associations. It is the "irony of the fate" that the association was motivated by the reactions to the lost World War in 1919, and disappeared from the Hungarian society and universities by another lost World War in 1945. The Turul subsisted throughout the Horthy era and epitomized in a way the ruling public mentality and political atmosphere of Interwar Hungary.

Part II.

Around the numerus clausus in Central-Europe

Katalin Fenyves

A successful battle for symbolic space: the *numerus clausus* law in Hungary

Hungary was the first country after WWI to curtail the civil rights of Jews by introducing a quota on their number in higher education. Although, primarily directed against the Jews, these restrictions also concerned those women who wanted to enter higher education, as women were not mentioned explicitly by the law, yet their applications could be denied solely at the discretion of the boards of the universities. Consequently, in the beginning of the 1920s a severe *numerus nullus* policy prevailed at the Budapest medical school and the proportion of female students plummeted in several other institutions, as well. In this paper, I will argue that the *numerus clausus* law and other regulations restricting the access of Jews and women to higher education had a highly symbolic value in as much as they were to exclude the epitomical “Other”, that is, both Jew and Woman, from public spaces. Even if, in the medium term their efficiency may be a matter of debate, in the long term, I would argue, their success is beyond doubt. It is due to these measures that Hungary was able to establish the hegemony of Christian nationalist males and achieve a certain degree of modernization without emancipation in the interwar period.

Beliefs and fears concerning Jews and women at the turn of the century

For many conservatives and even numerous liberals the physical, mental and moral inferiority of Jews and women became a shared assumption in fin-de-siècle Europe, especially in German speaking areas and in Hungary. (Volkov 2006, Planert 1998) Bringing together wide-spread ideas about femininity and Jewishness, Otto Weininger, a young Viennese Jew succeeded in creating an “associative merger” in his book, *Geschlecht und Charakter* published in 1903. For him, the struggle against women and the struggle against Jews were two sides of the same coin. In the first, larger part of his book based on his doctoral thesis, he brought together and surveyed contemporary antifeminist theories, including medical and psychological ones. Only in the last three chapters, which was not part of his original doctoral thesis, did he make an associative link between the inferiority of the two eternal “Others”, Jew and Woman. According to the vision of Weininger and his followers, both “Jew” and “Woman” show a lack of creativity, of intellectual and physical strength. As both women and Jews were generally viewed as pacifists and cosmopolites, Weininger characterized them as selfish and unable to comprehend such transcendental ideas as “state” and “nation”. Hence, according to Weininger, Jews and women must also lack any

loyalty towards the nation. These pseudo-scientifically underpinned beliefs were perfectly able to produce new sexist and anti-Semitic ideas and reinforce age old fears. After 1867, in Hungary under a liberal government, similar beliefs were the basis of both a “glass ceiling” for Jews who wished to work in public offices, and for women who were completely excluded from higher education until 1895.

The visibility of Jews and women in the Hungarian dualist era

The fast growing visibility of Jews and women, especially in places like higher education where they were never expected to appear, only made sexist and anti-Semitic beliefs and fears worsen around the turn of the century. The number of Jews was high in urban spaces, especially in bigger towns and cities – above all in Budapest – and they were often highly concentrated in specific neighborhoods. While the urban population of Hungary made up only 20.4 percent of the overall population in 1910, more than the half, 50.9 percent of Jews (of the total number of 911,227) lived in urban centers, making up 1/8 of the total number of city population. (Kovács 1922) At the same time, Jews started to appear in such segments of society, which were preserved exclusively for Christian men and from where Jews had been completely absent before, like in such liberal professions as lawyers, scientists, journalists, comedians and artists, and even in politics, in the Lower and Upper House.

For the second half of the 19th century, women, similarly to Jews, suddenly seemed to be everywhere. In the years following the Compromise of 1867, due to waves of emigration, the proportion of women compared to the number of men increased first to 1020/1000 in the 1870s, then to 1035/1000 in the 1880s. Even though at the beginning of the 20th century this proportion became more balanced (1005/1000 in 1900, 1007/1000 in 1910), the war propelled the number of women to 1062/1000 by 1920. (Polónyi 2002, 31) From the late 19th century the marriage rate decreased and the legalization of divorce in 1895 also contributed to the growing percentage of unmarried women resulting in that by 1900 more than one third of Hungarian women over the age of 14 were unmarried. Since most of these women had to take care of themselves on their own, between 1890 and 1900, the number of female earners sharply increased and made up 14 percent of the total number of wage earners. (Kéri 2008) Hence, women, like Jews did, appeared in social spaces, from where they were completely excluded before. They showed up in coffee houses, refusing to be relegated to the back rooms and sitting wherever they pleased, in the streets, demonstrating for their civil rights or simply running errands, on the benches of universities and finally in such professions as teachers, medical doctors, journalists and artists. While women stood out literally because of their attires of fashionable huge hats and long skirts, acculturated Jews, even though they were dressed like everyone else, were recognizable by their German sounding or conspicuously Magyarized [Hungarianized] names.

From marginalized groups to cultural threats

Having been legally emancipated in the year of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Hungarian Jews underwent a tremendous geographical and social mobility. Although Jews were hampered by a glass ceiling and were underrepresented in some sectors of public service, they occupied very important economical positions as bankers, industrialists, landowners and leasers of landed estates. The medical profession was one of those associated with Jews for centuries. In Hungary the first Jewish medical doctor having graduated in higher education started his career in 1782 and was followed by several others. For the beginning of the 20th century Jewish doctors constituted nearly half of the whole medical body. Common people had to get used to dealing with Jewish doctors as well as with Jewish lawyers, whether they liked it or not. Even though Jewish lawyers had to fight bitterly to obtain their license even in the 1860s, for the end of the century Jewish lawyers made up around 34% of the professional body. From 1900, there was an ongoing discussion concerning the introduction of a *numerus clausus* for lawyers, especially for those “mercantile” lawyers, who were considered to be all Jewish by the public. (N. Szegvári 1988, 70) Legal experts of Jewish descent played a major role in the codification of criminal and civil law and in the creation of Hungarian legal language, while, more generally, Jewish professionals, including medical doctors, economists, philosophers, all of whom had grown up in bilingual family and were often active translators, participated in the elaboration of the language of different sciences and in economic or industrial activities.

The visibility of Jews was even higher in different sectors of culture, such as the press, publishing, theatre, cinema or the arts, even though the journalists, editors, actors, directors, painters and sculptors of Jewish descent who participated in the great cultural buzz of the turn of the century did not see themselves as Jews, but as true Hungarians. A number of them joined contemporary artistic and intellectual trends of the time and strived to contribute to the renewal of Hungarian art and intellectual life considered largely worn out by the late 19th century. Although not all Jewish artists and intellectuals advocated modernity, since as everywhere else in Europe the members of the modernist avant-garde were only a handful, having lined up behind Endre Ady, the most talented and at the same time the most controversial non-Jewish Hungarian poet of his time, this small group of modernist Jewish artists and intellectuals found themselves at the forefront of the quarrel between Ancients and Moderns at the turn of the century. The first modernist literary weekly, *A Hét* (The Week) was founded in 1890 by József Kiss, a Jewish-Hungarian poet, who belonged to a generation for which religion was still important, and who exhibited a double, Jewish and Hungarian identity, yet his journal was far from being denominational. For about 20 years *A Hét* was home to all modernist literary figures and ideas, regardless of their religion producing an almost equal proportion of Jewish and non-Jewish contribution (though with a slight Jewish dominance). The younger

editors of *A Hét* decided to publish a new literary review even more up to date, which was to become the flagship of Hungarian literary modernism. This review was an answer to contemporary ideological attempts trying to situate Hungary and to anchor its national identity in a mythical Orient. In 1908, the editors of this new review proclaimed their orientation by calling their monthly literary review *Nyugat* (Occident), hence the journal was born, the very name of which has become a synonym for quality in the Hungarian literary canon.

Similar stories could be told about Hungarian modernity in the fine arts, where *plein air* and later expressionist and cubist painting was taken up and represented by numerous Jewish as well as non-Jewish Hungarian artists. There is no need to emphasize the importance of Jewish owners, actors and directors in cinema and theatre, or in publishing and music. What is most important, however, to stress again is that - except the Zionists, a marginal minority organized in Hungary from 1897 -, not even religious Jews participating in Hungarian cultural life identified themselves as ethnic Jews. At the turn of the century there was no separate Hungarian speaking Jewish subculture, and until the creation of the first Zionist review *Múlt és Jövő* (Past and Future) in 1911 there was no publicly articulated intention to create a specific modern Jewish culture in Hungary either. Even denominational publications emphasized in general the strong Hungarian identification of their contributors and of the Hungarian Jews and regarded themselves programmatically as Jewish Hungarians. It is another question, beyond the scope of this study, how much the Jewish members of the public, especially collectors and patrons of art developed their cultural affinities according to what they considered to be proper for members of the "*Besitz- und Bildungsbürgertum*", that is, how much their artistic tastes were meant to be proofs of their cultural assimilation.

All efforts of Hungarian Jews for proving the success of their assimilation failed considering the reactions of some of their contemporaries and the works of a small number of present scholars (Gyurgyák 2001, 18, Kerekes 2005, 83–94). From as early as 1911, the "Jewish" press in general, as well as the *Nyugat* in particular, was under constant ferocious attack because of their supposed use of "impure" Hungarian language. According to the adversaries of Jewish press, including János Horváth, the most distinguished literary critic of the time, the collaborators of these journals and especially *Nyugat* mutilated the Hungarian language with their style "reeking of asphalt". In the eyes of their opponents, modern literature, theatres and movies were hotbeds of immorality, extreme eroticism and decadence, hence completely alien to Hungarian soul, that is, Jewish. It goes without saying that conservative and nationalist artistic productions, often verging on or being plain kitsch especially in popular culture, were just as often created and financed by Jewish owned institutions and consumed by a large Jewish public as by non-Jewish Hungarians. However, non-Jewish Hungarian public opinion was unwavering about Jews in culture as for instance the painter Aladár Körösfői Kriesch, leader of the Hungarian followers of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites stated in 1917: "In culture Jews do not create,

only convey diverse foreign ideas.” A women writer and philosopher, Emma Ritoók, erstwhile friend to Georg Lukács, Béla Balázs and Ernst Bloch, also said on the same occasion, answering an inquiry about the “Jewish question” for the sociological review *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century): “The language of Jews is un-Hungarian, and they write about characters that have nothing in common with Hungarians.” (Kerekes 2005,180.) Even if we don’t consider these opinions as proofs of a “failed assimilation”, they still indicate a misunderstanding. Intellectuals of Jewish descent, who were mostly rather secular and often converts, strived to embrace modern culture, a modern lifestyle, and modern ethics, including free love, planned childbirth and divorce, yet by doing so they only managed to move away from the conservative mainstream of Hungarian society. Their influence, however, in all sectors of cultural life was indubitable and their presence was perceived as threatening often due to their sheer number in some specific spaces long before the revolutions following WWI.

Women, by contrast to Jews, did not have all civil rights before 1918 in Hungary. Even though women constituted – as we have seen – a steady, albeit varyingly strong majority in the population from the very beginning of the dualist era, they were marginalized in public life. Many women had to work out of necessity. Nearly two-third of economically active women were unmarried, yet even as members of the labor force they were often assigned to indoor occupations only, most of them working as domestic help, hence remaining invisible in public life. From the 1880s women started to work in the food and chemical industries and in civil services as well and the number of women typists, post office clerks, switchboard operators, secretaries and shop clerks started to rapidly increase due to the generalization of primary and lower secondary education and to technical development. In 1896 the first girls’ gymnasium was opened in Budapest following such examples as that of Prague (1890), Vienna (1892) or Berlin (1894), only a year after women were granted access to higher education. It is significant that even this was carried out only by a ministerial decree, because Gyula Wlassics, the liberal Minister of Education at that time, did not want to take political risks by bringing the question before the two Houses of Parliament. However, women’s access to higher education was limited and controlled in so far as they could only study at faculties of philosophy and in medical schools and - unlike male applicants -, women’s applications were evaluated by an individual process of admission on a case by case basis. Most significantly, however, they were excluded from legal studies, that is, from the habitual path to public services and political career. Less than a decade later, female applicants were also bound to satisfy criteria of excellence in order to be admissible, while in the case of their male colleagues the simple fact of having graduated from secondary school sufficed. This new admission policy meant that from 1904 girls, who according to public and academic opinion were only studying out of whim and for following the newest trends, had to have excellent grades if they wanted to be admitted to any higher educational institution.

The question of women in higher education surfaced nonetheless in the debates of the Hungarian Parliament during the parliamentary session of 1906-1907. Facing the problem of academic overproduction, representatives expressed their serious concerns about witnessing the “endemic stream” of women entering Hungarian universities. Representative Károly Kmety, a professor of law, went even as far as to call them “female monsters”, but since his speech was immediately picked up by the press, he had to correct his blunder by explaining that he “only” referred to feminists. At the time of representative Kmety’s infamous speech, the number of female students in higher education was only 200 and their proportion less than 2 percent. (N. Szegvári 1988, 71-72) Nevertheless, the number of female university students started to increase steadily and on the eve of WWI, their proportion reached 4.5 percent, lagging a mere half percent behind the proportion of women in higher education in Germany and about a more substantial 2.5 percent behind the Austrian figure. (Király 2009, Freidenreich 2002)

When professor Kmety raged against “female monsters” and subsequently tried to excuse himself by restraining the scope of his allegations to the feminists, either unknowingly or knowingly he gave a good example of what I called above “associative merger”. I would argue that when he expressed his disgust with feminists, he was very likely to think of Jews. The first feminist organization in Hungary was the *Feministák egyesülete* (Association of Feminists), founded in 1904. Its leaders and most prominent members were indeed Jews, or rather women of Jewish descent, but they considered this biographical fact just as unimportant as did other Jewish representatives of literary and artistic modernity. The main concern of these women was to campaign for women suffrage and to advise and help women in all kind of matters. Even though they tried to keep their independence in party politics, they were close to those circles, which later in 1914 organized the Bourgeois Radical Party denounced only four years later based on allegations of having served Jewish interests. According to Susan Zimmermann, the only monographer of the history of Hungarian women’s movement, their organization followed a twofold pattern. She characterized Hungarian feminists and women in the Social Democratic Party as “individualistic modernists”, while members of conservative organizations as “hierarchical integrationists”, because they accepted traditional gender differences. The primary aim of Hungarian feminists was to fight for the legal and social (for the Socialists: the social and legal) emancipation of women, whereas the objective of the conservatives was to tend to womanly issues, that is, social, occupational and educational, from a perspective of difference, and represent womanly interests, while remaining within the traditional “maternal framework”.

While the most important conservative women’s organizations had a strong Christian background as well as a strong nationalistic orientation, Hungarian feminists and women socialists were still associated with Jews partly because of their individualism, their modernism, their internationalism and later their pacifism and partly because, as we have seen, feminists and women socialist

were often of Jewish descent. Similarly to them, female students and even girls with secondary education were also tended to be from Jewish origin. Far from being a specific Hungarian phenomenon, however, this development was common in the Central European region.

“Recent scholars have attributed the overrepresentation of Jewish women in the student body to a variety of factors, both socioeconomic and cultural... A high proportion of Central European Jews belonged to the “well-situated” middle class, which could afford the luxury of educating their daughters, as well as their sons. Claudia Huerkamp hypothesizes that a lower Jewish birthrate that had begun in the late nineteenth century resulted in fewer sons to educate and therefore more money to spend on the education of daughters.” (Freidenreich 2002, 17)

Andrea Pető goes even further by claiming that at the turn of the century first born daughters of Hungarian Jewish families were educated as if they were sons. (Pető 2002, 77-87) Paradoxically, as research in Jewish social history from Jacob Katz to Shaul Stampfer and Iris Parush has shown, even in religious families Jewish girls and women were less secluded as their Christian peers or their male relatives. In the 18th and 19th century, the more religious a Jewish family was, the less its men mingled with Christians and young Jewish girls and women of all ages were more likely to acquire secular knowledge, learn the local languages, read European literature than their fathers, brothers or husbands. Moreover, Jewish women were also more likely to work outside the home as primary breadwinners or partners in business, because on the one hand the most important occupation for men was the ongoing religious study and on the other hand, Jewish women had more secular knowledge than Jewish men, which made them more apt to conduct business with a Christian clientele. Memoirs of Jewish intellectuals born in Hungary during the early 19th century such as Ármin Vámbéry, Sigmund Mayer, Adolf Ágai or József Nagy offer ample support of these findings. (Fenyves 2010, 75-80, 127-137, 191-198) The effect of these peculiarities of the history of Jewish women on their social skills was two-fold. On the one hand, they were more accustomed to move around and work in public surroundings than their Christian counterparts, and on the other, they could follow an uninterrupted tradition of several generations of their reading and studying female predecessors. Conclusively, all the above could make their decision to study and work easier, to step outside their home less exceptional, in other words, make them more probable to build what Bourdieu would call “cultural capital”.

When cultural capital becomes political capital

As we have seen, even if public irritation provoked by the presence of women and Jews in Hungarian cultural spaces started earlier, its decisive turn was brought about by the years of WWI and the turmoil of the following revolutions. The public did not fail to notice the tremendous changes in the visibility of both groups. Most of the resentful declarations cited above were made in 1917, in the historical moment when public spirit was at its lowest all over Europe, and even

Hungarian bourgeois radicals considered an intellectual debate of the “Jewish question” necessary and inevitable. In fact, by that time, Jews were perceived to be underrepresented on the battlefield and overrepresented among the universally hated military millionaires in Hungary as well as in other countries, especially in Germany.

As there is an ever growing body of literature on the question of the role of Jews in WWI, let me consider here their situation in higher education during the war. In the beginning of the 20th century in Hungary, the proportion of Jews among university students was already high and continued to increase until following WWI it nearly reached the proportion of the most important denominational group, Catholics, which at that time made up 48.7 percent of the whole Hungarian population. Between 1914/15 and 1918/19 the percentage of Jewish students increased from 37.1 percent to 40.2 percent at the Pázmány Péter University of Budapest, the leading university of the country. After a considerable initial increase in the first two years of the war, the proportion of Catholics fell to 40.7 percent in 1917/18 and then rose slightly again to 41.8 percent in 1918/19. The most critical year, however, for the anti-Semitic part of the public had to be 1917 with its 40.7 percent of Catholic and 39.9 percent of Jewish students at the University of Budapest (originally of Catholic foundation). These figures, however, had to be even more alarming for those who also considered the absolute numbers, according to which not only the total number of students increased rapidly during the years of WWI but also by 1918/19 the number of Catholic students only amounted to 5059, while the number of Jewish students to 4911. (Király 2009) It has to be remembered, however, that according to the census of 1910 the total number of highly educated Jews employed in the public services did not reach 4000.

After the Compromise there was a silent consensus in Hungarian politics asserting that since Jews are full citizens and their Jewishness is only a religious and not an ethnic affiliation, thus they should not have any specific interests, there is no need for a special Jewish representation. In the 19th century, when Jewish personalities were elected as members of Parliament, they represented the great bourgeoisie in the Lower and different religious and worldly corporations in the Upper House. These Jewish representatives only occasionally took up a clearly Jewish stance, for instance when they opposed the then marginal anti-Semitic party, and even then they acted in accordance with the actual governing liberal majority. Representatives of Jewish descent never protested in Parliament against the occupational glass ceiling or other disadvantages concerning Jews as these issues were considered to be no more than minor problems that should disappear with time. This attitude, however, started to change when a new Jewish generation entered the scene, born after the Compromise and socialized in the midst of the political battles surrounding the Tiszaeszlár blood-libel trial. This new generation of young Jewish men started their political career at the local level, in the Budapest City Council. Therefore, a so-called “Jewish Party” did indeed exist if not in Parliament, then in the Budapest City Council, even if it was only ironically

or deprecatingly labeled as such. (Welker 2006) Their existence, however, was not surprising in a city where by 1910 more than 23 percent of the population was Jewish.

Unlike their father's generation in Parliament these young Jewish members of the Budapest City Council were not rich as they often came from modest origins, but benefited from university education. Vilmos Vázsonyi for instance, who was trained as a lawyer and later became a representative of the Terézváros district of the capital and leader of the Democratic Party, was the son of a schoolteacher. In 1917 he became the first minister of Jewish faith in Hungary who did not convert, similarly to the lawyer Ferenc Heltai, the lord mayor of Budapest for a short time, who was elected in February 1913, but passed away only six months later. In contrast to the former political elite of noble, rich, and highly educated Hungarians, these two men and their generation, including for instance Samu Hazai, defense minister between 1910 and 1917 and József Sztterényi, minister of commerce in January 1918, both converts, had only educational assets. Yet they still got access to the highest positions in the political arena without even being members of the economic elite.

The new political class emerging after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918 was staffed with a great number of highly educated people of Jewish descent. More than half of the members of the two democratic governments, both of the National Council and of the leading political bodies during the Hungarian Soviet Republic were considered to be Jews by everyone, except themselves. The visibility of a minority formerly considered to be politically insignificant became extremely high as a number of professionals and intellectuals of Jewish descent started to occupy positions of high responsibility in different offices and in the dreaded political police. There was no doubt among friend and foe that this young new generation of intellectuals of Jewish descent succeeded in converting their cultural capital into a political one.

The situation of women was rather different as compared to Jews, even if women's public visibility was slightly less spectacular. During WWI, women on the one hand had to fill up many positions left vacant in the labor force by the men enlisted in the army, and on the other, their number in higher education increased spectacularly. (Karády 1994) In the first year of WWI the proportion of female students in Hungarian universities was 8.5 percent and for 1916/17 it reached its peak with 16.5 percent. There was a severe decrease in the next year to 7.4 percent before a slight increase to 8.1 percent in 1918/19, only to fall back again to 6.7 percent in 1919/20. However, as we have seen, the percentages are misleading in so far as the total number of students in higher education rocketed in this period and consequently the number of women students also increased drastically from 725 in 1914/15 to 1672 in 1918/19.

During the two Hungarian revolutions after WWI women gained full civil emancipation and full access to every kind of higher studies, including law schools. However, they did not have the opportunity to take full advantage of their newly granted rights as the revolutions were over before they could vote or be

elected and in the fall of 1919 several faculties refused, as earlier, to let them enroll. But, by then “the damage has already been done” as during the war women came to discover that they are able to do everything men do. If they were said to be highly visible before WWI, during and immediately after it women indeed were everywhere where according to traditional norms they did not belong.

The quota and its targets

“Because the university is first and foremost a male educational establishment [...] we need to introduce the institution of the *numerus clausus*” stated a professor of the Faculty of Philosophy in Budapest during a discussion about the still existing restrictions on women’s access in 1917 (Bihari 2008, 130). As early as 1903, the Faculty of Philosophy already requested from the Ministry of Education to prevent women from “thronging” into the universities, but at that time the Ministry carefully avoided any open action that would lead to overt legal discrimination and instead, as we have seen, issued a policy that dealt with women’s applications by an individual process of admission and on case by case basis. Furthermore, under this policy, female applicants could only be admitted with excellent school leaving examination grades, while the grades of male applicants were not considered before the *Numerus Clausus* law of 1920. Yet, despite the Ministry’s policy, the Faculty of Philosophy in Budapest already considered introducing a *numerus clausus* for women in 1916 as a reaction to the growing number of students of both sexes and in order to maintain the quality of education.

After WWI and the two failed revolutions, the medical school of Budapest in August 1919 was the first to propose the introduction of a quota that would maximize the total number of students at 400, calling it *numerus clausus*. The proposed policy was intended to rule out all those who participated in the revolutionary movements and to severely restrict women’s admission. The proposal was forwarded to and circulated between other faculties, but it was the dean of the Faculty of Theology who gave it an openly religious and racial turn. According to his version, applicants should satisfy moral and spiritual criteria and the policy should set a quota of the maximum number of applicants of each denomination to be admissible, which should represent the proportion of the specific denomination in the Hungarian population. Faculties also should consider in admission processes the religion, educational record and race of the candidates. By the time the other faculties decided upon the proposal, some accepting and some rejecting it, registrations for the new academic year had begun, which later became infamous of Jew-bashings and constant scandals. (N. Szegvári 1988, 153)

The *Numerus Clausus* bill, proposed to Parliament in 1920, did not mention women in any implicit or explicit way as members of the Parliament were too busy to debate the negative influence of Jews in recent political developments. If the bill was indeed intended only to solve the gravest issues of Hungarian education in 1919/20, the problems of overcrowded universities and

the overproduction of highly educated youth, the introduction of a quota linked to achievement, as proposed by the referee of the Faculty of Philosophy, would have proven more than efficient. However, the very first two sections of the law already emphasize the importance of the political loyalty of candidates, implicitly ruling out political adversaries, while the third section states that the number of young people belonging to the individual races and minorities of the country among university students should correspond to the proportion of these races and nationalities within Hungary. Therefore, even if implicitly, the law was aimed against candidates of Jewish denominations, since their group was considered as the most overrepresented in universities. The law remained silent about women, leaving a legal gap and allowing faculties to decide about women's admission or exclusion at their own discretion, which effectively meant that university-level policies could freely curtail women's rights.

Katalin N. Szegvári and Mária M. Kovács in their excellent legal and political analyses discuss the ramifications and the contexts of the *Numerus Clausus* law. However, in this paper I only want to make some remarks concerning its symbolic significations. The first section of the law concerning political loyalty is seldom mentioned, yet it can be considered as a milestone in Hungarian history in so far as it is the first, but not the last time that access to higher education is explicitly made a function of politics. When between 1948 and 1980 universities demanded from their applicants a recommendation from the communist youth organization, they followed the same logic. Furthermore, the requirement of proportionality is a classical act of symbolic violence. By talking about race and nationality but meaning Jews the law is re-naming "Hungarian citizens of Mosaic faith". Calling them an ethnic group or race instead of a denomination assigns them an identity category they consequently tried to avoid for more than fifty years. At the same time, the law authorizes to think of Jewish citizens in terms of race and sets the tone of public discourse. This requirement of proportionality is also formulated as if it would serve social justice by giving each "race and nationality" fair educational opportunities, but, in fact, it serves only to curtail the opportunities of one minority. Once again the same logic was at work between 1948 and 1963 when children of "class enemies", that is, members of the former social elite, another re-named group were banned from higher education under the pretext of social justice. Social justice was indeed lacking, yet the above solution was certainly ill-equipped to bring equality about.

The silence of the law on women amount to legal abuse and at the same time demonstrates how little importance was ascribed to them. To relegate the question of total or partial exclusion of women to a lower, local level as a mere technicality not regulated by law, suggests that their access to university is not a right but a mere possibility to be granted or denied.

From the physical and metaphorical spaces to the social space

The most striking characteristic of sexist and anti-Semitic discourses is the excessive use of spatial metaphors. From the very beginnings of their increased visibility, both women and Jews were accused of flooding, rushing, thronging into and occupying both physical and symbolic spaces like coffee-houses, university benches, middle classes or sacred Hungarian soil. Their physical presence in these spaces seemed to cause a disruption in the perception of order and eventually resulted in a discursive backlash aiming to force both women and Jews back and keep them at bay both metaphorically and physically. That is, for the public opinion to re-establish order they had to be put back and confined to what was considered as “their” spaces.

What was considered to be the proper place for Jews, however, is explicit only in case of the most radical anti-Semites: out of the country. Still, at least, as long as the proper place for Jews was out of the country and only spatial metaphors were used in anti-Semitic discourses, the idea of their eradication did not surface – as it could only be born with the eventual appearance of biological metaphors. Such metaphors appeared as early as the end of the 1880s in Hungarian anti-Semitic discourses, but they only became dominant in the 1920s, not surprisingly in the very historic moment when Professor Lajos Méhely, eminent physiologist-zoologist, became the director of the most important racist review, *A Cél* (The Objective). (Gyurgyák 2001, 387-397)

Social spaces considered to be proper for women were restricted to those domains that were associated to traditional female roles such as caring, teaching, nursing or potion mixing. For 1920, policies concerning women’s admission to universities were designed either to completely exclude women from certain areas of higher education, like medical schools, or restrict their access to faculties associated with traditional female roles. Women could not study Catholic theology, and less in line with the above logic economics, engineering, law. Even after 1927, when women’s access to universities was finally regulated by law and their number stabilized between 1264 and 1550 per annum, that is, between 11.8 and 14.2 percent, they were not allowed to hold prestigious or otherwise important positions. Although women were allowed to enter faculties formerly inaccessible to them, albeit not in every university, and from 1928 on they could apply to pass the examination leading to the position of private lecturer [Hungarian: *magántanár*], in 1938 there were still only 4 women bearing this title, 4 assistant lecturers [Hungarian: *adjunktus*] and 29 assistants [Hungarian: *tanársegéd*] in the whole country. (Papp 2004, 46) Still by 1941 the number of women in the labor force was higher than in 1920. The “Modern Woman” (as the New Woman was called in Hungary) was an omnipresent character entering and occupying the popular press and culture, especially the women’s magazines and the new media, the film. However, this modern woman was only modern in her appearance, because the accomplished women on the screens, while smoking, driving, wearing tailor made ensembles, and playing tennis had only womanly concerns. At best,

she was an actress, an artist, or a secretary and never had anything on her mind other than the men in her life. Enjoying a limited right to vote and a limited access to study, she was kept far away from power and politics and in blissful ignorance of the fact that she was everything but emancipated.

Conclusively, after 1920 the battle was won, the place was clean and order, e.i. male Christian hegemony, was reestablished. However, if we consider the process starting in 1938, it was obviously not the perception of an important majority. Even though no immediate connections can be established between the *Numerus Clausus* law and the Hungarian Anti-Jewish Acts of the 1930s, the symbolical signification of this measure can hardly be emphasized enough. There are sometimes even minor historical events, which cast a "long shadow". The passing of the *Numerus Clausus* law in Hungarian Parliament in 1920 is a decisive case in point.

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Csaba Fazekas

“*Numerus clausus* represents a strong national ideology.” Bishop Ottokár Prohászka and the closed number law in Hungary

Ottokár Prohászka, Catholic bishop of Székesfehérvár (1858-1927), was a prominent personality of political Catholicism in Hungary and one of the most important ideologists of the Horthy regime.¹ In Hungarian historical publications, it is a matter of widespread debate whether the extremely influential bishop was an anti-Semite or not.² According to many, his statements about the Jews cannot be characterised as anti-Semitic. This paper does not strive to settle this debate just intends to provide some details about his activities contributing to his reception. As a matter of fact, my viewpoint is that Prohászka's public activities, among which Act No XXV of 1920 (*numerus clausus*) was one of the most important episodes, were imbued with anti-Jewish feelings.

Here, it is only possible to give a brief summary of Prohászka's anti-Jewish attitude, articulated from the beginning of the 1890s. From this time on, Prohászka published several articles in which he combined his criticism of

¹ This work was carried out as part of the TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0008 project in the framework of the New Hungarian Development Plan. The realization of this project is supported by the European Union, co-financed by the European Social Fund.

² General remark: for the problem of Prohászka's opinion on Jewry and the Jewish question in Hungarian historiography we can find a lot of works representing practically two viewpoints: 1. Denial or attempt to relativize Prohászka's Anti-Semitism e.g.: Gergely, Jenő: *Prohászka Ottokár. „A napbaöltözött ember.”* [‘Ottokár Prohászka. The man wearing the sun.’] Budapest, 1994.; Orvos, Levente: *Prohászka Ottokár és a zsidókérdés.* [‘Ottokár Prohászka and the Jewish question.’] In: *Prohászka Ottokár – Püspök az emberért.* [‘Ottokár Prohászka – A bishop for the man.’] Ed.: Mózes, Gergely. Székesfehérvár-Budapest, 2006. 135-220; Szabó, Ferenc SJ.: *Prohászka Ottokár élete és műve, 1858-1927.* [‘Ottokár Prohászka's life and work.’] Budapest, 2007.; Mózes, Gergely: *Prohászka Ottokár zsidóellenességéről.* [‘About Ottokár Prohászka's Anti-Semitism.’] In: *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, 2008. 4. sz. 125-130. Showing Prohászka as a fundamentally Anti-Semitic political person: Gárdonyi, Máté: *Az antiszemitizmus funkciója Prohászka Ottokár és Bangha Béla társadalom- és egyházképében.* [‘The function of Anti-Semitism in Ottokár Prohászka's and Béla Bangha's perception of society and church.’] In: *A holokausz Magyarországon európai perspektívában.* [‘The Holocaust in Hungary in European perspective.’] Ed.: Molnár, Judit. Budapest, 2005. 193-204; Fazekas Csaba: *Prohászka Ottokár zsidóellenességéről.* [‘About Ottokár Prohászka's Anti-Semitism.’] In: *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, 2008. 4. sz. 131-155. See further literature in the following footnotes. From the English literature we used more: Hanebrink, Paul A.: *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944.* Ithaca-London, 2006. (Further: Hanebrink, 2006.) See more: Fischer, Rolf: *Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1882-1932.* In: *Hostages of Modernization. Studies on Modern Antisemitism, 1870-1933/39. Austria – Hungary – Poland – Russia.* Ed.: Strauss, Herbert A. New York, 1993. (Current Research on Antisemitism, 3/2.) 863-892; Bodó, Béla: *‘Do not Lead us into (Fascist) Temptation’. The Catholic Church in Interwar Hungary.* In: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 2007. Nr. 2. 413-431. etc.

capitalism and liberalism with strongly marked anti-Semitism.³ In the second part of World War I, his relevant public statements became stronger regularly displaying additional new features.

In 1917 and 1918, Hungarian public life was imbued with ever stronger anti-Semitism (therefore, the anti-Jewish attitude of 1920 can by no means be regarded only as a reaction to the fact that most of the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 had been of Jewish descent), and in this 'preventive counter-revolution'⁴, Prohászka played a central role. In all probability, it is correct to say that Ottokár Prohászka was the first to put forward the idea of *numerus clausus* in an indirect way.⁵ In his articles written in 1918⁶, he already clearly formulated the arguments intended to support the later idea of *numerus clausus*. One of these was that at the fronts of the war, Christian youth were bleeding while Jews avoided military service, and at the same time, became dominant at the universities. ('Our youngsters from the universities are fighting hard to defend the country and do not have time to study; meanwhile, others of whom we have plenty in this country occupy universities and polytechnics, others who were only allowed to stay away from military service – I cannot think otherwise, that is why I am saying it expressly – because they are degenerated.') Prohászka's articles had an enormous impact, and among the increasing hardships of the war, greatly contributed to the attitude looking for a scapegoat and demanding the repression of Jews.⁷ From the aspect of the future, it is extremely important that this was the period when radical rightist student organisations started their activities.⁸

In autumn 1919, Prohászka formed a strongly marked anti-Semitic standpoint and made it public, as well. This was different from his former activities in that he did not only state or outline the reasons and consequences of

³ Prohászka's best-known articles on the Jewish question at the end of the 19th century: A zsidó recepció a morális szempontjából. (1893) In: PCW. XXII. 1-14. ['The Jewish reception from the moral viewpoint.']; Keresztény szocialista akció. (1894) In: PCW. X. 69. ['Christian social action.']; Miért gazdag a zsidó s koldus a magyar? (1901) In: PCW. XXI. 166. ['Why the Jew is rich and the Hungarian is beggar?']; Mázsálás. (1901) In: PCW. XXI. 183. ['Weighing.'] etc.

⁴ . Miklós Szabó's phrase, quoted in Bihari, Péter: *Lövészárkok a háttérben. Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2008. ['Trenches in the Hinterland. Middle Class, Jewish question, Anti-Semitism in Hungary in the World War I.'] 238. See more: Hanebrink, 2006. 56-57; Schlarp, Karl-Heinz: Das ungarische Numerus-clausus-Gesetz von 1920 als erste judenfeindliche Gesetzgebung in Europa. Ursachen und Folgen. In: *Südosteuropa. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*. Hrsg.: Clewing, Konrad von – Schmitt, Oliver Jens. München, 2005. (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten, 127.) 349-382, etc.

⁵ N.Szegvári Katalin: *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon. A zsidó és nőhallgatók főiskolai felvételéről*. Budapest, 1988. ['Numerus clausus laws in the Counter-Revolutionist Hungary. On the Jewish and the women students' entrance.'] (Further: N.Szegvári, 1988.) 86-87.

⁶ Pro juventute catholica (1918); Pro re christiana (1918); Elég volt-e? (1918) ['Was it enough?'] In: PCW. XXII. 184-194.

⁷ About the impact see e.g. the Catholic daily *Alkotmány*'s articles between 1918 June and September.

⁸ See e.g. N.Szegvári, 1988. 93.

the Jews' 'becoming dominant in society' but put forward proposals to push the Hungarian legislative to pass and the government to draw up anti-Jewish regulations. In this sense, the experience of the Soviet Republic in Hungary can be regarded as a dividing line in Prohászka's thinking as it provided justification for and deepened his already existing anti-Semitic attitude, at the same time urging him to take steps to put restrictions on the Jewish community.

His sporadic statements also indicate that he did not only share the public opinion that the Soviet Republic was some kind of conspiracy and organised action on the part of the Jewish community but he himself also played a key role in the dissemination of such propaganda. In August and September 1919, Prohászka emphasized his commitment to the rebuilding of the country and the new regime, at the same time making declarations with which he made an attempt to alleviate the extremities of White Terror. This can be clearly seen in his encyclics issued following the fall of the Soviet Republic, in which he called the former a historical event clearly generated by the Jews⁹ but focussed on restarting life, rebuilding the country and the refusal of violence (White Terror). For example, he condemned the statements made by writer Dezső Szabó, giving a lecture at Székesfehérvár town hall.¹⁰ (Allegedly, Szabó said that 'Jews should be lovingly exterminated in Hungary'.)

In autumn 1919, the bishop wrote a two-part article for the Viennese weekly *Das Neue Reich*. In it, he gave a detailed diagnosis of the Jewish problem, elaborated on the attempts at solution and the relevant political programmes, directly proposing the introduction of *numerus clausus*. He regarded the solution of the Jewish problem to be Hungary's most severe issue ('destiny'), which was more urgent than the solution of any other problem. In his lengthy historical essay, he dealt with the events leading up to the revolutions in which he attributed central importance to the 'spread of Jewish spirit', which spirit had concealed its attitude antagonistically opposed to Christian and national values behind the mask of assimilation. He dealt with three problems in detail. These later became central issues in his future public activities: the land reform, social democracy and the role of the press. All of these gave him an opportunity to keep reverting to the Jewish problem. He blamed the lack of a thorough land reform for the appearance of radical attitudes among the provincial inhabitants of the country, even criticising prelates opposing the idea of reallocation of land. In his viewpoint, the reallocation of land could have contributed to the formation of a vigorous peasant middle class, which was indispensable for the predominance of a Christian-national ideology. In Prohászka's thinking, due to their interests, the Jewish community (the 'Galician element', adversary of the Hungarians) was totally against the economic rebuilding and strengthening of the peasantry. He called

⁹ A kommunizmus bukása után. In: PCW. IX. 60-64. p. ['After the fall of Communism.']; PD. Appendix.

¹⁰ *Pesti Élet*, 1919. September 13. 3; Babus, Antal: Fülep Lajos az 1918-1919-es forradalmakban. ['Lajos Fülep in the 1918-1919 Revolutions.'] IV. r. In: *Új Forrás*, 2002. 6. sz. [Hungarian Electronic Library: www.epa.oszk.hu – 2010. December.]

social democracy 'a silly elephant', mounted by '5 or 6 abnormal Jews with Phrygian caps on their heads', and according to him, this was how the Soviet Republic in Hungary came into being. If the Jewish community is not restricted – he concluded – 'Hungary will be lost.'

He drew a sharp, impenetrable dividing-line between Hungarians and Jews, which could only be eliminated by conversion to Christianity and a total denial of descent: 'A Jew remains a Jew until he disowns the Jewish community as a religious and racial community. Anybody who considers facts will realise that there are no Hungarian Jews but there are only Jews living in Hungary who speak Hungarian.' According to Prohászka, time had come when it had to be declared openly: 'what we have always known - that Jewishness is not only a religion but also a race and a nationality'. And, according to Prohászka, this race represented the greatest threat to the Hungarian nation and should be fought. In the bishop's visions, the whole issue became simplified to the level that the Jews wanted to take the country from the Hungarians by conspiracy, occupy it as their own and oppress the majority, to which the first step was getting their rights acknowledged and codified. Therefore (as he put it: 'we must not engage in debates but must act') it was necessary to start anti-Jewish legislation. He put forward his ideas in a polarised, agitative way: 'In our country, Hungarians face a Jewish community speaking Hungarian but strictly preserving their special racial features and living in a closed, compact racial community. The following question should be asked: is this our country or theirs?' Prohászka also added that this approach, which was common in Hungary, could not be labelled anti-Semitism but only 'Christianity and Hungarianism'.

In his second article, focussing specifically on the Jewish problem¹¹, he elaborated these ideas in greater detail. His starting-point was that he did not hate Jews and refused violence and pogroms. He saw the solution in quick and strong legislation and in elaborating a legal environment restricting Jews, which would lead to the 'national factor' becoming predominant at the expense of the Jews. He specifically wrote about the expulsion of immigrant Jews: 'We make no secret of it that we want to get rid of any immigrants fraternally given shelter by the Hungarian Jewish community.' He dealt with the problem of higher education in detail declaring that 'Hungary cannot passively tolerate that the universities are inundated by Jews'. In Prohászka's interpretation, the social differences between Jews and Hungarians had been deepened by the educational system (in favour of the former). Therefore, as a solution, he firmly demanded the use of admission restriction: 'Even first generation Jews belong to the middle class and acquire an academic degree. This situation can only be counterbalanced by the application of *numerus clausus*.'

¹¹ . Prohászka, Ottokár: Die Judenfrage in Ungarn. In: *Das Neue Reich*, 1919. 7. Dezember, 150-152. The contemporaneous Hungarian comment on Prohászka's article (Prohászka Ottokár a zsidókérdésről. ['Ottokár Prohászka ont he Jewish question.']) In: *Gondolat*, 1920. January 1. 8. p.) named named Prohászka as 'the person whose words are followed by millions', so normative the bishop's program was as the only useful one.

This train of thought was formulated in a more moderate way in Prohászka's paper written in 1920, which is relatively widely known and analysed in special publications.¹² However, this brochure was written even more for the purpose of informing and convincing politicians and the public in foreign countries than his above articles, and only partly reflects Prohászka's ideas on the Jewish question. It can mostly be regarded as a self-justifying diagnosis, which makes no mention of the specific action programme or the measures deemed necessary by him (for example, the *numerus clausus*). (In this respect, there are only such generalities in it as the existing situation 'cannot be effectively changed leniently, with delicate methods' etc.) The brochure gives a detailed summary of Prohászka's anti-Semitic standpoint in the Jewish problem, formed earlier and consistently represented all the time later: According to it, Jews can be regarded as a 'race' alien to the Hungarian nation, who abused the legal environment of emancipation in the second half of the 19th century, settled in the country in huge numbers and then occupied the most important positions in economy and trade due to their financial talent. In connection with higher education, he only mentions that 'Jews were awarded medical and legal degrees in an appalling number' without saying how he would like to change this situation. It is also his basic idea that liberalism, which he regards to be harmful, was favourable for the gaining ground of the Jews who had thus occupied the key positions of literary life and the press, as well. Meanwhile, Christian Hungarians had gradually been pushed to the background. In addition, Prohászka elaborated on his basic principles of strengthening the middle class and the impossibility of assimilation, on his conviction that Jews had an ineradicable racial awareness and his belief that it was only and exclusively the Jews who were responsible for the collapse of historical Hungary in 1918 and 1919, conspiring to destroy every traditional Hungarian value. The extent to which the pamphlet was written for the purpose of convincing foreign politicians and the public in foreign countries is also shown by the fact that he labelled the Jewish problem as a 'hot worldwide issue', to which he could only see two solutions: complete conversion to Christianity or Zionism.

¹² The English version: Prohászka, Ottokár: *The Jewish Question in Hungary*. Hague, 1920. (Prohászka lasted for important spreading his viewpoints on Jewish question in a very wide circle: he published his article in an American Catholic weekly: *Daily American Tribune*, 3-4 November 1920.) The German version was published by a paramilitary, extreme right-wing organisation ('Deutsch-völkischer Schutz und Trutzbund') with a swastika on the cover of the book: *Die Judenfrage in Ungarn*. Hamburg, 1921. It is interesting; in Hungary there are two Hungarian translations. The first was made and used by the extreme right-wing of the 1930's – demonstrating Prohászka as a fore-runner of the National Socialism, the second was translated by a Catholic Church historian – trying to contradict Prohászka's Anti-Semitism. See: Prohászka, Ottokár: *Zsidókérdés Magyarországon*. ['The Jewish question in Hungary.'] In: *Új Magyarság*, 1937. december 25. (Új Magyarság I. karácsonyi melléklete.) 27-28. (Transl.: Bosnyák, Zoltán.); Barlay, Ö. Szabolcs: *Hitvédelem és hazaszeretet, avagy antiszemita volt-e Prohászka?* ['Faith defence or patriotism, or was Prohászka an Anti-Semitic?'] Székesfehérvár, 2003. (*Írások Prohászka-ról*, 2.) [Pázmány Péter Electric Library, Nr. 488. – www.piar.hu/pazmany/ – 2010. December.] (The first one was published in the 2000's on a lot of extreme right-wing webpage, too.)

This was referred to in Prohászka's first significant speech in Parliament on 26 February, 1920, made in relation to the act on the restoration of constitutionalism and the settlement of the problem of head of state.¹³ Here, I should like to highlight two aspects of this speech, in which Prohászka unconditionally supported governor Miklós Horthy and argued for a strong state maintaining order even at the expense of giving up democratic principles. On the one hand, he passionately condemned previous, especially revolutionary regimes as ones leading to the decay of the country. On the other hand, it was an extraordinary rhetorical accomplishment on his part that he kept instigating his audience against the Jews with hints and rhetorical questions – without ever uttering the words 'Jew' or 'Israelite', etc.! However, with his indirect circumscriptions, he provoked his audience to associate to the Jews. (For example: 'I am asking what category of revolutions we should put this Hungarian revolution to?' Reaction: Shouts: 'Jewish revolution!' Or when he said 'we should not tolerate to be kept being spiritually poisoned in this way', reaction: 'Jewish press!') Using shrewd rhetorical techniques, he was careful to present the Jewish community as the major source of danger in society by giving the most evident examples in point for the different issues seemingly by accident but still managing to make his audience understand his hints. From such hints, the audience unavoidably could come to the conclusion that the Christian-national character of the new political regime should be closely related to the exclusion of the Jewish community.

On 30 June, 1920, he entered the following frequently cited note in his diary: 'we have a Christian regime' 'without Christianity or Christians'¹⁴ I am convinced that this did not indicate any 'turning against' the regime on the bishop's part. Instead, his disappointment was rather motivated by the fact that the regime had not produced the results expected by him, that is, it had failed to turn the country rapidly and more markedly 'Christian'. In other words, he did not get disillusioned with the Christian regime but rather had the feeling that what was currently going on was not (yet) what he wanted – this idea later became the source of his increasing radicalism. He sharply criticized 'nominal Christians' who only refer to religion 'but do not confess to it with their deeds'. It was not accidental that he condemned the lack of anti-Jewish measures constituting an essential part of the 'regime': 'Everything is given over to the Jews. We can see this everywhere; Jews do the businesses under the flag of the Christian regime fluttering up in the air.'

It was at this time that Prohászka finally committed himself to the aspirations of the anti Jewish student organisations acting as chairman at the students' meeting held on 5 August, 1920, firmly demanding the *numerus clausus*.¹⁵ He set the task of the legislative in 'finding a form to solve this delicate

¹³ NA. PD. Vol. I. (1920. February 16.); PSP. (1920. February 16.)

¹⁴ PD. (1920. június 30.)

¹⁵ Nagy, Iván: A MEFHOSz első éve. Adatok egy készülő tanulmányhoz. ['The first year of MEFHOSz. Data to an article in progress.'] In: *Új Élet*, 1925. January 28. 9-11.. (Comp.:

issue appropriately and to public satisfaction.’ He defined the nature of the appropriate form as follows: ‘Could the law be possibly formulated in the way that admission should be proportionate to the number of races and nationalities?’ (This exactly corresponded to his later motion of an amendment in Parliament.) Later he modified it in the way that the law should only refer to ‘Jews and non-Jews’. The students’ meeting played an important role in exerting an anti-Jewish pressure in the issue of university admissions, for example in enhancing Ottokár Prohászka’s determination, as well.

This was confirmed by another statement of his, made in the same period,¹⁶ in which he tried to distance himself from anti-Semitic atrocities and, at the same time, making it clear that the essence of the whole motion for the amendment was an anti-Jewish standpoint, the repression of an undifferentiated Jewish community. He said: ‘It is my standpoint that this issue should be kept away from the street outrages of ordinary anti-Semitism. We do not want anti-Semitism but do want to ensure the right of higher education for Jews just like for Christians. This right will be ensured on the basis of the number of population. We should lower the gates to keep off the flood of a spiritual proletariat, we should select among the youth not only on the basis of talent and diligence but also on that of reliability, patriotic feelings and moral characteristics. Therefore, selection may be made on the basis of religion, and should be made – let us make it clear – according to whether the person is Jewish or Christian. We do not want Hungarian higher education to become a lever in the hands of the Jews with which they will thrust Christian Hungary from its position and make it poor and homeless.’ This means that at this time, too, Prohászka saw and presented the Jewish community as a mass which was the potential enemy of Christian Hungary.

Prohászka also presided at the August meetings of the governing party,¹⁷ and in all probability it was him who formulated the motion for the amendment according to which in university registrations ‘the rate of admitted youngsters belonging to the different races and nationalities living in the territory of the country should possibly be equivalent to the national rate of the relevant race or nationality.’ Formally, the motion was put forward under the name of MP Nándor Bernolák but the bishop played a decisive role in its formulation. It is revealing

N.Szegvári, 1988. 95.) The students’ organisations, like MEFHOSz (‘Association of Hungarian University and College Students’), mentioned very proudly that they had cleared the university faculties from the ‘communist, radical and Jewish rabble’ between 1919 August 3-5, and demanded the *numerus clausus* first. See e.g. the students’ newspaper: *Technikus*, 1920. Nr. 2. 53. On the genesis of *numerus clausus* see: N.Szegvári, 1988. 93-97; Kovács M. Mária: *Liberalizmus, radikalizmus, antiszemitizmus. A magyar orvosi, ügyvédi és mérnöki kar politikája 1867 és 1945 között*. [‘Liberalism, radicalism, Anti-Semitism. The policy of the Hungarian medicals, lawyers and engineers.’] Budapest, 2001. 76-78. For the interpretation see comprehensively: Gyurgyák, János: *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai eszméletörténet*. [‘The Jewish question in Hungary. A Political Thought-History.’] Budapest, 2001. (Further: Gyurgyák, 2001.) 117-123.

¹⁶ *Új Somogy*, 1920. August 31. 1.

¹⁷ Gyurgyák, 2001. 118-119.

that the motion for amendment was first registered by the parliamentary official under the name 'Ottokár Prohászka and others'¹⁸ and it was usually linked to the bishop's name in the press, too. In this way, Prohászka, as the president of the governing party, made an attempt to turn against the cabinet, led by Pál Teleki. The supporters of the motion for the amendment, marked by his name, exerted pressure on the government, in which process a central role was played by anti-Semitism.

In autumn 1920, Hungarian public life was characterised by increasing anti-Semitism. The openly anti-Jewish *Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* ('Association of Awakening Hungarians'), several times banned by the government on account of its extreme ideology, held its national conference at the beginning of September, clearly with the purpose to exert pressure on Parliament.¹⁹ To the conference proceedings of the association demanding anti-Semitic legislation in an extremist style, Ottokár Prohászka wrote the foreword, thus clearly identifying himself with the extreme right, which the bishop considered to be 'the carrier of Christian awareness, public sentiments and moral forces'.

In the parliamentary debate on the *numerus clausus* (2-21 September, 1920), Prohászka's speech on 16 September marked the real turning-point.²⁰ In this, the bishop indicated that the most important device of the formation of the Hungarian middle class was the suppression of the Jews and the prevention of their attending higher education. He based his highly influential speech on the idea that his proposal was not an attack against the Jews, to the contrary: it represented 'the nation's self-defence' and thus he fundamentally reinterpreted the terminology of politics. (For example, he thought that the term 'freedom' had no content but it was just form so that the freedom of the ideologies labelled by him as harmful was not freedom in reality but oppression, etc.) He blamed the crisis of the country on liberalism, allowing the Jews to enter the country, and he only wanted to allow two alternatives for the Jews: conversion to Christianity (integration into 'Christian society') or emigration (Zionism). He tried to prove the unpatriotic feelings of the Jews with – actually untrue – statistical data according to which they would have fought in the fronts of the war in a much lower rate than Christians. However, the majority believed and followed him while the few liberal speakers were hooted down. Prohászka's speech was received with thunderous applause in Parliament and the press celebrated the overwhelming success of his speech for days. It is typical that a student

¹⁸ HNA. K 2. (= Parliamentary Archive. President's Papers.) 530. cs. 28. t. 55.

¹⁹ Az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének II. Országos elnöki konferenciája Budapesten, 1920. évi szeptember hó 7., 8. és 9-én. ['The 2nd National Presidential Conference of the Association of Awakening Hungarians in Budapest, in 1920. September 7., 8. and 9.'] Budapest, 1920. November.; Zinner, Tibor: *Az ébredők fénykora, 1919-1923*. ['The heroic age of awakeners.'] Budapest, 1989. 76-88.

²⁰ NA. PD. Vol. V. (1920. September 16.); PSP. (1920. September 16.) See more e.g.: Herczl, Moshe Y.: *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry*. New York, 1993. 45-46.

organisation wrote in their letter of thanks²¹ that Prohászka's speech 'had an effect on our souls similar to that dew has on a barren meadow. Our souls have got refreshed, our truth has been proven.' Following Prohászka's example, they declared that they expected further anti-Jewish measures and were even ready 'to run into death for Christian Hungary.'

In fact, Prohászka would have supported the extension of the *numerus clausus*. For example, at the beginning of December 1920, he supported the motion for amendment according to which in the management board of the Banking Institutions' Centre, providing the state control of banks, the number of Jewish members should be maximised in two.²² Although this motion was outvoted in Parliament it is important that its logic exactly corresponded to that of the Acts on Jews passed at the end of the 1930s. (Restriction of the number of Jews in every field of the economy and public life)

Prohászka tried to keep his ideas formulated in 1919 and 1920 about the Jewish community on the public agenda even when he was no longer a member of parliament. He kept emphasizing that the 'Jewish spirit', 'Jewish culture', 'Jewish press', etc. still presented the same or an even greater threat to the Hungarian nation than before. He always tried to persuade his current audiences to fight the Jewish danger and be 'alert'. Here, I only cite one of his later statements concerning *numerus clausus*.²³ A reporter asked for his opinion about the statements promising the alleviation of *numerus clausus* especially because it had been Prohászka who 'brought this work of racial protection to maturity with his mighty arguments.' At this time, the bishop did not comment on the remark attributing a central role to his person but vehemently inveighed against the endeavours referred to in the question. It is worth quoting his arguments in greater detail: 'The attempts at the weakening of the *numerus clausus* cannot be ignored. Without doubt, these attacks would sooner or later transform public opinion and would destroy the well-conceived statute of the first national assembly. The germs of liberalism are still present in the minds of Hungarian intellectuals, and naturally, liberalism does not like to reside together with strong national feelings. [...] Now that we have recovered a bit, we are attacked not only by the Jewish but also by a by far more dangerous liberal way of thinking. The *numerus clausus* represents a strong national ideology. It is identical with national Christian awareness. If this way of thinking is alien to a person, he will naturally not be enthusiastic about the *numerus clausus*, and if a person is not enthusiastic about *numerus clausus*, he will not prevent emigration from Galicia, either. The politicians of the past decades have not been able to create a national Hungary because they have not taken this fact into account. Since the act on *numerus*

²¹ College students' so-called Carlyle Circle's letter to Ottokár Prohászka. Újpest, 1920. September 25. – DA. PC. s.n.

²² The parliamentary amendment was presented by the extreme Anti-Semitic member of parliament, Károly Ereky. See: NA. PD. Vol. VII. (1920. December 1.)

²³ Prohászka Ottokár püspök az időszerű kérdésekről. ['Ottokár Prohászka on actual questions.'] In: *Szózat*, 1922. August 31. 1-2.

clausus was passed, the situation has not improved at all in favour of Hungarians. To the contrary, our conditions concerning the protection of the nation have definitely deteriorated because national awareness has decreased and the rapid pace of reoccupation, characteristic of the period following the days of the Soviet Republic, has flagged. I do not think that it is timely to make any amendments or narrowing.' Once again, Prohászka expressed his support for the extension of the *numerus clausus*: 'We cannot stop at the restriction of the freedom of study.'

At church events or at the meetings of the *Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* (Association of Awakening Hungarians) and other 'Christian' political organisations, he either formulated his ideas more strongly or more leniently. It also happened that he openly encouraged the radical extreme right and spoke more and more about the distinction of the 'Hungarian race' and the 'Jewish race'. (By the expression Hungarian 'race', he meant a spiritual community sharply distancing itself from the Jewish community and embodying a special combination of Christianity and Hungarian nationalism.) Thus, towards the end of his life, Prohászka came near to the extreme right in the consolidating Bethlen era, and although he was no longer in the forefront of public and political life he was still regarded to be a respected spiritual leader.

As a last remark, let me mention that in the period of the later amendments of the *numerus clausus* law after the bishop's death, Prohászka's name became the symbol of extreme right endeavours to preserve the original intentions of the act. For example, MP Béla Túri gave lengthy citations from the anti-Jewish argument system of the late bishop of Székesfehérvár,²⁴ and contemporary press published articles about what Prohászka's opinion would be about the restriction of the intentions and measures of the law on *numerus clausus*, inseparable from his name.^{25,26}

Abbreviations:

DA. PC. — [Dioecesan Archives, Székesfehérvár. Prohászka Collection.] Székesfehérvári Püspöki és Székeskáptalani Levéltár. Prohászka-gyűjtemény.

HNA. — [Hungarian National Archive.] Magyar Országos Levéltár.

NA. PD. — [National Assembly. Parliamentary Diary.] Az 1920. évi február hó 16-ára hirdetett nemzetgyűlés naplója. I-XIII. kötet. Budapest, 1920-1922.; *Az 1927. január hó 25-re hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója. Budapest, 1927-1932.* [Parliamentary Documents. Diaries and papers, 1861-1990. Online library of the Hungarian Parliament Library: mpgy.ogyk.hu – 2010. December.]

PCW. — [Prohászka's Collected Works.] *Prohászka Ottokár Összegyűjtött Művei*. Ed.: Schütz, Antal. I-XXII. Budapest, 1929.

PD. — [Prohászka's Diary.] Prohászka Ottokár: *Naplójegyzetek. III. (1919-1927)* Ed.: Frenyó, Zoltán – Szabó, Ferenc SJ. Budapest, 1997. [Pázmány Péter Electronic Library. Nr. 316. – www.piar.hu/pazmany/ – 2010. December.]

²⁴ NA. PD. Vol. IX. (1928. February 14.)

²⁵ *Nemzeti Újság*, 1928. February 15. 5-6.

²⁶ I express my special thanks to Ms Judit Papp Szabó for his stylistical work on my paper.

PSP. — [Prohászka's Speeches in the Parliament.] *Prohászka Ottokár parlamenti beszédei*. Ed.: Barlay, Ö. Szabolcs – Kiss, Antal. Székesfehérvár, 2006. [Pázmány Péter Electronic Library. Nr. 478. – www.piar.hu/pazmany/ – 2010. December.]

Tibor Frank

„All modern people are persecuted”. Intellectual exodus and the Hungarian trauma, 1918–1920

Watershed 1919: Socio-political crisis and intellectual emigration

Hungary was particularly hard hit by the consequences of World War I, not only from her association with Germany and thus being irredeemably on the losing side, but the lost war also released long simmering social tensions and energies that facilitated the outbreak of subsequent revolutions.¹ In addition, the country had to accept the humiliating peace treaty of Trianon, the consequence and symbol of the military success of the Entente powers. Tragically, the treaty paved the way for Hungary's involvement in World War II. Though much of this is textbook history, a review of some of the crucial points of Hungarian history in the years 1918–1920 can serve as a background to the devastating intellectual exodus that followed postwar events.²

World War I, the “Great War,” was immediately followed by the “Frost Flower (Aster) Revolution” (October 31, 1918), which preceded the German armistice. Headed by Count Mihály Károlyi, a magnate and one of the few steady opponents of the War from its beginning, the 1918 revolution was geared toward a liberal transformation of Hungary from a largely feudal to a bourgeois-democratic system with well-known Radicals and Liberals, including scholars and social scientists, in the government. The Liberal-Democratic, occasionally leftist élite, and the Radical elements in early twentieth-century Hungarian politics, academia, literature and the arts, may have felt for a brief period of time that their long fight for the modernization of the country against the repressive regimes of pre-World War I Hungary had finally come to a successful and promising climax. Prime minister-turned-president in the newly proclaimed Republic of Hungary, Count Károlyi promoted a much-overdue land reform and addressed major social problems. He failed, however, to handle the rapidly deteriorating international as well as domestic political and economic situation and half-heartedly left his power to the Social Democrats and the Communists, whom his government had quite stubbornly and effectively oppressed until their takeover on March 21, 1919. The short-lived Hungarian “Republic of Councils” (in Hungarian: *Tanácsköztársaság*) was a translation of the “soviets” and was largely imported from Soviet Russia by

¹ This paper is based on the author's article „Between Red and White: The Mood and Mind of Hungary's Radicals, 1919-1920 (*Hungarian Studies*, 9/1-2, 1994, pp. 105-126), as well as his recent book *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 79-119

² For a brief introduction to the period see Tibor Hajdu and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, “Revolution, Counterrevolution, Consolidation,” in Peter Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank, eds., *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 295–318.

former Hungarian prisoners of war, who had spent years in Russian POW camps during World War I where they had been indoctrinated with the ideas and ideals of Communism. It seemed that the “Soviet” Republic of Hungary tried to realize the dreams of the Bolsheviks: its leader, Béla Kun, as well as some of his associates were in constant, sometimes even personal touch with Lenin himself. The leaders of 1919 outdid those of 1918 in terms of radicalism, social engineering and imported visionary utopianism and were often completely detached from the realities of post-World War I Hungary. Theirs was a major social experiment turned into total disaster. Initially popular among certain groups of workers, poor people in general, and some intellectuals, the system succeeded in alienating not only the middle class but even the peasantry, and ended up after 133 days with no social backing whatsoever. Its only visible success was a nationally popular effort to retake former Hungarian territories that by 1919 had become dominated by the Czechs and its willingness to fight for Transylvania, occupied by Romania, which had used the political vacuum to move well into the heart of Hungary. By early August 1919, the Soviet experiment was over, and Béla Kun’s regime had to go.³

Many of the leaders in both revolutions, but particularly of the 1919 Republic of Councils, came from a Jewish background. About two-thirds of the “people’s commissars” (as ministers of the government were then called) and their deputies were Jews. Jewish presence was particularly noted in the police forces and in the cultural ministry. To appreciate and understand 1919, we must set it against the background of Jewish-Hungarian social history.

By the end of the nineteenth century, in little over two generations, Hungary had absorbed a vast influx of several hundred thousand Jewish immigrants from Russian and Austrian Poland. Hungary was a country whose Hungarian citizens were not necessarily all native speakers of the Magyar tongue. Yet, the new refugees were for the most part little tolerated and even despised by the happier few, who had arrived earlier, mostly in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, either from Moravia or other westernized territories of the Habsburg Monarchy. Many of these earlier arrivals had quickly assimilated to the Hungarian traditions, learned the Hungarian language, appreciated the dominant Hungarian culture, and become devoted to the national/nationalist sentiment that swept across the country during much of the nineteenth century. They played an important role in building the new Hungary of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918), its economy, its professional class, its cultural infrastructure, its new urban civilisation and its modern intellectual capital assets. They had quickly entered politics, even parliament and the government. Just like their equivalents in Vienna, they received titles from the emperor-king Franz Joseph I, entered the ranks of the lower nobility, and for some, even the titled aristocracy. They produced and owned much of the new wealth and exercised considerable

³ On the first year of the (mainly Communist) Hungarian emigration see György Borsányi, “Az emigráció első éve” [The first year of emigration], *Valóság*, 1977/12, pp. 36–49.

influence and even political clout by the time the newcomers from Galicia or Russia were moving into the country, mostly after the final partition of Poland (1795), especially in the *Vormärz* (the Hungarian „Reform Era”). It was almost inevitable that the two groups would find each other offensive, and their conflicts contributed to the end of their “love-affair.”⁴

After the takeover of Admiral Miklós Horthy’s White Army in August 1919 and a succession of extremely right-wing governments, “Jew” and “Communist” became almost synonymous. As Hugh Seton-Watson remarked, “[t]he identification of ‘the Jews’ with ‘godless revolution’ and ‘atheistic socialism,’ characteristic of the Russian political class from 1881 to 1917, was now also largely accepted by the corresponding class in Hungary.”⁵ Bolshevism was considered “a purely Jewish product,” as sociologist Oscar Jászi described it in his reminiscences. Jews were punished for the Commune as a group.⁶ Until Horthy was proclaimed Regent of Hungary on March 1, 1920, the country lived under the constant threat of extremist, sometimes paramilitary commandos, who tortured and killed almost anyone, Jew or non-Jew, who was said or thought to have been associated in any way with the Béla Kun government. Intellectual leaders lost their jobs as a matter of course. Jewish students were repeatedly beaten. In Prague and Brünn (today Brno, Czech Republic), many Hungarians, “indeed almost Hungarian colonies, of some 100–200 people” according to New York engineer Marcel Stein’s memory, “left Hungary not as Communists but as Jews.”⁷ The year 1920 saw the introduction of the *Numerus Clausus* Act in Hungarian universities and law schools: for anyone who was Jewish, starting a career was becoming nearly impossible. There were few ways to survive politically, economically, and intellectually; the safest solution was, indeed, to flee the country.⁸

On top of this turmoil, the devastating peace treaty of Trianon effectively transferred the larger part of the former kingdom of Hungary to newly created or aggrandizing neighboring “nation-states” (in actual fact multi-ethnic, multinational countries) such as Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” (later, as of 1929, Yugoslavia). The Hungarians of those multiethnic territories immediately began experiencing many difficulties. Once again, Hungarian intellectuals or would-be intellectuals of those regions had very little choice but to leave.

⁴ Raphael Patai, *The Vanished Worlds of Jewry*, p. 68. For some brief but very succinct comments see Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 389–390, 394, 426.

⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

⁶ Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), pp. 122–124, quote p. 123.

⁷ Interview by the author with Marcel Stein at Columbia University, New York City, November 29, 1989.

⁸ The first major introduction to the problem area of Hungarian intellectual emigration after World War I is Lee Congdon’s *Exile and Social Thought. Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919–1933* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), an important book.

Budapest became frustrated, angry, and dangerous. Leaders and members of the Radical Party felt particularly bitter and lost.⁹ One of those was a former cabinet minister under Count Károlyi and one of his few personal friends, the anti-Bolshevik Radical Oscar Jászi (1875–1957), a versatile and original social scientist/politician, “Minister Entrusted with the Preparation of the Right of Self-Determination for Nationalities Living in Hungary” in late 1918, then professor at Oberlin College, Ohio, from the 1920s until his death, and author of the widely read *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*.¹⁰ Jászi’s Hungarian friends included some of the best Liberal and Radical minds of early twentieth-century Hungary, most of whom gathered in the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* [Society for Social Sciences], and published in its journal *Huszedik Század* [Twentieth Century], which was introduced by no less a patron than Herbert Spencer. The spectacular galaxy that surrounded them and who made their reputations abroad included art historians Frederick Antal, Arnold Hauser, and Charles de Tolnay, film theoretician and poet Béla Balázs, philosopher Georg [von] Lukács, sociologist Karl Mannheim, economic historian Karl Polanyi and his brother, the physical chemist turned philosopher Michael Polanyi.

Jászi’s first marriage is a good example of some of the social patterns of Hungarian Jewry. The gifted author and artist Anna Lesznai (1885–1966) came from a distinguished, gentrified, upper-middle class Jewish-Hungarian family. Her grandfather was a celebrated doctor in northeastern Hungary, who distinguished himself in the fight against the cholera epidemic of 1831 and could even boast of a personal relationship with Hungary’s great 19th century national leader Lajos Kossuth. Lesznai’s father, Geyza Moscovitz de Zemplén, was a rich landowner who gave important support to Count Gyula Andrássy, the first Hungarian prime minister in the newly transformed monarchy (1867–1871) and later, more importantly, Austro-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs (1871–1878). Moscovitz received a title and was the only Jewish member of the otherwise discriminating aristocratic *Nemzeti Casino* [National Club].¹¹ Anna Lesznai changed her name and took one from the family estate at Körtvélyes (today Hrušov in Slovakia) where she had grown up.

⁹ On the differences between Radicals and Socialists see Imre Csécsy, “Radikalizmus és szocializmus,” (Radicalism and Socialism) in: *Radikalizmus és demokrácia* [Radicalism and Democracy]: *Csécsy Imre válogatott írásai* [The Selected Writings of Imre Csécsy] (Szeged, 1988), pp. 47–49.

¹⁰ ¹⁰ Jászi himself came from an upper-middle class Jewish background and his family converted into Calvinism Péter Hanák, *Jászi Oszkar dunai patriotizmusa* [Oscar Jászi’s Danubian Patriotism] (Budapest: Magvető, 1985); see also Hugh Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, pp 166–167. Cf. Tibor Hajdu, *Az 1918-as magyarországi polgári demokratikus forradalom* [The Hungarian Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in 1918] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1968), György Litván, *A Twentieth-Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi 1875–1957* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005).

¹¹ For the family background see Anna Lesznai, *Kezdetben volt a kert* [First There Was the Garden] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1966), Vols. I–II.

Jászi's own reminiscences indicate his detesting equally both "Bolshevism" and the "White Terror," a stance typically shared by the Radicals of Hungary.¹² He soon came to the conclusion that "the mechanical State Communism of the Marxists cannot be a higher stage of development, as it would completely absorb the freedom and self-direction of the individual."¹³ Jászi provided the first scholarly and penetrating "critical evaluation of the proletarian dictatorship" and demonstrated, in his own words, "the economic and moral bankruptcy of the Soviet Republic."¹⁴ He abhorred the raging of the White Terror, which he described as "one of the darkest pages of Hungarian history," and condemned the new regime just as uncompromisingly for "the complete suppression of popular liberties."¹⁵

The letters Jászi received from family and friends during his 1919–1920 Vienna exile reveal much of the anguish, distress, and misery of the post-revolutionary period. Father Sándor Giesswein's letter to him reflected the Budapest mood in the fall of 1919: "With us the atmosphere is like in the middle of July 1914—were we not at the outset of Winter, we would again hear the voice subdued in so many bosoms: Long live the war!—This is what the Hungarian needs."¹⁶

The successful author and playwright Lajos Biró received similar news in Florence from his friends in Hungary: "Letters from home keep telling me that everybody reckons with the opportunity of a new war by next Spring. The war is unimaginable, impossible, madness; but in Hungary, so it seems, it is the unimaginable that always happens."¹⁷ Jászi's brother-in-law, József Madzsar added: „[...] the distant future is dark. The air is unbelievably poisoned, it feels as if in a room filled with carbon dioxide, one must get out of here, anywhere, otherwise it gets suffocating. Please write to me whether there is something toward Yugoslavia or whether or not something can be done in Czechoslovakia. There are serious negotiations here with the British and there is some chance toward Australia, the very best prepare themselves, it will be good company."¹⁸

Others also placed their hopes on newly-established Czechoslovakia. Lajos Biró, however, had a number of questions: "What do the Czechs say? How do

¹² Oscar Jászi, *op. cit.*, Chapter IX.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 177.

¹⁶ Sándor Giesswein to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 24, 1919, Columbia University, Butler Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5. [Original in Hungarian.]—Sándor Giesswein (1856–1923) was co-founder of the Christian Socialist movement in Hungary as well as a courageous and outspoken Member of Parliament.

¹⁷ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 25, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5. [Original in Hungarian]

¹⁸ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 6, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5. [Original in Hungarian.]—József Madzsar (1876–1940) was a versatile medical doctor and social activist, editor and author who moved from a Radical background toward the Communist Party in later life.

they envisage the future? How does Masaryk envisage it?”¹⁹ On another occasion Biró, with some bitterness and mockery, felt he had a bad choice in front of him when it came to Czechoslovakia: “If news about Horthy turns out to be true and he resorts to conscription and attacks the Czechs, then—then one can only shoot oneself in desperation over the fate of Hungary or else... he can volunteer to join Horthy’s army.”²⁰

“To live here in [Buda]Pest today is very obnoxious, the uncertainty, that on anybody’s petty accusations or charges you could get into prison, how nauseating,” the influential avant-garde artist Károly Kernstok thought.²¹ The air was filled with fear. “Dénes Nagy resigned from the secretaryship of the Free School, *he is afraid as are most people*, he is anxious to keep his job in the [Ministry of] Public Food Supply,”²² an admirer of Jászi, Ambró Czakó, informed him at the time. “I was also hit by clericalism, I lost my job (in the pedagogical institute),” he went on, „although the faculty nominated me three times in the first place, it was the secretary of the Calvinist department of the Christ[ian] Soc[ialist] Party who got the job [...] It is a great pity, that the element which supported us in the progressive cause is—cowardly. [...] [The socialist editor] Béla Somogyi²³ was right when he said to me the other day: It is very bad that however outstanding a man Jászi is, there is no one behind him, as there is no radical bourgeoisie, only cowardly Jews. Though this is not true that way, but it does contain some truth [...] The Hungarians are indeed angry at the Jews, the clericals for Bolshevism, we on the other hand for their recent spineless behavior.”²⁴

This was a pointed reference, indeed, to the lack of courage or simply unwillingness of Jewish intellectuals to rally against the White Terror in the fall and winter of 1919–1920 and stand up against the “White” army of Admiral Miklós Horthy. Madzsar made the point in a different way: “Should you return, you will find all the valuable people of the former Radical Party around you, the Gentiles without exception [...] the Jews are much more cowardly.”²⁵ Anything but an anti-Semite, Jászi came quickly to the conclusion that “on the whole, the atmosphere of the Socialist parties is poisoned, made terribly Jewish through a grocery store spirit. This should be cured in some way, as in the Church through the Reformation, since this current Social Democracy is unable to prepare the future.”²⁶

¹⁹ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 25, 1919, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 4, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

²¹ Károly Kernstok to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, October 27, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

²² Ambró Czakó to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 28, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5. [Emphasis added.]

²³ Béla Somogyi (1868–1920) editor of the Socialist daily *Népszava*, assassinated by an extremist military commando for his open criticism of the White Terror.

²⁴ Ambró Czakó to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 28, 1919, *loc. cit.*

²⁵ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 6, 1919, *loc. cit.*

²⁶ Oscar Jászi to Mihály Károlyi, Wien, Austria, September 21, 1919, Boston University, Mugar Memorial Library, Special Collections, Károlyi Papers, Box 2, Folder 4/II/3. Throughout I have used the original Károlyi and Jászi correspondence in U.S. libraries, checking it against *Károlyi*

The Freemasons of Hungary were also Jewish to a considerable extent and Czako blamed them as well for inaction, remarking: “Balassa e.g. (for whom I have otherwise high regard!) has no courage to summon the ∴-s and the Symbolic Grand Lodge did not make a single step toward foreign lodges, particularly toward the French Grand Orient to support the Hungarian progressives.”²⁷ Others were also giving up hope about Freemasons, and the Liberal daily *Világ* came under heavy criticism for its failing tenacity to represent basic Liberal values and its lack of moral strength. Early in December 1919, Lajos Biró received firsthand information on Hungarian Freemasonry and the daily *Világ* when the art historian Arnold Hauser²⁸ arrived in Florence from Budapest. “I was most embarrassed and upset when he spoke to me about the tone of *Világ*,” Biró wrote. “He cannot exactly quote the articles but he says, *Világ* disavows even the revolution of October [1918]. If this be the case, it’s most deplorable. The white terror does not last for ever, and how does *Világ* want to do politics later if it denies everything three times before the cock will crow?”²⁹ *Világ* made a lot of its former friends and readers deeply unhappy. “A number of people come to me who are dissatisfied with *Világ* and Co, they would want a little more serious, combating approach,”³⁰ József Madzsar reported to Jászi.

The dangerous and often demoralizing ambience increasingly made people think about leaving the country. Emigration for Hungarians was not a novel idea: some one and a half to two million people had left the country between 1880 and 1914 for the United States. Few of these early emigrants were intellectuals, however. By 1919 the situation had changed. “How different is the air that [authors in Hungary] breathe since 1918 in contrast to what they had breathed before 1918...,” author and critic Ignotus noted. “The air, just as wine or sulfur dioxide, influences man’s mind as it considers things, man’s eyes as they look at things, and man’s judgment as it measures things.”³¹ “Today it is good for any honest man to have a passport,” as Mrs. Madzsar summarized the case in a late 1919 letter to her brother Oscar in Vienna.

Many didn’t wait to get a real one and forged documents: “There are any number of people now trying to leave the country for various purposes with false passports,” U.S. General Harry Hill Bandholtz of the Inter-Allied Military Mission in Budapest reported in early January 1920 to the American Mission in

Mihály levelezése [The Correspondence of Mihály Károlyi], Vols. I–VI (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, I, 1978 [ed. György Litván], II, 1990, III, 1991 [ed. Tibor Hajdu].

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Arnold Hauser (1892–1978), internationally recognized sociologist of art, author of critically acclaimed *The Social History of Art*.

²⁹ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 4, 1919, *loc. cit.*—Biblical reference at the end of the passage from John 13:36.

³⁰ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 6, 1919, *loc. cit.*

³¹ Ignotus, “A Hatvany regényéről” [On Hatvany’s novel], in *Ignotus válogatott írásai* [Selected Writings by Ignotus] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1969), p. 266.

Vienna.³² A character in author Gyula Illyés's novel, *Hunok Párisban* (Huns in Paris) remarked in a conversation in Paris in the early 1920s: "Soon there will be no one left in Hungary!"³³ A lot of people had little else in mind but emigration. Leading Communists had no other option. Some people had mixed feelings about it, others seemed quite terrified:

„Józsi [Madzsar] is strongly concerned with the idea of emigration, which can only be understood by those who went through all this, from March [1919] till now. But particularly the last four months. I did not believe that there could be anything which I detested more than Communism. [...] Though I don't deny, I would suffer very much from leaving Hungary.”³⁴

Madzsar had the same feelings: "Alkó [Jászi's sister Alice] is very nervous, she is terribly excited about my thinking of emigration, it is only yesterday that has value for her, and she can only look forward to tomorrow terrified. And yet, this is going to be the end of it.”³⁵ The idea of emigration soon obsessed Madzsar entirely. "There is one hope to keep me alive, perhaps one could emigrate. This is the only thing I can think of, and I start next spring if there is just the tiniest opportunity to make a living somewhere else.”³⁶

Some of those involved in the revolutions, like the author Lajos Biró, had already become émigrés and found themselves on their way toward some unknown destination. Biró (1880–1948), an acclaimed novelist, playwright, and journalist went on to success in Hollywood as a script writer for several films directed by fellow Hungarian Sir Alexander Korda (1893–1956). Yet, gloomy and forlorn in 1919, Biró settled temporarily in Florence, Italy, and derived moral strength from Jászi's friendship, to whom he wrote at the end of December: „I am full of doubt and wavering, even my health was in terrible shape until very recently. I had unhappy and aimless weeks and in these deaf weeks I am sometimes inclined to commit moral suicide. In soul only, of course; one mentally breaks with everything that is dear to him and says this hopeless race, man, should be damned: he does not deserve anything else but what in fact happens to him.”³⁷

Biró was contemplating going to the United States to work for Hungarian papers and discussed his plans with Jászi, who already had harbored similar ideas. Biró was successful and, unlike most Hungarian authors, was well known even outside Hungary, yet he felt uncertain about leaving Italy. "One or two of my plays will be soon shown and one or two of my novels published. Perhaps they also show one of my plays in London; if I happened to have success that would at

³² Gen. Harry Hill Bandholtz to Albert Halstead of the American Mission, Vienna, Austria, Budapest, January 3, 1920. Memoranda to American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 1919-1920. Louis Szathmáry Collection, Chicago, IL, consulted on March 27, 1990.

³³ Gyula Illyés, *Hunok Párisban* [Huns in Paris] 1st ed. 1946, 3rd. ed. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1961, Vol. I.) p. 102.

³⁴ Alice Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], n.d. [most probably November 1919], Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

³⁵ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, November 6, 1919, *loc. cit.*

³⁶ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], November 19, [1919], *loc. cit.*

³⁷ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 25, 1919, *loc. cit.*

any rate facilitate my American trip. By any means I want to spend half a year there and want to learn English well enough to write for papers in English.”³⁸ He kept himself open to both options: “I do believe that it will be possible to return home in the spring [of 1920]. Yet it would be good to keep the way open toward the West.”³⁹

Biró was optimistic about Jászi’s emigration plans, noting:

„What you wrote about American plans is entirely convincing to me. That *English* speaking America would give you as much as you modestly need or even a lot more is quite clear to me. My doubts concern *Hungarian* America. But I might be wrong even there. I think that the New York reporters would welcome me already on the ship, will write a lot of nonsense, in some sensationalist fashion, on what I may have to say; and this great reception will perhaps impress our good Hungarians to an extent that even they would behave like a human being.”⁴⁰

Even the Liberals of Hungary could not emotionally accept what had happened to the country and her borders in the Treaty of Trianon (1920). Lajos Biró’s assessment of the political situation of partitioned Hungary was a statement for very nearly his entire generation. “I am very biased against the Czechs,” he admitted, „particularly because they are the finest of our enemies (and because their expansion is the most absurd). I think if I was in charge of Hungarian politics I would compromise with everybody but them. Here I would want the whole: retaking complete Upper Hungary, from the Morava to the Tisza [Rivers]. I don’t know the situation well enough but I have the feeling that Hungarian irredentism will very soon make life miserable for the Czech state and that the Slovak part will tear away from the Czechs sooner than we thought. Then we can make good friends with the Czechs.”⁴¹

Biró’s vision proved to be prophetic in some ways, and as was fairly typical among assimilated Jewish-Hungarian intellectuals at the turn of the century, he proved to be very much a Hungarian nationalist when deliberating the partition of former Hungarian territories and their possible return to Hungary. „To me, I confess, any tool served well that would unite the dissected parts with Hungary. I feel personal anger and pain whenever I think for example of the Czechs receiving Ruthenland. I really think any tool is good that would explode this region out from the Czech state. I believe in general that Hungarian nationalism will now receive the ethical justification which she so far totally lacked; nations subjugated and robbed have not only the right but also the duty to be nationalist. We must see whether or not the League of Nations will be an instrument to render justice to the peoples robbed. If yes, it’s good. If not: then all other tools are justified. First everything must be taken back from the Czechs that

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, December 4, 1919, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, November 24, 1919, *loc. cit.*

they themselves took away, as this will be the easiest. Then from the Serbs. Finally from the Romanians.”⁴²

Nonetheless, Biró felt pessimistic about the prospects of returning to Hungary and thought, oddly but not untypically, that his Jewishness compelled him to demonstrate his Hungarian patriotism by way of making himself financially independent of Hungary.

„I have settled for a long, long stay abroad. I hope I will be able to live here or elsewhere and make a living. I have a burning desire to make my personal economy completely independent from any financial source at home: I want to prove to myself that my painful love toward Hungary and the Hungarians is independent from what the Hungarian book-market can give me, just because I do not happen to be an engineer or a doctor but an author.—Sometimes I think that this feeling is a Jewish feeling, [the poet Endre] Ady might not even have such an idea. All the worse for me. To be a Hungarian is quite a problem. To be a Hungarian Jew is doubly so. To be a Hungarian Jewish author: this is the piling of pains by way of [Heinrich] Heine.”⁴³

In virtual exile since before the Republic of Councils, which he detested, Jászi did not feel optimistic. In letters to Count Mihály Károlyi in the early Fall of 1919, he spelled this out clearly. “The situation is undoubtedly dark,” he wrote from Prague. “Vienna is swirling again and rough. The whole of Europe is like a mortally operated man sick in fever, and poor Hungary, as Návay added, received a cadaverous poisoning.”⁴⁴ Jászi’s sister, Alice Madzsar, made her brother particularly distressed by telling him that the “white” regime was not at all attacking Communists only.

„In the University, [political] reaction is raging mostly in the school of medicine, led by Grand Master [Árpád] Bókai [Bókay]. [...] The party started in the university faculty by first putting together a kangaroo-court with Bókai, [János] Bársony and I do not remember the third; the 4 professors of Jewish origin, Leo [Liebermann], [Rezső] Bálint, [Emil] Grósz, and [Adolf] Onody [Onodi] were ”interrogated” as defendants. [Baron Sándor] Korányi was spared with a view to the merits of his father. They voted after the interrogation and declared that the people in question are rehabilitated with flying colors except for Onodi against whom the process will continue [...]. According to the blacklist compiled by [Professor Ernő] Jendrassik’s senior assistant Csika, the Adjunct Professorship⁴⁵ was taken from Józsi [József Madzsar], Lajos [Dienes], Pali Liebermann, Tibor Péterfi, [Miksa] Goldzieher, Jenő Pólya, [Sándor] Barron

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, November 24, 1919, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ Oscar Jászi to Mihály Károlyi, Praha, October 15, 1919, Boston University, Mugar Memorial Library, Special Collections, Károlyi Papers, Box 2, Folder 4/ II/3.

⁴⁵ Equivalent to a German *Privatdozentur*.

[Báron], Károly Engel and 54 people lost their job in the University. Among the Adjunct Professors as you can see there is not one Communist.”⁴⁶

Madzsar himself wrote Jászi to this same effect about the purges in early September 1919, adding that “their crime is mainly that they are Jews. They took my Adjunct Professorship without any hearing, and also from Pólya, Péterfi, Lajos Dienes, Goldzieher, Károly Engel and Pali Liebermann, as you can see, none of them is a Bolshevik, but this is now good excuse to persecute all modern people.”⁴⁷ A little later Madzsar repeated the phrase as if he found the point, “*All modern people are persecuted*, this company created a terrible atmosphere.”⁴⁸ No wonder that Jewish intellectuals in the fall of 1919 were intimidated to a degree that they seemed or, in fact, became “cowards.”⁴⁹

Alice Madzsar had hardly more encouraging news from other parts of the University of Budapest, “though the situation is perhaps milder than in the Medical School,” she believed. “As I hear, [Manó] Beke, [Bernát] Alexander, [Géza] Révész, [Lipót] Fehér [Fejér] have to go.”⁵⁰ On the suggestion of [Lajos] Lóci [Lóczy] the Hungarian Academy of Sciences declared that Jews can no longer be members.”⁵¹ Jászi received no better news from other intellectual quarters.

„Action was taken in the [Municipal] Library against Józsi [József Madzsar], [Soma] Braun, Laci [László] Dienes, [Béla] Köhalmi, Blanka Pikler. [...] Poor Blanka, she was detained for 2 weeks, *she, who just like us, despised these Communists*. But at least she was not beaten. Terrible things go on in the police, in the Transdanubian area, everywhere. But you certainly know about these from the papers in Vienna.”⁵²

The painter Károly Kernstok was even more succinct about the paradox of people with an anti-Communist record now going to the “white” prisons of Admiral Horthy’s army: „You know it was bad in the prison from the dirty worn out trousers to the prisoner-cap and the linen which saw the dream of prisoners, and from the rebuke, the kicking to the clearing of the table- [illegible word] we had a number of other pleasures like this, *pour compléter la biographie*.—Yet damn it, during the whole time I reproved the Commune, to peasant and to gentleman and to Béla Kun. But you know the Hungarian country gentleman who

⁴⁶ Alice Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], n.d. [end of 1919?].—Several of the doctors mentioned here left Hungary at some point before World War II, e.g. Miksa Goldzieher for the U.S., Károly Engel for Australia, Tibor Péterfi for Czechoslovakia and Germany. Liebermann committed suicide in 1938.

⁴⁷ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], September 3, 1919, Columbia University, Butler Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*—Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ For a general survey of anti-Semitism in the medical profession in the 1920s see Mária M. Kovács, “A *Numerus clausus* a huszas években” [The *Numerus clausus* in the 1920s], *Budapesti Negyed*, 1995/8, pp. 137–158.

⁵⁰ Eminent professors of the School of Philosophy, of Jewish origin.

⁵¹ Alice Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], n.d. [end of 1919?]

⁵² *Ibid.*—Emphasis added.

was reddest of them all, who remained and served the Bolsheviks, just as he did Károlyi, Tisza; this is how that country bumpkin wanted to deserve some praise.”⁵³

And yet in the crestfallen mood of the fall of 1919, after the departure of Béla Kun but before the consolidation of the Horthy regime, those at home hoped to get out while the émigrés hoped to get back. When Biró tried to help his friend Jászi find his way to the United States, Biró was desperate: “My heart is heavy when I write this letter. What misery and what sadness this is.”⁵⁴ And in four weeks, on Christmas Day, he added: “Sometimes I am tortured by unbearable homesickness.”⁵⁵ The misery of the exiles was not mitigated by some countries wishing to see the aliens out of their land and denying them jobs or other forms of livelihood: “Here in Switzerland distrust of the ‘Uslanders’ [foreigners]⁵⁶ is just raging, so that a foreigner can hardly get here to some income, in addition, those after this will hardly be allowed in at all. [...] your option is certainly right: emigrate.”⁵⁷

The old animosities and personal, often petty, biases among the Hungarian Radicals were exacerbated and even transferred into the emigration. The Jászi circle for instance, partly at least because of its own mixed Jewish/gentile, upper-middle class (or even upper class) background, never liked the Polányis,⁵⁸ and this type of division damaged the chances of concentrated Radical-Liberal political action. The Polányi family was one of the most remarkable in modern Hungarian cultural history. Its members built a modern intellectual tradition. Of Jewish-Lithuanian background, Cecilia Polányi, the mother of Michael and Karl and soon a widow, was the focus of a popular, largely Jewish intellectual circle. She was also an enthusiastic follower of Emile Jacques-Dalcroze and set up an “institute of eurhythmics” to teach the representation of musical rhythms in movement in Budapest. She wrote for Liberal German papers in Budapest (*Pester Lloyd*, *Neues Pester Journal*), Vienna (*Neues Wiener Journal*), and Berlin (*Berliner Börsen-Courier* and the *Berliner Montagspost*). More importantly, she was one of the earliest feminists of Hungary who, between 1912 and 1914, established and maintained her own private “women’s college,” called *Női Liceum*, which she

⁵³ Károly Kernstok to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, October 27, 1919, *loc. cit.* The same idea emerges in Jászi’s *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁵⁴ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, Firenze, November 27, 1919, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁵ Lajos Biró to Oscar Jászi, December 25, 1919, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁶ Swiss-German for “foreigner.”

⁵⁷ Károly Méray-Horváth to Oscar Jászi, Davos-Platz, Switzerland, December 9, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Női Liceum. Magyar nők tudományos továbbképző tanfolyama*, 1912–1913, 1913–1914 (“Értésítő” and “Munkaterv”), [Budapest, 1913]. Ilona Duczynska and Zoltán Horváth, “Polányi Károly és a Galilei-Kör” [Károly Polányi and the Galileo Circle], *Századok* 1971/1, pp. 89–104; and Lee Congdon, “Karl Polányi in Hungary, 1900–19,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11, No. 1 (1976), pp. 167–183; Hans Zeisel, “Karl Polanyi,” in David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12 ([New York:] The Macmillan Co & The Free Press, 1968), pp. 172–174.

interpreted as an open university for Hungarian women. Its faculty included some of the best scholars, social scientists and artists of the day, whose list reflected the intellectual scope and horizon of the Polányi circle before World War I. The student list reflected the social background of Mrs. Polányi's school, representing mostly rich, upper-middle class Jewish Budapest.

Family interests were truly encyclopedic. One of "Mother Cecile's" sons, Michael Polanyi (1891–1976), was the distinguished physical chemist turned philosopher, author of *Personal Knowledge*, first in Germany, later in Britain. His brother Károly (Karl) (1886–1964), cofounder of the pre-World War I radical Galilei Circle in Budapest, became a pioneering economic historian/anthropologist in the United States (*The Great Transformation*, 1944; *Dahomey and the Slave Trade*, 1966); his wife Ilona Duczynska (1897–1978) was also a leading figure in the radical movements of the early twentieth century. Michael's son, John C. Polanyi (b. 1929, and living in Canada), received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1986. Several other members of the family were equally creative and active.

Nonetheless, regardless of the Polányis' outstanding record, Alice Jászi-Madzsar was particularly hostile to Károly (Karl) Polányi and his followers, and warned her brother against possible cooperation with Károly in the United States which Oscar Jászi seemed to have considered at that point. Károly Polányi was attacked even in the most Liberal circles though, as Alice Jászi-Madzsar added, "[o]f course they themselves do not mean Károly himself, but the many chaos-minded, ill-mannered Jews who made up his entourage [...]"⁵⁹ József Madzsar joined his wife in attacking Jászi's plans to cooperate politically with Károly Polányi in the United States. „(1) It is unfortunate that the American plan is common knowledge, you still don't know the Polányis; (2) You couldn't have worse company in America than Karli; (3) All the plans of our friends concerning the future end with the *ceterum censeo*:⁶⁰ but without the Polányis! Those who would go for you into the fire make a proviso that the P[olányi] dynasty must not enter the club. There isn't a single Gentile among us (including myself) who would be once again willing to do any common work with any of the Polányis [...] [D]on't alienate your best allies by exposing yourself again with a member of the P[olanyi] dynasty. One cannot undertake this burden after their participation in the [Communist] dictatorship, not to speak about the damage done by their participation in the Radical Party.”⁶¹

This was more than just personal animosity against Karl Polanyi, this was a dedicated attempt to draw the line between the Radicals and the Communists, between the two revolutions of 1918 and 1919, and make the Radical-Liberal

⁵⁹ Alice Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], n. d. Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.—János Hock (1859–1936), author, orator and Member of Parliament, left Hungary after the declaration of the Republic of Councils.

⁶⁰ "I keep telling you ..." from the speeches of the Elder Cato (234–149 B.C.) who often reiterated it in his outbursts against Carthage.

⁶¹ József Madzsar to Oscar Jászi, Budapest, December 28, 1919, Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5.

position clearer, devoid of the extremities of both left and right. This included the avoidance of people discredited during what was commonly called the Commune. It became a running theme among Radicals and Liberals, and distancing themselves from the memory of 1919 was rapidly becoming an integral part of the new, progressive, Liberal agenda. A friend wrote to Jászi on the necessary changes during the fall of 1919:

„They plan to reopen the Free School but the list of speakers is in my mind not good: mostly people who played a role during the Commune. [...] In general, my feeling is that the world, the public sentiment, has changed very considerably, those who supported Hungarian progress up to now are disturbed; on the one hand they have a certain animosity against the progressive direction, on the other hand they do not like the contemporary state of affairs either. This mood makes a new, adapted method necessary. The old, excellent, aggressive, critical voice, dating back to some two years ago, is today out of place.”⁶²

It was certainly not the White Terror that created the “Jewish question” in 1919; it was already there, deeply embedded in early twentieth century Hungarian society. There were, of course, biases of all sorts. The Polányi circle, typically, would deal only with Jews and was often convinced that everybody of importance was, could, or should be Jewish. This often damaged their links with potential non-Jewish political allies. As a friend put it in mid-1921 writing to Michael and his family: “There is a new tenant in your apartment [in Germany], I don’t know whether or not you know him, Sanyi [Sándor] Pap, a boy from Pozsony [today Bratislava in Slovakia], and he is not even Jewish. He has never been. None of his relatives have ever been. I don’t believe the whole story; there is no such person in the world.”⁶³

⁶² Jenő [Gönczi] to Oscar Jászi, [Budapest], n. d., Oscar Jászi Papers, Box 5. I am indebted to György Litván for identifying Gönczi as the author of this letter.

⁶³ Gyuri [?] to Michael Polanyi and family, Wildbad, Germany, June 12, 1921, Michael Polanyi Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, Special Collections.—The perception of Jewish intellectual ubiquity was not quite a delusion or self-deception. The professional elite in Hungary had very

frequently intermarried with Jewish families and the Gentile author Lajos Zilahy provided an unusual and unexpected explanation, in his unpublished autobiography: “Christian intellectuals met with rigid, almost hostile reactions from their families and relatives. This is the explanation of the fact that some seventy percent

of them—beginning with Jokai, the greatest novelist in the last century up to the youngest generation in literature, the composers Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly [sic], prominent actors and painters—married Jewish girls, not for money, but for the warmer understanding of the Jewish soul for their professions.” Lajos Zilahy,

Autobiography, Boston University, Mugar Memorial Library, Lajos Zilahy Papers, Box 9, Folder 5. [English original.]—Mixed marriages in fact have remained a basic pattern in Hungarian middle-class and upper-middle-class society and have added to its creativity and intellectual intensity. Cf. John Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*.

A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), pp. 189–190.

Leaving Hungary

Whatever their faith, the drive to leave Hungary was preeminent and urgent for thousands. Contemporary observers commented on the “crisis of the university degree,” which was widely discussed in Hungarian public life, in parliament, at social gatherings, as well as at student meetings. Though the *Numerus Clausus* Act of 1920 created a particularly severe situation for young Jewish professionals, the crisis had a dramatic impact on most of the young students in Trianon-Hungary.⁶⁴ Social critics in the late 1920s pointed to “such an astonishing measure of intellectual degradation that the bells should be tolled in the whole country.”⁶⁵ Emigration seemed to be a serious option for every college graduate throughout the 1920s. Jews, of course, found they could not place realistic hopes on completing advanced studies and making a career in Hungary. Foreign universities and other institutions promised a good education and perhaps also a job. Good people freshly out of the excellent secondary schools started to gravitate toward German or Czechoslovak universities. Several of the latter also taught in German, and the Hungarian middle class of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Jew and Gentile alike, spoke German well. They brought it from home, learned it at school, occasionally in the army or during holidays in Austria, and it now became their passport to some of the best universities of Europe. The papers of almost every major Hungarian scientist or scholar include requests for letters of recommendation to attend fine German institutions. Already in Germany, Michael Polanyi and Theodore von Kármán were in constant contact with each other and with some of their best colleagues in Hungary and abroad. This is partly how interwar Hungarian émigrés started “cohorting” or “networking,” and gradually built up a sizeable, interrelated community in exile.⁶⁶ The network of exiles often continued earlier patterns of friendship in Hungary.

Curiously enough, Vienna was not particularly inviting. With his mother in Budapest and his brother Michael in Karlsruhe, Karl Polanyi’s discomfort in Vienna was typical. Though he was recognized as an economist of some standing and soon became editor of *Der österreichische Volkswirt*, he complained bitterly about the ambiance of the city. “The spiritual Vienna is such a disappointment, which is deserved to be experienced by those only who imagine the spirit to be bound to a source of income.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Dezső Fügedi Pap, “Belső gyarmatosítás vagy kivándorlás,” [Internal colonization or emigration] *Uj élet. Nemzetpolitikai Szemle*, 1927, Vol. II, Nos. 5–6. Repr. p. 1.—Pap cites pathetic details about the lifestyle of Hungary’s cca. 10,000 students, most of whom were deprived of even the most essential conditions and many were hungry and sick.

⁶⁵ Dezső Fügedi Pap, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 6–8.

⁶⁶ Mihály Freund to Michael Polanyi, [Budapest], May 4, 1920; Imre Bródy to Michael Polanyi, Göttingen, March 24, 1922; both in the Michael Polanyi Papers, Box 17.

⁶⁷ Karl Polanyi to Michael Polanyi, Vienna, April 24, 1920, Michael Polanyi Papers, Box 17, Folder 2. [Original in German]

Germany seemed much more challenging than Austria. With its sophistication and excellence, it was the dreamland for many who sought a respectable degree or a fine job. Young Leo Szilard was somewhat compromised under the Republic of Councils as a politically active student, and found the Horthy regime, in the words of William Lanouette, “thoroughly distasteful, and dangerous. [...] He thought he was in physical danger by staying because of his activities under the Béla Kun government [...] [He] was [...] afraid to come back. He stayed in Berlin.”⁶⁸ At first Szilard wanted “to continue [his] engineering studies in Berlin. The attraction of physics, however, proved to be too great. Einstein, Planck, von Laue, Schroedinger, Nernst, Haber, and Franck were at that time all assembled in Berlin and attended a journal club in physics which was also open to students. I switched to physics and obtained a Doctor’s degree in physics at the University of Berlin under von Laue in 1922.”⁶⁹

Already in Karlsruhe, Germany, and on his way toward a career in physical chemistry, Michael Polanyi was searching for a good job. He turned for help to the celebrated Hungarian-born professor of aerodynamics in Aachen, Theodore von Kármán, seeking advice as to his future. Von Kármán himself came from the distinguished, early assimilated Jewish-Hungarian professional family of Mór Kármán. Theodore went to study and work in Germany as early as 1908 and acquired his *Habilitation* there. By the end of World War I, he already had a high reputation when, after a brief interlude in 1919 in Hungary and some largely inaccurate accusations that he was a Communist, he quickly returned to Aachen in the fall of 1919.⁷⁰

Young Michael Polanyi’s questions to von Kármán about a job in Germany were answered politely but with caution.

„The mood at the universities is for the moment most unsuitable for foreigners though this may change in some years, also, an individual case should never be dealt with by the general principles [...] To get an assistantship is in my

⁶⁸ William Lanouette on His Leo Szilard Biography. Gábor Palló in Conversation with William Lanouette, *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, XXIX, No. 111 (Autumn 1988), pp. 164–165. A missing link: Szilard received a certificate from Professor Lipót Fejér dated December 14, 1919, testifying that he won a second prize in a student competition in 1916, and he presented this document to a notary public in Berlin-Charlottenburg on January 3, 1920. This is how we know, almost exactly, when he left Hungary. Cf. *Beglaubigte Abschrift*, signed by Notary Public Pakscher, Charlottenburg, January 3, 1920, Leo Szilard Papers, Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego, Geisel Library, La Jolla, California, MSS 32, Box 1, Folder 12.

⁶⁹ Leo Szilard, Curriculum Vitae (Including List of Publications), August 1956, updated June 23, 1959, Leo Szilard Papers, MSS 32, Box 1, Folder 2. Albert Einstein, Fritz Haber, Max von Laue, Walther Nernst, and Max Planck were Nobel Laureates, while Erwin Schrödinger and James Franck were prospective Nobel Laureates.

⁷⁰ For the 1919 incident in Hungary see Theodore von Kármán with Lee Edson, *The Wind and Beyond: Theodore von Kármán* (Boston-Toronto: Little, Brown & Co, 1967), Chapter 11: “Revolution in Hungary,” pp. 90–95; Gábor Palló, Egy tudománytörténeti szindrómáról—Kármán Tódor pályafutása alapján,” *Valóság*, Vol. XXV, No. 6, 1982, p. 26.

mind not very difficult and I am happily prepared to eventually intervene on your behalf, as far as my acquaintance with chemists and physical chemists reaches. I ask you therefore to let me know if you hear about any vacancy and I will immediately write in your interest to the gentlemen concerned.”⁷¹

Michael Polanyi’s Budapest University colleague and friend, George de Hevesy (1885–1966), chose Copenhagen. The prospective Nobel Laureate (Chemistry, 1943), who also came from a wealthy upper class Jewish family, was subjected to a humiliating experience just after the Republic of Councils came to an end.⁷² De Hevesy received his associate professorship (the actual title was “Extraordinary Professor”) from the Károlyi revolution and his full professorship from the Commune. He had a special task to perform: with Theodore von Kármán in his short-lived, though influential job in the ministry of education as head of the department of higher education, de Hevesy tried to obtain enough money to equip the Institute of Physics at the University of Budapest with important new technology and materials that would also serve other departments. Allegations were made that he used his friendship with von Kármán to prepare the Institute of Physics for Kármán and the department of physical chemistry for himself. He was accused of having been a member of the university faculty council during the Commune and to have received his professorship from its government. He was dismissed and was even denied the right to teach at the University of Budapest.

In an important letter written to Niels Bohr in the middle of his “trial,” de Hevesy bitterly complained that “politics entered also the University [...] hardly anybody who is a jew [sic] or a Radical, or is suspected to be a Radical, could retain his post [...] The prevalent moral and material decay will I fear for longtime prevent any kind of successfull scientific life in Hungary.”⁷³ Hevesy left Hungary in March 1920.

Others tried their luck in the German universities of Prague or Brünn [Brno] in newly created Czechoslovakia, where good technical and regular universities were available and the language of instruction was German. Many Hungarians had been natives of Pozsony or the Slovak parts of former greater Hungary and spoke German as their mother tongue. Standards were high and the students were still close to home. In an interview given in late 1989 in Columbia University in New York City, former Hungarian engineering student Marcel Stein vividly remembered the heated and dangerous atmosphere of late 1919 and early 1920 in Budapest. Though many moved to Berlin-Charlottenburg, or Karlsruhe in Germany or, like the distinguished engineer László Forgó, toward Zürich,

⁷¹ Theodore von Kármán to Michael Polanyi, Aachen, March 17, 1920, Michael Polanyi Papers, Box 17.

⁷² The history of the “trial” of De Hevesy in late October 1919 was reconstructed by Gábor Palló, “Egy boszorkányper története. Miért távozott el Hevesy György Magyarországról?” [The History of a Kangaroo Court: Why Georg de Hevesy Left Hungary?] *Valóság* XXVIII (1985), No. 7, pp. 77–89.

⁷³ George Hevesy to Niels Bohr, Budapest, October 25, 1919, Bohr Scientific Correspondence, Archive for History of Quantum Physics, Office of the History of Science and Technology, University of California, Berkeley. [English original.]

Switzerland, Marcel Stein remembered that many émigrés returned to Hungary later.⁷⁴ Though their actual number is unknown, the returnees were lured back to Hungary chiefly because of their sense of linguistic isolation, their keenly felt separation from family and friends, and, most of all, the gradually consolidating situation of Hungary in the mid-1920s.

Still some of the best scientists, engineers, scholars, artists, musicians, and professionals of all sorts, continued to leave Hungary in large numbers in 1920 and later.⁷⁵ For many, there was real danger in staying as they had actively promoted the Commune of 1919, such as the future Hollywood star Béla Lugosi, remembered primarily for his role in *Dracula*, who left for the U.S. in 1921, and film director Mihály Kertész, who became the successful and productive Michael Curtiz of *Casablanca*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, and *White Christmas*. For those who were actually members of the Communist government at some level, like the philosopher Georg [von] Lukács and the author and future film theorist Béla Balázs and many others, there was simply no choice but to leave.

Hungary became more civilized and less dangerous in the latter part of the 1920s under the government of Count István Bethlen (prime minister between 1921 and 1931), and some of the heated issues of 1919–1920 subsided by the end of the decade. The Radical-Liberal agenda no longer had a wide appeal, losing many of its champions who chose exile, and meeting with a measure of disregard under the regime of Regent Adm. Miklós Horthy. It became apparent to most people how difficult it had become, in the suddenly and drastically changed international and national, political and social conditions of the immediate post-World War I period, to uphold Western ideas and ideals. Even the Liberal agenda, which looked back almost a century in Hungarian history, and which embraced former immigrant Jews as well as the ideals of modernization through much of the nineteenth century, was in many ways closed off. Interwar Hungary became a thoroughly conservative, nationalist, and emphatically “Christian” country, as it was defined by the ruling élite. Though uncertain whether to leave their native Hungary, many Radicals and Liberals, despite their ambivalence, resolved their dilemma by necessity alone: there was no choice left to them but emigration.

The escape of Hungarian modernism

The unparalleled artistic, cultural, and intellectual upheaval in the final decades of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy has been amply treated by a growing

⁷⁴ Marcel Stein in conversation with the present author, November 29, 1989, Columbia University, New York City. In 1990–91 I was granted several valuable interviews by Andrew A. Recsei (1902–2002), a distinguished chemist in Santa Barbara, CA, another former Hungarian student who also studied once in Brno (Brünn) in exactly the same period of time.

⁷⁵ For the earliest and consequently incomplete list of important people who left Hungary in, or right after, 1919–1920, see Oscar Jászi, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–174.

literature, in and out of Austria and Hungary.⁷⁶ Much of what we call “the modernist movement” in European music, literature, the arts, social thought, philosophy, and psychology was started in the fertile, sensual and decaying intellectual climate of turn-of-the-century Vienna and Budapest. There was a certain playfulness and experimentalism in the air, the creative élite became attracted to novelty and invention, intellectual challenge and a call for change.

Less has been written about the link between the spiritual and artistic upsurge in what the Austrian author Stefan Zweig called the “World of Yesterday” and the subsequent post-World War I exodus of the Austro-Hungarian intellectual élite. The revolutionary movement in the arts and thought of pre-War Vienna and Budapest was radically transformed after the collapse and dissolution of the Monarchy in 1918–1920. The modernist movement suddenly lost momentum and was transformed into a more professional and more conservative tradition. It was also gradually relocated to other countries such as Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, and ultimately, the United States. In the following I will show some of the characteristic patterns of this migration of intellectual and artistic experimentalism and innovative spirit, illustrated here by two creative Hungarians who contributed to U.S. culture and civilization in a major way, Joseph [József] Szigeti and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

Pioneer in programming: Joseph Szigeti

Budapest was a center for the discovery of talented young musicians such as Gustav Mahler, Arthur Nikisch, Hans Richter, Rafael Kubelik, Franz von Vecsey, as well as of the dancing phenomenon Isadora Duncan. The man who did most for modern music among the Hungarian musicians was probably the violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973).⁷⁷ This Jewish-Hungarian virtuoso, who left Hungary also in the early 1920s, was perhaps the most celebrated and well-known student of Jenő Hubay and he carried the Hubay tradition literally all around the world. All his life he was conscious of the continuity of the Brahms tradition, both

⁷⁶ Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday. An Autobiography* (1943, repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964); W. M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), Allan Janik & Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), László Mátrai, *Alapját vesztett felépítmény* [Superstructure Without Base] (Budapest: Magvető, 1976), Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), Kristóf Nyíri, *A Monarchia szellemi életéről. Filozófiatörténeti tanulmányok* [The Intellectual Life of the Monarchy. Studies in the History of Philosophy] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1980), J. C. Nyíri, *Am Rande Europas. Studien zur österreichisch-ungarischen Philosophiegeschichte* (Wien: Böhlau, 1988), *Wien um 1900. Kunst und Kultur* (Wien-München: Brandstätter, 1985), John Lukacs, *Budapest 1900. A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays in the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁷⁷ For his autobiography see Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached. Reminiscences and Reflections* (New York: Knopf, 1947; 2nd ed. 1967), pp. 28–30.

in Vienna and Budapest, which he had received from his Budapest professor Hubay. The example of Szigeti is relevant in demonstrating the strong links between the old Music Academy tradition and the musical philosophy of the post-World War I generation.

In an effort to describe the tradition of the European chamber music tradition as well as his own roots, Szigeti wrote „[...] I felt that these notes might interest the listener of our days who has been to a great extent deprived of the real »habitat« of chamber music: the small Hall and— better still—the music room in which the congenial few gather around the players in rapt concentration. I was in my late teens when I turned pages at a rehearsal of the d minor Sonata. Leopold Godowsky and [my master] Jenő Hubay [rehearsed it] in preparation for their concert in Budapest, some twenty years after [Brahms had brought the pencil manuscript of his work to my master Hubay for] this Vienna »try-out« [...] One has reason to feel grateful for having been born at a time when these sonatas were still a comparative rarity, when [their performances presupposed mature players and] they had not yet become class room »material« and grateful »vehicles« for debut recitals. There were at the time a dozen-or-so recordings from which the student could choose his »model«; [...] As the rare live performances he heard were mostly by mature interpreters and took place in halls of modest proportions (world famous performers like Ysaÿe, Sarasate, d'Albert, Busoni played in Vienna's Bösendorfer Saal, in the old Paris Salle Pleyel in the rue Rochecouart seating barely 4 or 500, in the small »Royal« Hall in Budapest), the intimate chamber-music characteristics of these sonatas were brought home to him [...] Hubay told me at the time how much these fine points meant to Brahms, how literally he took his marking[s]...»⁷⁸

Szigeti mastered nearly the entire classical violin repertoire, and yet he became one of the few leading soloists in the world who was attracted to contemporary music. He even began to play the solo sonatas by Bach at the instigation of Milán Füst, a modernist poet who was his Budapest friend in their young days and became one of the leading spirits of the modernist movement in Hungarian literature and aesthetics.⁷⁹ For Szigeti, the living tradition of late 19th century music in Budapest and Vienna also implied the inclusion of contemporary music. This became evident from the beginning, as Otto Eckermann carefully observed as early as 1922, stating, “Mr Szigeti is one of the few violinists who always brings novelties [...], and he commissioned me to look for appropriate new works.”⁸⁰ Szigeti was always eager to learn new things and to understand

⁷⁸ Joseph Szigeti, “Jacket Notes for a Columbia Brahms Sonata Album,” Circa 1955?, In Szigeti's handwriting, Boston University, Mugar Memorial Library, Joseph Szigeti Papers. Deleted parts appear in brackets.

⁷⁹ “Joseph Szigeti, Pioneer in Violin Programming,” Unfinished MS, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, p.2.

⁸⁰ Otto Eckermann to Kurt Atterberg, June 24, 1922, quoted in Kurt Atterberg to Joseph Szigeti, Stockholm, July 28, 1958, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4. [English translation of a German translation by Kurt Atterberg.]

music from the composers' point of view. "If we concede—as I am inclined to do—an important role to this auto-suggestive faculty in our work, what better schooling in it than commence with new works and their composers?"⁸¹

At 80, he was awarded the George Washington Award of the American Hungarian Studies Foundation for identifying "himself with the new, untried and progressive," giving of himself "unstintingly so that a significant new voice in music might be heard."⁸² More contemporary composers of all nationalities dedicated their work to Szigeti, or were commissioned by him, than perhaps any other contemporary soloist. He readily lent the power of his charisma to Hungarians such as Béla Bartók, Pál Kadosa, Antal Molnár, Americans like George Templeton Strong, Russians such as Nikita Magaloff and Sergei Prokofiev, the Armenian Aram Khachaturian, Irishmen like Sir Hamilton Harty, Englishmen like Alan Rawsthorne, the Italian Alfredo Casella, the Lithuanian-Jewish Joseph Achron, the Swiss Ernest Bloch, and the Polish Alexander Tansman, often at an early stage in their careers when his support was especially beneficial. He considered it important to keep a whole series of contemporary music on his program, such as work by the Polish Karol Szymanowski, the French Albert Roussel and Darius Milhaud, the Roumanian Filip Lazar, the Russian Igor Stravinsky, the Italians Ferruccio Busoni and Ildebrando Pizzetti, as well as the Englishmen Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Arnold Bax,⁸³ and, later, the American David Diamond, Charles Cadman, and Henry Cowell.⁸⁴ He also worked in close collaboration with both Paul Hindemith and Igor Stravinsky. In this respect, Szigeti resembled Hungarian-American conductor Fritz Reiner who had a similar reputation for playing a lot of new Hungarian music such as that of Béla Bartók, Ernst von Dohnányi and Leo Weiner.⁸⁵ In what was probably early 1922, Szigeti played Dohnányi's *Violin Concerto* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Reiner.⁸⁶

There was a great deal of the Liszt tradition continuing in these gestures. Szigeti often invited composers to appear in recital with him performing their own work "thus creating a little oasis in a recital program where the composer and not the reproducing artist is the center of interest."⁸⁷ In the 1950s, he repeated a

⁸¹ "Joseph Szigeti, Pioneer in Violin Programming," *op. cit.* p. 43.

⁸² Diploma of the George Washington Award, April 19, 1972, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 4, Folder 3.

⁸³ Szigeti assisted by Nikita de Magaloff. Programme for June 13, 1935, Queen's Hall, London. Inside: A Few Contemporary Works from Szigeti's Repertoire. Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 2, Folder 1. See also V. Bazykin to Herbert Barrett, November 12, 1943, on Aram Khachaturian, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 3. Szigeti added to Bazykin's signature in pencil: "in the meanwhile, he became Ambassador."

⁸⁴ Joseph Szigeti Memorial Exhibition, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 6, Folder 2.

⁸⁵ Philip Hart, *Fritz Reiner. A Biography* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 23, 195, 225. Cf. Rollin R. Potter, "Fritz Reiner: Conductor, Teacher, Musical Innovator" (Ph.D. Thesis, Northwestern University, 1980).

⁸⁶ Philip Hart, *Fritz Reiner. A Biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁸⁷ "Joseph Szigeti, Pioneer in Violin Programming," *op. cit.*, p. 5.

number of series entitled “20th Century Cycles” in several U.S. universities and music centers,⁸⁸ which he recalled as a “pleasure evening series of eleven contemporary master-pieces, entitled ‘Sonatas of the 20th Century.’ I gave this series about fifteen times on different campuses in America and also in Zürich and over the Italian Radio in 1959. I recorded it for the Swedish Radio.”⁸⁹ In cases where he could not promote a contemporary work himself, he did everything in his power to make other artists interested, for example, in the case of Gian Francesco Malipiero’s *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, which he showed “to my friend, Maestro George Szell,” as well as to Leopold Stokowski in New York and Henri Barraud at the Radio Diffusion Française in Paris.⁹⁰

By carrying the tradition of an active interest in the contemporary, Szigeti made an example to his entire generation throughout a long and productive life. As Manoug Parikian saluted him in *The Royal Academy of Music Magazine* on his 80th birthday in 1972 „All this would seem commonplace in these days of over-consciousness of contemporary music; in the 1920s and 1930s, in the midst of virtuoso-type recitals and endless repetitions of the same five or six concertos it was a brave crusade. His deep knowledge and understanding of the spirit of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven was as important as his search for new music.”⁹¹

In the U.S., Szigeti’s delayed popularity has been attributed to the slow growth of intellectual sophistication in American audiences. His was a long and tedious journey toward making contemporary music recognized there. His pioneering efforts in front of select audiences of metropolitan music halls, enterprising campus groups, and on elitist radio programs, were often unnoticed or not remembered. He was often criticized for his programming. “Playing the Roussel *Sonata No. 2*, once lost Szigeti a prospective manager who heard him perform at Carnegie Hall. Modern composers do not sell programs, Szigeti was promptly informed. Recalling this incident Szigeti wrote, ‘needless to say I was entreated once again to mend my already notoriously incorrigible ways of programming.’”⁹² Yet, his pioneering efforts led to breakthroughs even in the U.S. where his philosophy of musical programming came through triumphantly: when playing the world première of the Bloch *Concerto* in Cleveland in 1938; Bartók’s *Contrasts* with Benny Goodman and the composer in Carnegie Hall in 1939; Prokofiev’s *Sonata in D*, op. 94 in Boston in 1944 and his *F minor*, op. 80 in San

⁸⁸ Joseph Szigeti to Ralph Vaughan Williams, April 10, 1957, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁸⁹ Joseph Szigeti to Michael Kennedy, Baugy s/Clarens, February 11, 1965, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹⁰ Carisch S. p. A., Milano, to Joseph Szigeti, Milano, January 14, 1958, and Joseph Szigeti to Carisch S. p. A., Palos Verdes Estates, CA, January 25, 1958, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹¹ Manoug Parikian, “A birthday tribute to Joseph Szigeti,” *The Royal Academy of Music Magazine*, [1972], Joseph Szigeti Papers.

⁹² “Joseph Szigeti, Pioneer in Violin Programming,” *op. cit.* p. 5.

Francisco in 1946; and the U.S. première of Prokofiev's *Concerto in D* and the Ravel *Sonata*.⁹³

For Béla Bartók, a contemporary composer self-exiled in the U.S., Szigeti did more than perhaps anybody else between 1940 and 1945. Their friendship started in the 1920s, and they toured together in Berlin in 1930. Szigeti used his connections to make Bartók's music available and popular to audiences in the U.S. He appeared with Bartók in recitals at the Library of Congress and played with the newly-arrived Hungarian composer in 1940 at Carnegie Hall. He was in touch with leading U.S. conductors such as Leopold Stokowski and tried to get Bartók's American compositions performed. Szigeti was one of the loyal supporters of Bartók during his last illness and tactfully helped the poor, though proud, composer receive help from wealthy patrons like Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge in 1943. He was ready to be at Bartók's disposal to the very last when the terminally ill composer requested his help to interest conductors in his third Piano Concerto, the last he composed.⁹⁴ After Bartók's death, Szigeti served as one of the trustees on the board of the Bartók Archives in New York.⁹⁵

Joseph Szigeti lived most of his adult life abroad, though he visited Hungary regularly to the end of his life, except for a gap after World War II. Throughout, Szigeti maintained excellent relations with Hungarian musicians and helped a number of them start their own careers. He was glad to be associated with Hungarian causes, and, along with Arthur Koestler and Nobel Laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi, was acknowledged by honorary membership in the Association of Hungarian Authors in Foreign Countries, located in London, right after the revolution of 1956.⁹⁶ He was instrumental in launching the career of cellist János Starker at the Indiana University School of Music.⁹⁷ Newcomers from post-1945 Hungary such as pianist-conductor Tamás Vásáry were glad to register their homage to the *maître*.⁹⁸ Szigeti found it important to publish his autobiography in Hungarian, thinking that "this new Hungarian intelligentsia should get to know me a little."⁹⁹ He asked Hungarian-American diplomat Andor C. Klay how he felt about it and Klay's answer was most enthusiastic: "I have found that they know about you to a degree which is surprising in the light of your

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; Agatha Fassett, *The Naked Face of Genius: Bela Bartók's American Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958); Agatha Fassett, *Bela Bartók—The American Years* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970).

⁹⁵ Victor Bátor to Joseph Szigeti, New York City, February 18, 1963, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹⁶ Joseph Szigeti to Magyar Írók Szövetsége, Céligny (Geneva), November 17, 1958, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹⁷ Joseph Szigeti to Wilfred C. Bain, Palos Verdes Estates, CA, January 22, 1958, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹⁸ Tamás Vásáry to Joseph Szigeti, Chardonne, October 26, 1960, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁹⁹ Andor [C.] Klay to Joseph Szigeti, American Embassy, Belgrade, March 3, 1960, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

long absence from Hungary and their long years of isolation from the West. I recall examples from Camp Kilmer when I visited there in order to select some refugees to form a delegation which could be presented to the President and the Secretary. I raised various questions, ranging from the political to the cultural, in order to gauge their range of knowledgeability. Your name was repeatedly mentioned.”¹⁰⁰

Szigeti always tried to include Hungarian pieces in his U.S. programs and even his most popular ones such as the People’s Symphony Concerts on CBS, included a *Scène de la Csárda* by his master Jenő Hubay, *Rhapsody in C* by Ernst von Dohnányi and a piece by Bartók played with the composer.¹⁰¹

“New Vision:” Laszlo Moholy-Nagy

Comparable in many ways to the achievement of Szigeti in the performing arts was the *New Vision* of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), a dramatic testimony to the significance and range of the modernist contribution in the visual arts from Hungary. Coming from the same generation of Jewish Hungarians, Moholy-Nagy was probably the most versatile of the Hungarian artists, being an architect, photographer, designer, prolific author, and filmmaker.¹⁰² Along with fellow-Hungarian Marcel Breuer, he was a founding member of the *Bauhaus* school, first in Germany and later, in 1937, in Chicago. Moholy became a pioneer in diverse fields such as non-figurative geometric art, kinetic sculpture, typographical design, as well as in photography. *Bauhaus* founder and lifelong friend Walter Gropius characterized Moholy-Nagy’s abstract art, his “new vision,” in musical terms at the opening of the Moholy-Nagy Exhibition at “London Galleries,” in 1936, providing one of the most lucid and rational explanations of abstract art ever given.

„You know that musical work, a composition, consists, just like painting, of form and content. But its form is only in part a product of the composer, for in order to make his musical ideas comprehensible to any third person, he is obliged to make use of counterpoint which is nothing more than a conventional agreement to divide the world of sound into certain intervals according to fixed laws. These laws of counterpoint, of harmony, vary among different peoples and in different centuries, but the changes are very slow [...] In earlier days the optical arts also had firm rules, a counterpoint regulating the use of space. The academies for art which had the task of keeping up and developing these rules, lost them—and art decayed. Here the abstract painters of our day took up the threads and used their

¹⁰⁰ Andor [C.] Klay to Joseph Szigeti, American Embassy, Belgrade, March 3, 1960, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰¹ Columbia Concerts Corporation of CBS to Joseph Szigeti, New York, December 31, 1940, Joseph Szigeti Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.

¹⁰² Moholy-Nagy’s films, lesser known today, included *Berlin Still Life* (1926), *Marseille vieux port* (1929), *Lightplay: Black, White, Gray* (1930), *Gypsies* (1932).

creative powers to conquer a new statutory law of space. This new counterpoint of space, a new vision, is the core of their achievement.”¹⁰³

Gropius described Moholy-Nagy's entire work as „a mighty battle to prepare the way for a new vision, in that he attempts to extend the boundaries of painting and to increase the intensity of light in the picture by the use of new technical means, thus approximating nearer to nature. Moholy has observed and registered light with the eye of the camera and the film camera, from the perspective of the frog and the bird, has tried to master impressions of space and thus developed in his paintings a new conception of space.”¹⁰⁴

Moholy-Nagy was a most intense and insightful observer of the “modern” world of the 1920s and 1930s. Like the best of his generation, he went far into the visual exploration of form, construction, spacial relationships, and light effects.¹⁰⁵ “We might call the scope of his contribution “Leonardian,” so versatile and colorful has it been,” said Walter Gropius in eulogizing him at his Chicago funeral in 1946.¹⁰⁶ “His greatest effort as an artist was devoted to the conquest of pictorial space, and he commanded his genius to venture into all realms of science and art to unriddle the phenomena of space. In painting, sculpture and architecture, in theater and industrial design, in photography and film, in advertising and typography, he constantly strove to interpret space in its relationship to time, that is motion in space.”¹⁰⁷

What Gropius attempted to explain particularly was the source of Moholy-Nagy's modernism, the basis of his deep and enthusiastic interest in anything new. „Constantly developing new ideas, he managed to keep himself in a stage of unbiased curiosity from where a fresh point of view could originate. With a shrewd sense of observation he investigated everything that came his way, taking nothing for granted, but using his acute sense for the organic. [...] Here I believe was the source of his priceless quality as an educator, namely his never ceasing power to stimulate and to carry away the other fellow with his own enthusiasm. What better can true education achieve than setting the student's mind in motion by that contagious magic?”¹⁰⁸

Just as many other contemporary artists of the early 20th century represented varied brands of modernism, Moholy was described as a technical pioneer “who was fascinated and stirred by the dynamic pace of the machine age. His elan vital thrived on the tempo and the motorized rhythm of big-city life.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Walter Gropius, “Speech for the Opening of the Moholy-Nagy Exhibition at ‘London Galleries,’” December 31, 1936, Walter Gropius Papers, Harvard University Libraries, The Houghton Library, bMS Ger 208 (5).

¹⁰⁴ Gropius, “Speech,” December 31, 1936, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ Eleanor Margaret Hight, “Moholy-Nagy: The Photography and the ‘New Vision’ in Weimar Germany,” Harvard University Ph. D. Thesis, 1986, p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Gropius, “Eulogy for Ladislaus Moholy-Nagy,” Chicago, November 1946, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (86).

¹⁰⁷ Gropius, “Eulogy,” *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Eberhard Roters, *Painters of the Bauhaus* (New York—Washington: Praeger, 1969), p. 165.

He deeply believed in the new unity of art and technology.¹¹⁰ The big European and American metropolises exerted an unmistakably “modern” influence and left a lasting imprint on his whole generation. An important aspect of Moholy’s life was the big city, the continuous mechanization of the world and human life with it. For him, modern man’s structure was mechanical, “the synthesis of all his functional mechanisms.”¹¹¹ “Man is unique in the insatiability of his functional mechanisms, which hungrily absorb every new impression and never cease to crave for more. This is one reason for the continuing need for the creation of new forms,” as he explained in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*.¹¹² As an artistic expression of his functionalist artistic philosophy, Moholy-Nagy experimented with what he called the “space modulator,” a pioneering optical-kinetic sculpture pointing towards a new art form. Others of his ideas contributed to new branches of knowledge such as cybernetics and semantics.

Experimentation was fundamental throughout Moholy’s life, starting with his participation in the *Ma* [Today] group in Budapest, and his cooperation with the Hungarian modernist artist and author Lajos Kassák. But it was in Germany, in the early *Bauhaus* period, that his experimenting vitality blossomed and young Moholy became particularly productive.

A primary example is his discovery of creative photography as a new artistic discipline. He became convinced that photography came to replace painting in representing reality. In his painting, he was striving for “organized order.” In his photography he proved to be a superb master of new techniques, but his photographs became artistically significant through “his completely novel and individual manner of looking at familiar things—the use of bold foreshortening, unusual angles, and superimposed light-dark structures, such as the shadow of a net or a fence.”¹¹³ His growing reputation made movie director Sir Alexander Korda request that he do the special effects for his *The Shape of Things to Come*, based on a 1933 work of science fiction by the popular British author H. G. Wells.

His experimental photography gave fresh impetus to advertising techniques. To this end, he renewed the art and technology of typography in order to create a new form for communicating messages. He argued that “printing processes had not undergone a significant change, either technically or aesthetically, since Gutenberg’s time, and that the printed image should be made lively and interesting and should be brought up to date to make it worthy of the twentieth century.”¹¹⁴ Here again, his innovative spirit was preoccupied with modern technology and the use of machines.

„Opportunities for innovations in typography are constantly developing, based on the growth of photography, film, zincographic and galvanoplastic

¹¹⁰ Eberhard Roters, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–165.

¹¹¹ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (München, 1925) p. 23, quoted by Eberhard Roters, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹¹² Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei*, quoted by Roters, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹¹³ Eberhard Roters, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

techniques. The invention and improvement of photogravure, photographic typesetting machines, the birth of neon advertising, the experience of optical continuity provided by the cinema, the simultaneity of sensory experiences—all these developments open the way for an entirely new standard of optical typographic excellence; in fact, they demand it.”¹¹⁵

Though Moholy-Nagy in his American years continued to do the experimental art of his German *Bauhaus* period and gradually became a very influential teacher of its ideas, like Szigeti, he had a long fight for recognition in the United States. The idea to invite him came from his mentor Walter Gropius, then Chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard, who had worked out details with the people in Chicago. For Moholy, this sounded like intellectual salvation, as in London he had bitterly complained that “from a spiritual point of view one can reach here nothing or only the minimum and that every stimulus and every excitement is missing.”¹¹⁶ He was anxious to get back and work in a school just as in the old days of the *Bauhaus*. Now the chances were good for being able to develop an American version of the *Bauhaus* in Chicago and Moholy eagerly answered, “for plan highly interested [—] please send more details.”¹¹⁷

His friend Walter Gropius, then 60, was optimistic about the U.S. environment.¹¹⁸ He called America a “pleasant continent,” and gave details about the Chicago plans which were based on the money of department store millionaire Marshall Field and located in one of his buildings. One of the crucial points of Moholy-Nagy’s candidacy was his strong relationship with British and German industry, and firms like Simpson and International Textile. Important people such as biologist and educator Julian Huxley provided references.¹¹⁹

After what he labelled “*diesen enervierenden kleinkram hier*” [these enervating odds and ends], Moholy was eager to leave Britain and relocate, as it were, the *Bauhaus* spirit in Chicago. “Everything calls here for a better design in industry,” said Gropius underlining the nature of the new job he helped to find for Moholy.¹²⁰ He planned four classes in industrial art, in metal, wood, “typo-photo-film (commercial graphic),” and textile. Gropius suggested that he would “be given free hand to develop the thing in a direction as you like fit.”¹²¹ He also

¹¹⁵ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, “Zeitgemässe Typographie—Ziele, Praxis, Kritik,” in *Offset, Buch und Werbekunst*, No. 7 (Leipzig: [Bauhaus,] 1926). Quoted by Eberhard Roters, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹¹⁶ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter and Ise Gropius, London, May 28, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).—Keeping with the *Bauhaus* tradition, Moholy did not capitalize in his correspondence.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ Walter Gropius to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, [Cambridge, MA,] June 1, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹¹⁹ Walter Gropius to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, [Cambridge, MA,] June 10, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²⁰ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter and Ise Gropius, London, June 13, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²¹ Walter Gropius to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, [Cambridge, MA,] June 10, 1937, *loc. cit.*

thought Moholy could put together his faculty as he pleased, and the opportunity to start from scratch seemed to have particular advantages.

Moholy put enormous energies into what became “the new *bauhaus*—American School of Design, founded by the Association of Arts and Industries.” First he had to fight for the very name *Bauhaus* itself, for he thought that since the Americans had adapted *Weltanschauung*, they might as well use the term *Bauhaus*.¹²² Immediately, he wanted to become part of the *Bauhaus* exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art at Rockefeller Center in New York.¹²³ He also intended to continue the old *Bauhaus* book series, particularly as the Nazi takeover had closed the German market for *Bauhaus* publications.¹²⁴ He shared, however, the opinion of Gropius who saw great potential in bringing over the *Bauhaus* to the U.S., but considered it essential to adapt its methods to the country and to the character of its people.¹²⁵

The new bauhaus was finally opened in Chicago on October 18, 1937.¹²⁶ Moholy was pleased with his first experiences which he found interesting, particularly as he had earlier considered the Americans not clever enough; soon he had to realize how mistaken he had been. “Their intellectual standard, the quick copying of the facts is fascinating. Only their capacity of experiences must be enlarged, I think. They eat knowledge really with the spoon, with large, real, round soup spoons.”¹²⁷ He persuaded some of the best available people to join his faculty, including Archipenko for modeling, David Dushkin for music, the journalist Howard Vincent O’Brien to lecture on “the meaning of culture,” as well as three professors of the University of Chicago, Charles W. Morris to teach “intellectual integration,” Ralph W. Girard for life sciences, and Carl Eckart for physical sciences. “[George] Kepes will arrive, with all the gods’ help, in the middle of November,” he added to the list.¹²⁸

The first school year was academically successful. At its end, however, they experienced financial difficulties to an extent that Moholy-Nagy was advised by the Association of Arts and Industries to tell his faculty that if they were offered other positions “they should take them because the Association’s financial position made it probable that we would not open next semester.”¹²⁹ Moholy-

¹²² Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Ise and Walter Gropius, Chicago, July 31, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²³ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Ise and Walter Gropius, July 24, 1937; Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Alfred H. Barr, Chicago, September 15, 1937, [English original], Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²⁴ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Alfred H. Barr, Chicago, September 15, 1937, *loc. cit.*

¹²⁵ Walter Gropius to [?] Kruger, [Cambridge, MA,] [October, 1937], Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²⁶ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter Gropius, Chicago, October 20, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221). [English original].

¹²⁷ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Ise and Walter Gropius, Chicago, August 12, 1937, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹²⁸ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter Gropius, Chicago, October 20, 1937, *loc. cit.*

¹²⁹ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to The Executive Committee, Association of Arts & Industries, Chicago, August 16, 1938, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221). [English original].

Nagy felt especially bitter about experiencing a typical émigré situation: “After I and my teachers were asked by the Association of Arts and Industries to come to this country and after we have shown every possible amount of good will, the reason why she [Miss Stahle of the Association] could not raise money for the school was the resentment against foreigners in this country.”¹³⁰ The school started to disintegrate: teachers were dismissed, equipment became less and less available. Moholy felt he had to look for other sponsors and get out of the Association. Gropius called the story “the first case of Chicago gangsterism that we experienced in actual fact,” and tried to use his prestige to help.¹³¹ Moholy thought “America was always a country of pioneers and there is no doubt my next time will be a justification of this term.”¹³² He felt compelled to fight for survival. “Now sometimes I think why is to fight? As stranger in a foreign country! But I found such a great enthusiasm everywhere I go for the *Bauhaus* that I think it would be a pity to drop it. Also the last year I felt that I grew really, more and quicker than in the past 5 years all together.”¹³³ Oddly enough, he felt at home and wrote most of his letters, even the ones to Gropius, increasingly in English.

At Christmas 1938, the situation was still unchanged and Moholy’s wife Sybill complained bitterly to Mr. and Mrs. Gropius, “*Es ist immer und immer die alte schmutzige geschichte mit ihnen...*” [It is always and always the old dirty story with them...]”¹³⁴ Moholy himself wrote a long letter to *The New York Times* and gave a detailed story of their humiliation. Soon he was able to gather enough support to open the school again, under a new name, School of Design, at a new address, starting February 22, 1939. The “Sponsors’ Committee” included distinguished names such as the noted American art historian Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Walter Gropius, and Julian Huxley. He was able to offer a summer course in 1940 and a series of evening lectures in 1939–1940.

By Christmas 1939, the storm was over, and Moholy confidently reported to Gropius, “Indeed the school looks fine. We have much more and better machines and equipment than we had on Prairie Avenue and as good luck, my public lecture on “The New Vision and Photography” drew about two hundred and twenty people and was very well received.”¹³⁵ He was also able to secure a grant of \$10,000 from the Carnegie Foundation and another \$7,500 somewhat

¹³⁰ *Ibid*

¹³¹ Walter Gropius to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, [Cambridge, MA,] August 19, 1938, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹³² Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter Gropius, Chicago, August 19, 1938, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221). [English original].

¹³³ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter Gropius, [Chicago?] November 15, 1938, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221) [English original].

¹³⁴ Sybill Moholy-Nagy to Ise and Walter Gropius, Chicago, December 24, 1938, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹³⁵ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Walter Gropius, Chicago, December 21, 1939, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

later, which were major triumphs.¹³⁶ He planned to invite Stravinsky to lecture and perform at the School. By March 1, 1942, the School had 120 students “which is absolutely wonderful as it is 2% more than last semester and so many art schools and colleges have lost rather than gained students.”¹³⁷

The School was blossoming when leukemia claimed Moholy's life in 1946.¹³⁸ Robert J. Wolff commented on the book by Sybill Moholy-Nagy on her husband, “Laszlo Moholy-Nagy will perhaps be best remembered as the man who not only helped to formulate one of the most vital manifestos of our time, but who, unlike many of his brilliant *Bauhaus* colleagues, had the power and the faith to fight to the point of death for the social implementation of the brave young words of the original Bauhaus documents.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Charles W. Morris, Chicago, February 8, 1940, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Ise and Walter Gropius, Chicago, August 13, 1941, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹³⁷ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Mr and Mrs Walter Gropius, Chicago, March 9, 1942, Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹³⁸ Moholy's last available report on the school is dated September 27, 1943, and is most optimistic. Walter Gropius Papers, bMS Ger 208 (1221).

¹³⁹ Robert J. Wolff on Sybill Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950).

Michael L. Miller

***Numerus clausus* exiles: Hungarian Jewish students in inter-war Berlin**

In September 1919, following the collapse of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, two brothers, Leo and Béla, went to the register at Budapest's Technical University, but they were stopped by a throng of students, one of whom yelled, "You can't study here. You're Jews." Leo protested, saying, "We're Calvinists, not Jews, and have the papers to prove it." But this only angered the students more, and they rushed at the two brothers, kicking them as they crawled and tumbled down the broad marble steps. Afterwards, Leo applied for an exit visa to study abroad, eventually leaving for Berlin, where he continued his studies at the *Technische Hochschule* (Technical University). Leo remained in Berlin until the Nazi seizure of power, then emigrated to the United States, where he went on to become a "father of the atom bomb."¹ This tale of Leo Szilárd's last months in Budapest is indicative of the anti-Jewish climate in 1919 that led many young Hungarian Jews (or Jewish converts) to pursue their studies abroad.² In the following year, the post-revolutionary government, in one of its first legislative acts, passed the *numerus clausus* law, which "produced a break with the tolerant, secular policies of Hungary's pre-1914 governments."³

Overcrowding, antisemitism and the numerus clausus

In Hungary, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was followed by a quick succession of governments: first, the Hungarian Democratic Republic under Count Mihály Károlyi (October 1918 – March 1919); then, the Hungarian Soviet Republic under Commissar Béla Kun (March – August 1919); and finally, the reconstituted Kingdom of Hungary (1920-1944) under the regency of Admiral Miklós Horthy (1920-1944). The Hungarian Soviet Republic was often denigrated as the "Judeo-Bolshevik Commune," due to the preponderance of Jews among its leadership, and many Jews were forced to pay the price for the Red Terror and other crimes committed during the Soviet Republic. Indeed, the White Terror of 1919-1920, which sought to avenge the Red Terror, targeted leftists and Jews alike, often assuming the character of anti-Jewish pogroms in the

¹ Details taken from William Lanouette and Bela Silard, *Genius in the Shadows: a biography of Leo Szilard, the Man Behind the Bomb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

² On the emigration of many leftist Hungarian intellectuals after the fall of the Soviet Republic, see Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³ Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994).

Hungarian countryside. Many Hungarian Jews sought temporary refuge in Vienna and elsewhere during this tempestuous period. In total, the White Terror claimed the lives of roughly two thousand people, many of them Jews.

In the Horthy era, Hungarian nationalism took a decidedly antisemitic turn, and “Judeo-Bolsheviks” were increasingly cast as a treasonous enemy that had brought about all of Hungary’s ills, including the Red Terror in 1919 and the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. The Treaty of Trianon, which was signed at Versailles on June 4, 1920, officially dismembered Hungary, transferring three-quarters of its pre-war territory and two-thirds of its pre-war population to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and even Austria. Along with the loss of territory, Hungary lost most of its national minorities (Romanians, Slovaks, Serbs, etc.), leaving the Jews as the most visible “other” in an increasingly homogeneous state. Christian nationalism, which was ascendant in the 1920s, viewed the Jewish “spirit” as foreign – and antithetical – to the Christian Hungarian spirit. This became apparent in the discourse surrounding the *numerus clausus* law of 1920.

On September 22, 1920, the Hungarian National Assembly passed a *numerus clausus* law, with the ostensible aim of reducing the overcrowding in Hungary’s universities. The influx of many Hungarian-speakers from Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, as well as the closing down of the Hungarian universities in Kolozsvár (Cluj, Romania) and Pozsony (Bratislava, Czechoslovakia)—which had belonged to pre-Trianon Hungary—placed an enormous strain on Hungary’s institutions of higher learning, particularly on the various universities in Budapest. But the *numerus clausus* law, which established a quota system for Hungary’s universities based on the proportion of individual races (*nép faj*) and nationalities (*nemzetiség*) in the general population, had a clearly antisemitic intent. Jews constituted only 6% of Hungary’s general population, but almost 3% of its university students and as much as 5% of its medical students. Christian nationalists, who viewed universities as “workshops of genius,” saw the overrepresentation of Jews as the “de-Christianization of Hungary” and considered the *numerus clausus* a necessary form of “racial self-defense.”⁴ As such, the Hungarian *numerus clausus* was the first piece of antisemitic legislation in post-war Europe.

“The numerus clausus exiles”

Like Leo Szilárd, many Hungarian students “of Jewish origin” responded to the antisemitic climate by pursuing their higher education abroad. Hungarian Jewish students initially flocked to German-language universities and polytechnics in the former Habsburg Empire. Vienna’s universities, attended by numerous Hungarian students in the decades before World War I, continued to attract students from the former Habsburg lands, including more than 700

⁴ *Ibid.*

Hungarian Jews in 1922 alone.⁵ Nonetheless, as the young Arthur Koestler could readily attest, the atmosphere was not always hospitable to these Hungarian Jews. In 1922, when he inquired about the admissions procedure at Vienna's *Technische Hochschule*, he was "told in confidence that it is very difficult as a Hungarian and even more as a Jew to be accepted."⁶ Among the students at Prague's German *Technische Hochschule*, there were allegedly 600 Hungarian Jews in 1920 and 1,100 in 1921.⁷ Here, the Hungarian Jewish students could temporarily experience the pivotal role that their parents' generation had played in the nationality conflicts of the Habsburg Empire – with one major difference: while their parents' generation had bolstered the hegemonic Hungarian majority in Hungary, the Hungarian Jewish students in Prague now found themselves bolstering the beleaguered German minority. The dwindling enrollment at Prague's German academic institutions meant that such institutions risked being shut down by a relatively hostile Czechoslovak government; the influx of German-speaking Hungarian Jews gave institutions like the German *Technische Hochschule* an additional lease on life, but it also raised the ire of the Czechoslovak authorities. In the early 1920s, the police expelled a number of Hungarian Jewish students from Czechoslovakia, accusing them of obtaining false citizenship papers from their relatives in Slovakia (formerly Upper Hungary) in order to attend university. In Brno, where Czech-German tensions were considerably calmer than in Prague, somewhere between 500 and 1,000 Hungarian Jews attended institutions of higher education in the 1920-21 academic year, particularly the German *Technische Hochschule*.⁸

For many Hungarian Jews, Czechoslovak universities and polytechnics were merely the first station in their highly peripatetic student life, which often found them at two or three different institutions of higher learning in as many countries. After the Czechoslovak currency crashed in the early 1920s, many Hungarian Jewish students moved to Germany, where the celebrated universities – and instruction in German – were particularly appealing. The fact that some German universities (such as Würzburg) charged a supplementary fee for foreign students often put undue financial pressures on Hungarian Jews. By 1923, in the wake of the hyperinflation and general political instability, Germany became an increasingly inhospitable environment for foreign Jewish students, and many Hungarian Jews picked up their "wandering staff" and moved to their next station. In this context, the Hungarian-Jewish newspaper *Egyenlőség* (equality) lamented the "sad, truly Jewish fate, which has chased our students from country to country,

⁵ Pál Bethlen (ed.), *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja: Numerus clausus*, (Budapest, [1925]), pp. 139-142.

⁶ Letter from Arthur Koestler to his parents; quoted in David Caesarini, *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (London: William Heineman, 1998), 30.

⁷ *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 142-143.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 144. See also *Zsidó Szemle*, January 7, 1921, 14.

like truly modern Ahasveruses.”⁹ This allusion to the legendary wandering Jew was a central – and rather obvious – leitmotif in the Hungarian Jewish press of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰

While many Hungarian Jewish students left Germany for France, Italy, Switzerland and elsewhere, others continued to study in Weimar Germany.¹¹ Berlin, in particular, remained home to a sizeable colony of Hungarian Jewish students until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Some of these students, like the future nuclear physicist Eugene P. Wigner, joined Leo Szilárd at Berlin’s *Technische Hochschule*, while others attended the world-renowned Friedrich-Wilhelms University (also known as Berlin University).¹² Berlin’s institutions of higher learning had attracted numerous Hungarian Jews (and non-Jews) prior to the First World War, so the influx of Hungarian Jewish students in the 1920s was, in some respects, a continuation of this earlier trend.¹³ However, if the data for Hungarian applicants to the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in 1921-22 are any indication, Hungary’s Jews were drawn to Berlin’s institutions of higher learning in far greater numbers than Hungary’s non-Jews. Indeed, of the 32 Hungarian applicants for the winter semester, 23 of them, i.e. 72%, were of “mosaic” confession.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, this was the first full academic year in which Hungarian Jews were affected by the 1920 *numerus clausus* law. As Dezső Keresztury, a student in Berlin in the 1920s, noted in his memoirs, “as a result of the *numerus clausus*, the number of Jewish university students in Berlin

⁹ A magyar zsidó diákokat kivisszük Németországból, /We take out the Hungarian students from Germany/, *Egyenlőség*, November 17, 1923, 5.

¹⁰ The term “wandering Jew” (*bolygó zsidó*) was frequently used. See *Egyenlőség*, March 28, 1934, 18.

¹¹ “Különösen Németországból vándorol tovább sok bolygó diák, mert ott a megélhetésük majdnem lehetetlen volt és ezek többnyire Franciaország és az olasz egyetemi városokban igyekeznek elhelyezkedni.” /”This is especially from Germany that many wandering students go further because their living conditions are intolerable and the move mostly to France or to Italian university towns”/, *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 146.

¹² See Andrew Szanton, *The Recollections of Eugene P. Wigner as told to Andrew Szanton* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1992), 93.

¹³ See László Szögi, *Magyarországi Diákok Németországi Egyetemeken és Főiskolákon 1789-1919*, /Students from Hungary in German universities and academies, 1789-1919/, (Budapest, 2001), 45. In the decades before World War I, an estimated 15% of the Hungarian students in Germany were Jews. At Berlin’s *Technische Hochschule*, 40 out of 176 Hungarian students, i.e. 23%, were Jews. According to Victor Karady, Hungarian students abroad chose primarily German-speaking universities in Germany and Austria until the Nazi seizure of power. See his “Student Mobility and Western Universities: Patterns of Unequal Exchange in the European Academic Market, 1880-1939,” in *Transnational Intellectual Networks*, edited by Charles Charle, Jürgen Schriewer and Peter Wagner (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 2004), 374.

¹⁴ Humboldt University archive (Berlin), Rektor u. Senat der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin, sig. 1010. Ausländer. Übersichten über die bei der Universität Berlin eingereichten Anträge auf Zulassung zum Studium und ministerielle Entscheidungen, die mehrere Gesuchsteller betreffen. Winter Semester 1921/22. Of the remaining 9 applicants, 6 were Catholic, 2 Evangelical, and 1 Reform. For subsequent years, religion is not indicated.

multiplied.”¹⁵ According to one source, 80 Hungarian Jews were studying in Berlin in 1925, mostly at the Technische Hochschule, but some of them at the Berlin Academy of Arts (*Akademische Hochschule für Bildende Künste*), as well.¹⁶ The actual number was presumably even higher.

“Such is our suffering in Berlin . . .”

Being a student in 1920s Berlin was not all fun and games. “The student of the inflation period had little time for general academic pursuits,” observed one contemporary. “He suffered under economic and academic restrictions.”¹⁷ Some students were lucky enough to get one warm meal a week, which they often received from the Quakers, the World Student Christian Federation, or other charitable organizations that did their part to relieve the post-war misery and poverty. In order to make ends meet, students worked factory night shifts, found jobs as extras on film sets or played music at Berlin’s places of amusement.¹⁸ For Jewish and non-Jewish students alike, tales of hardship and despondency were legion, as were occasional reports of student suicides.

After the *numerus clausus* went into effect, the Hungarian-Jewish press regularly featured the plight of Jewish students studying abroad and spearheaded fundraising drives to relieve their misery. *Egyenlőség*, the ultra-patriotic and anti-Zionist weekly of assimilated Hungarian Jewry, was at the forefront of these efforts, but its appeals were also echoed by *Múlt és Jövő* (Past and Future), a Jewish cultural journal with Zionist sympathies, and *Zsidó Szemle* (Jewish Review), an organ of the Hungarian Zionist movement.¹⁹ Initially, students received assistance from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Welfare Center in Czechoslovakia (*Jüdische Fürsorge-Zentrale in der Tschechoslowakei*) or the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in Germany, but they also relied on the largess of private individuals – often Hungarian Jewish émigrés, such as the banker Alfréd Manovill in Berlin.²⁰ In

¹⁵ Dezső Keresztury, *Emlékezéseim* (Budapest, 1993), 175. Thank you to Eszter Gantner for bringing my attention to this important memoir.

¹⁶ *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 144.

¹⁷ Hans Ostwald, *Sittengeschichte der Inflation: Ein Kulturdokument aus den Jahren des Marksturzes* (Berlin: Neufeld & Henius Verlag, 1931), 200.

¹⁸ *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 145.

¹⁹ See *Külföldön tanuló magyar zsidó diákok nyomora*, /Misery of Hungarian students abroad/, *Egyenlőség*, November 20, 1920, 8; *A külföldön tanuló zsidó diákság nyomora*, /The misery of those studying abroad/, January 7, 1921, 14; *Zsidó diákok külföldön*, /Jewish students abroad/, *Múlt és Jövő*, January 21, 1921, 11-12.

²⁰ On Manovill Alfréd (1880 Veszprém – 1944 Budapest), see *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon*, 573; *Ki kicsoda? Kortársak lexikona* (Budapest, 1937), 529-530; *Veszprémi Megyei Életrajzi Lexikon* (Veszprém, 1998). In 1904 Manovill moved to Berlin, where he worked for the Mendelssohn bank. In 1934, he returned to Budapest, where he established the *Salamon J.T. és Manovill A. bankház*. Manovill’s philanthropic activities in Berlin are also mentioned in *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 144. He died in the Jewish hospital, right outside of the Budapest Ghetto, on November 30, 1944. I am currently writing a biography of Manovill.

most university towns, Hungarian Jewish students formed their own committees, which organized events on Jewish holidays, and, most importantly, solicited money from co-religionists back home. *Egyenlőség* regularly published letters from the committee chairmen in Vienna, Brno, Prague, Berlin, Padua, Bologna, Paris and elsewhere, as well as heart-wrenching descriptions of the poverty, hardship, illness – and physical and spiritual homelessness – suffered by the *numerus clausus* students. On July 29, 1922, it published the following report from Berlin:

“The majority of the Hungarian students in Berlin came here to live against their will. Among them, there are very poor ones who receive nothing from home. . . .

Those Hungarian students in Berlin who receive no help from home and would otherwise find it impossible to support themselves, receive support from the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). The bank director Alfréd Manovill, president of the Berlin Hungarian Association, has a very understanding heart and helps them a lot; with him, the Berlin Hungarians can always find moral support. Without exception, all of the Berlin Hungarians are grateful to him. Among them, there is no one who has nothing to thank Manovill for.”

The report goes on to describe a student who committed suicide, and then ends on a slightly happier note, noting that the film producer Cserépy Arzén (1881-1958) recently hired many Hungarian students at 40 Marks a day to work as extras on his new film, *Fridericus Rex*.²¹ The point of the report was clear: even a little financial aid would considerably ease the hardship of these “*numerus clausus* exiles” in Berlin.²²

In 1923, the Pest Jewish community came to the aid of the *numerus clausus* students by establishing the Central Student Aid Committee (*Központi Diáksegítő Bizottság*), which, in its first four years alone, supported 2,440 students in 68 towns in 8 different countries. In Germany, it supported 170 students in 1923/24, 100 students in 1924/25, 70 students in 1925/26 and 39 students in 1926/27.²³ One of these students was the 23-year-old Hungarian-born historian Jacob Katz, who received a stipend to study in Frankfurt, Germany, in the late 1920s.²⁴ (According to a report in *Egyenlőség*, of all the university towns

²¹ A *numerus clausus* száműzöttjei, /Exiles of the *numerus clausus*/, *Egyenlőség*, July 29, 1922, 6. Cserépy Arzén was not Jewish. Siegfried Kracauer describes “*Fridericus Rex*” (1922) as “cinematically trivial.” He characterized this film, which depicted the life of Frederick the Great, as “pure propaganda for a restoration of the monarchy.” See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 115-119.

²² A similar article, *Numerus clausus*, *Egyenlőség*, September 23, 1923, 8, begins with: “Igy szenvedünk Berlinben [...]”, /”This is how we suffered in Berlin...”/.

²³ Gyula Gábor, Küzdelmeink a *numerus clausus* ellen, /Our combats against the *numerus clausus*/, *Zsidó Évkönyv* (1927/28), 150-159. As the number of stipends for Germany decreased, the number of stipends for Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Italy increased.

²⁴ Jacob Katz, *With My Own Eyes: The Autobiography of an Historian*, translated by Ann Brenner and Zipora Brody (Hanover, 1995), 71.

in Germany, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France and Switzerland, Berlin was by far the most expensive.)²⁵

The Committee did not limit itself to financial aid, but also sought to provide other kinds of support for Hungarian Jewish students abroad. In the words of one report,

“The Committee does everything to ensure that the émigré students don’t lose their ties to Hungarianness; it supports their associations, in which Hungarian students from the separated territories also take an active part. In fact, Christian students studying abroad even join the associations of our students.”²⁶

If the report of the Committee can be taken at face value, the Hungarian Jewish student colonies succeeded in preserving a Hungarian national identity, rooted in cultural-linguistic solidarity and transcending confessional and racial categories. However, the Committee’s report must be taken with a grain of salt, especially when one considers the counter-examples in Berlin, which will be examined in a moment.

“A nation’s students abroad make the best propaganda”

In theory, the large number of Hungarian Jews studying abroad could have served as the avant-garde in Hungary’s attempt to end its international isolation in the 1920s. As “a well-traveled Hungarian” wrote in 1922, “Students abroad make the best propaganda for their nation.”²⁷ He reminded his readers how Czech, Serbian, Romanian and Polish students abroad had “served their country’s cause to such great effect” in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, and he envisioned a similar role for the thousands of Hungarians studying abroad. The “well-traveled Hungarian” echoed sentiments expressed by Count Kunó Klebelsberg, Hungary’s Minister of Religion and Education from 1922 to 1932, and the foremost proponent of cultural diplomacy in the post-Trianon period.

Minister Klebelsberg viewed Hungarian students and scholars as cultural diplomats, who could boost Hungary’s reputation in the capitals of Central and Western Europe.²⁸ As he said in a 1925 speech, “Following the disarmament of

²⁵ Mibe kerül egy magyar zsidó diák megélhetése a külföldi egyetemi városokban, /*What are the living costs of a Hungarian student in a foreign university town*/, *Egyenlőség*, August 1, 1925, p. 8. The *létférfi* (minimum for survival) for Berlin was 2.000.000 magyar papírkorona (Hungarian paper crowns), compared to 1.500.000 or 1.300.000 for all other German towns. Italian university towns were the cheapest: 1.000.000.

²⁶ *A Magyar Zsidóság Almanachja*, 146-147.

²⁷ A külföldi magyar diákok hivatása: ne gyártunk ellenségeket a saját testvéreinkből!, /The mission of Hungarian students abroad. Let us not make enemies out of our own brothers/, *Külföldi Magyarság*, May 1, 1922, 6.

²⁸ On cultural diplomacy in Central Europe from the outbreak of the First World War onward, see Andrea Orzoff, *The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ferenc Glatz, Klebelsberg tudománypolitikai programja és a magyar történettudomány, /Klebelsberg’s program of science policy/, *Századok* (1969), 1176-1200; Péter Hencz, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kunó, a harmadik évezred minisztere* (Szeged: Bába, 1999).

Hungary at Trianon, the cultural portfolio has become the homeland defense portfolio as well. . . . Today, the Hungarian motherland cannot be preserved by the sword, but rather by culture, and this will again make it great.”²⁹ Of course, the large number of Hungarian Jewish students forced to study abroad actually undermined Klebelsberg’s policy, because, as the *New York Times* put it, the *numerus clausus* law “created abroad anti-Hungarian opinion.”³⁰ It also undermined his policy, because it marginalized and disheartened the thousands of Hungarian Jewish students across Europe who would have happily and wholeheartedly served the Hungarian cause. As the “well-traveled Hungarian” observed in his article, “The Calling of Hungarian Students Abroad: Let’s Not Create Enemies out of Our Own Brothers,” everything ought to be done to prevent “artificial and unwise aggravations” that would “directly exclude [Hungarian Jewish students] from service to the Hungarian cause.” In other words, the “misguided” *numerus clausus* law ought to be repealed or revised.³¹

In 1921 and 1925, the League of Nations called for an inquiry as to whether the *numerus clausus* was in violation of Hungary’s obligations to the Minority Treaties, which had come into force following the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Wherever he went, Minister Klebelsberg was forced to defend this discriminatory measure, which he insisted was only temporary. (Indeed, the law was finally amended in 1928, after further pressure for the League of Nations.)³² Prior to Klebelsberg’s visit to Berlin in 1926, Robert Gragger, director of the Hungarian Institute at the Berlin University, warned him that someone from the German Foreign Ministry wanted to talk with him about ways to quell the “international Jewish outcry” over the *numerus clausus* law.³³ After his Berlin visit, Klebelsberg complained to his host, Prussian Minister of Culture and Education Carl Heinrich Becker, about the “unpleasant task” of always having to defend the *numerus clausus* law.³⁴

The international outcry over the *numerus clausus* law distracted Klebelsberg from his efforts to end Hungary’s cultural isolation through cultural diplomacy. As a means for fostering academic exchange, Klebelsberg proposed setting up Hungarian institutes abroad (*külföldi magyar intézetek*) in the cultural capitals of Europe as well as state-funded fellowships to enable Hungarian

²⁹ Kuno Klebelsberg, *Klebelsberg Kuno beszédei, cikkei és törvényjavaslatai: 1916-1926*, /Speeches, articles and legislative propositions of Kuno Klebelsberg/, (Budapest: 1927), 516.

³⁰ Hungarian Minister Attacks Anti-Semitism, *New York Times*, November 11, 1928, 59.

³¹ A külföldi magyar diákok hivatása, /The mission of Hungarian students abroad/, *Külföldi Magyarok*, May 1, 1922, 6.

³² Maria M. Kovács, . . . 24-25.

³³ Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattára /Manuscripts department of the Hungarian National Library/, (Budapest), Robert Gragger—Kunó Klebelsberg correspondence, no. 11, October 12, 1925.

³⁴ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin), VI. HA C.H. Becker. Letter from Klebelsberg to C.H. Becker, January 9, 1926.

students to study at foreign universities.³⁵ Not surprisingly, Klebelsberg did not assign a central role to Jewish students and scholars in this endeavor.

In the early 1920s, Hungarian centers, known as *Collegium Hungaricum*, were set up in Rome, Vienna and Berlin. The Berlin *Collegium Hungaricum*, which was established in 1924, was closely connected to the Berlin Hungarian Association (established in 1846), which had been the focal point of the Hungarian colony in Berlin, and the Hungarian Institute at the University of Berlin (established in 1916/17).³⁶ Unlike the Association and the Institute, however, the *Collegium Hungaricum* was a state-sponsored institution aimed at fostering intellectual exchange between Hungarian and German academics. These Hungarian academics benefited from the second pillar of Klebelsberg's foreign policy: state-sponsored fellowships (*állami ösztöndíjak*), which were given to qualified (or well-connected) Hungarians, beginning in the 1923/24 academic year.³⁷

It appears that the *numerus clausus* climate that reigned in Hungary extended to the allocation of these state-funded fellowships, as well. In the 1923/24, 1924/25, and 1925/26 academic years, of the 198 fellowships that were distributed for various European universities, not a single one was awarded to a Jew. Of the more than 200 academics who received state-sponsored fellowships for the Berlin *Collegium Hungaricum* between 1923/24 and 1932/33, only five of them were Jews.³⁸

The *numerus clausus* climate also reigned in the Berlin Hungarian Student Association, which had been established in 1842.³⁹ The original, short-lived Student Association had been dissolved already in the nineteenth century, but it was reestablished in October 1920, just before the Hungarian *numerus clausus* law was passed.⁴⁰ According to the statutes, membership was open to all people, and the Association was a non-political organization, which excluded those people, "whose past or current political activities endanger the political neutrality of the

³⁵ See Andor Ladányi, *Klebelsberg felsőoktatási politikája*, /The policy of higher education of Klebelsberg/, (Budapest: Argumentum kiadó, 2000), 7-13, 132-141. See also Ákos Horváth, ed., *Tanulmányok az újkori külföldi magyar egyetemjárás történetéhez*, /Studies on peregrinations abroad of Hungarians in the Modern Era/, (Budapest: ELTE, 1997).

³⁶ Dénes Kovács, *A Berlini Magyar Egyesület negyvenéves története*, /Forty years history of the Hungarian Association in Berlin/, (Berlin, 1886); *Magyar Kolónia – Ungarische Kolonie Berlin e.V.: 1846-1986* (Budapest: Delta Press, 1986).

³⁷ János Martonyi, ed., *A Collegium Hungaricum Szövetség Zsebkönyve*, /Almanach of the Collegium Hungaricum Association/, (Budapest, 1936).

³⁸ A külföldi ösztöndíjak, /Scholarships abroad/, *Egyenlőség*, March 12, 1927, 3. In the 1930/31 academic year, when a total of 241 *ösztöndíj* /student grants/ were distributed, eight Jews – including Dr. Benedict János and Dr. Ujlaki Miklós – were among the recipients. See Nyolc zsidó tudós kapott ezidén állami ösztöndíjat, /This year eight Jewish scholars have received state fellowships/, *Egyenlőség*, August 3, 1931, 3.

³⁹ Dezső Keresztury, *Emlékezéseim*, 173.

⁴⁰ Humboldt University archive (Berlin), Rektor u. Senat der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin, sig. 892. "Bund Ungarischer Hochschule Berlin 1842," ff. 5-8. Leo Szilárd was present at the founding meeting on October 30, 1920.

Association.”⁴¹ However, in reality, the meetings of the Student Association were politically charged, reflecting the general climate of the time in Berlin . . . as well as in Budapest.

In his memoirs, Dezső Keresztury, who headed the Student Association in the late 1920s, described the antagonistic, and often openly anti-semitic, atmosphere of the Association in this period:

“The Association had a good number of Jewish members who quarreled with one another, but they quarreled primarily with the non-Jews who came from the student associations in Hungary. They brought the domestic antisemitic catch phrases with them to Berlin. At home, the racist right wing got louder and louder. In Germany, Hitler and his henchmen were already on the rise.”⁴²

Keresztury went on to describe his sense of outrage, when “a passionate member of the right-wing Turul Student Association” started to preach antisemitism to the young people living in Berlin.⁴³

Kesztury also described the reaction among Hungarian Jewish students in Berlin, who tried to come to terms with their rejection by large segments of Hungarian society. In particular, he recalled a Hungarian Jewish architectural student at Berlin’s *Technische Hochschule*, who delivered a lecture on the Jewish Question in Hungary at one of the meetings of the Student Association. Keresztury summarized the essence of his lecture as follows:

“For us Jews, Hungary was a welcoming, nurturing mother; now the circumstances have made her our stepmother. We can bear this, because we know that she will once again take us under her arms as our mother.”⁴⁴

This Hungarian Jewish architectural student expressed his disillusionment and sense of abandonment by his Hungarian “mother,” but he still remained confident that the scourge of antisemitism that had enveloped Hungary and Germany was merely a passing phenomenon.

From numerus clausus to numerus nullus: university antisemitism and the rise of nazism

Berlin may have been a refuge from Hungarian university antisemitism in the early 1920s, but it proved to be only a temporary haven. The anti-Jewish riots that erupted at Budapest’s universities in 1919, and again in 1923, 1927, 1928 and 1933, found echoes in Vienna (1927, 1931), Brno (1927), Prague (1929), and especially Berlin, where the *Technische Hochschule* had become a stronghold of National Socialism long before the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933.⁴⁵ Indeed, “the National Socialists had gained more massive support among the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Dezső Keresztury, *Emlékezéseim*, 175.

⁴³ Ibid., 176.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hans Ebert, The Expulsion of Jews from the Berlin-Charlottenburg Technische Hochschule, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XIX* (1974), 156.

students than in any other section of the population,” with National Socialist student organizations garnering up to 76% of the vote at many of Germany’s universities and other institutions of higher learning.⁴⁶ At Berlin University, National Socialist students initiated antisemitic riots almost every year between 1929 and 1933, and routinely boycotted lectures of Jewish professors.⁴⁷ National Socialist students enthusiastically welcomed the Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities (April 25, 1933), which – like the Hungarian *numerus clausus* law of 1920 – restricted admission of Jewish students, with the stated goal of reducing their numbers to the percentage of non-Aryans in the entire German population.⁴⁸

On March 12, 1932, *Egyenlőség* published a letter from Hungarian Jewish students in Berlin, fittingly entitled “Hungarian Jewish boys in Berlin’s roaring chaos.” After describing Berlin’s “bloody streets,” these students lamented their unenviable predicament:

“Such are they, struggling in Berlin’s friendless crowd, having to pay for the fact that they were born Hungarians, not Germans, whose unforgiveable offense is that they are Jews, and whose unfortunate sin is that they are students.”⁴⁹

Interestingly, Éva Patai, the daughter of József Patai (editor of *Múlt és Jövő*) and herself a student in Berlin, gave a more encouraging report in the following year. Upon her return to Budapest in March 1933 (a month before the Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities was promulgated), she told the *Zsidó Szemle* that the atmosphere in Berlin at the time of her departure was “completely calm.”⁵⁰ Éva, however, saw her future in neither Berlin nor Budapest. On September 19, 1933, she married Alfred Leon Hirsch, a Lemberg-born Jewish engineer, whom she had met in Berlin. Their wedding took place in Jerusalem, where the Chief Ashkenazic Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook officiated.⁵¹ Éva’s brother, the anthropologist Raphael Patai, also moved to Jerusalem in 1933 and he attended the newly-established Hebrew University,

⁴⁶ Max Pinl and Lux Furtmüller, *Mathematicians under Hitler, Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XVIII* (1973), 130.

⁴⁷ Antisemitisch betonte Hakenkreuzler-Ausschreitungen an der Berliner Universität, *Jüdische Volksstimme*, February 28, 1929, 2; So weit ist es in Berlin gekommen! *C-V Zeitung*, July 3, 1931, 345-346; Studentenrebellion, *C-V Zeitung*, July 10, 1931, 359-360; Nazis Engage in Fight at Berlin University, *New York Times*, July 1, 1932, 4; Schwere antisemitische Ausschreitungen an der Berliner Universität, *Selbstwehr*, January 20, 1933, 2.

⁴⁸ Béla Bodo, *The Role of Antisemitism in the Expulsion of non-Aryan Students, 1933-1945, Yad Vashem Studies XXX* (2002), 189-227; Das Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung deutscher Schulen und Hochschulen, *C-V Zeitung*, April 27, 1933, 147.

⁴⁹ Magyar zsidó fiúk Berlin üvöltő káoszában, /Hungarian boys in the roaring chaos of Berlin/, *Egyenlőség*, March 12, 1932, 6.

⁵⁰ A németországi események egy szemtanúja. Beszélgetés Patai Évával, /A witness of the German events. Conversation with Éva Patai/, *Zsidó Szemle*, March 17, 1933, 2.

⁵¹ Patai Éva házassága Jeruzsálemben, /Éva Patai’s marriage in Jerusalem/, *Zsidó Szemle*, October 3, 1933, 8. See also Raphael Patai, *Between Budapest and Jerusalem: The Patai Letters, 1933-1938* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 7-11.

where he was awarded the university's first Ph.D. in 1936.⁵² After graduating, he returned temporarily to Budapest, where he sought to "recruit students for what at that time was the only Jewish university in the world."⁵³

In 1933, foreign Jewish students – whether Jewish by religion or "Jewish" by race – again picked up their "wandering staff" and moved to their next station: France, Italy, Switzerland, Palestine and increasingly Great Britain and America. Leo Szilárd – Jew by birth and Calvinist by religion – left for London in 1933, and then to America. Although he had become a *Privatdozent* and a German citizen, the rise of Hitler made his continued stay in Germany inadvisable. (Albert Einstein helped him secure an American visa.)⁵⁴ By June 1935, there were only 60 Jewish students in Berlin, most of them German citizens.⁵⁵ On November 11, 1938, two days after *Kristallnacht*, Bernhard Rust, Minister of Science and Education, instructed Germany's rectors to remove all Jewish students from their institutions, making Nazi Germany the first country to go from *numerus clausus* to *numerus nullus*.⁵⁶

A year earlier, in 1937, Minister Rust had addressed Berlin's *Collegium Hungaricum* on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Hungarian Institute at the Berlin University. In his remarks, he praised "the close sense of belonging between the German and Hungarian people," as well as the recent Cultural Treaty (1936), signed between the two allies.⁵⁷ Döme Sztójay, Hungarian ambassador to Germany at the time (and later Hungarian premier during the 1944 deportation of Hungarian Jewry) was also present, a testament to the increasing coordination (*Gleichstellung*) of Hungarian and German affairs.

Several years later, in 1942, the Berlin Hungarian Association celebrated its hundredth anniversary, and in honor of this festive occasion, Béla Szent-Iványi, a lecturer at the Berlin University and the director of the *Collegium Hungaricum*, co-authored an article on its history.⁵⁸ He portrayed the Student Association as a testament to the "Indestructibility and durability of German-Hungarian relations." Afterwards, he proudly touted Hungary's *numerus clausus* law, but he lamented its initial, unintended consequences:

"After the World War, Hungary was the first state in Europe that tried to remove the Jews from the leading intellectual and economic position that they had

⁵² Raphael Patai, *Apprentice in Budapest: Memories of a World That is No More* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 421.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 463. Hebrew University of Jerusalem was opened on April 1, 1925.

⁵⁴ William Lanouette and Bela Silard, *Genius in the Shadows*, 100-102.

⁵⁵ Apróságok Németországból, /Small things from Germany/, *Egyenlőség*, June 15, 1935, 10. "Berlinben mindössze 60, a birodalomban 300 zsidó főiskolai diák van." /In Berlin there are altogether 60, in the Reich 300 Jewish students./

⁵⁶ Certain *Mischlinge* were still permitted to study. See Béla Bodo, "The Role of Antisemitism," 209-226.

⁵⁷ For Rust's speech, see *Ungarische Jahrbücher* 17 (1937), 1-2.

⁵⁸ Zoltán von Papp and Béla von Szent-Iványi, Hundert Jahre Bund Ungarischer Hochschüler Berlin, *Ungarische Jahrbücher* (1942): 1-28. On Szent-Iványi, see *Keresztény magyar közéleti almanach*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1940), 1007.

assumed at the end of last century. The Hungarian law of 1920, which aimed to limit the number of Jewish students at the Hungarian universities, was the first break with the unified liberal, democratic order in Europe. Unfortunately, Hungary was alone back then in this measure and the effect of the law was that the Jewish youth of Hungary flocked to foreign universities.”⁵⁹

Indeed, many of Hungary’s *numerus clausus* exiles initially went to Berlin, but by the time Szent-Iványi wrote these words, the Hungarian Jewish students were long gone from Berlin (and the rest of the German Reich). Many of the students – and their patrons, such as the banker Alfréd Manovill – had returned to Hungary. The returning graduates often had difficulties getting their foreign degrees *nostrified* in their land of birth, which – in their years abroad – had truly become a “stepmother.” Others, like Leo Szilárd, Eugene P. Wigner and Éva Patai continued their peregrinations elsewhere as “wandering Jews” of the twentieth century.

⁵⁹ “Hundert Jahre,” 21.

Lucian Nastasă

Anti-semitism at universities in Romania (1919-1939)

By the end of the First World War the Ancient Kingdom of Romania had achieved the long desired aim of incorporating large territories with masses of native Romanians into an independent state. So Transylvania from Austria-Hungary, Bessarabia and Bukovina from Russia became united to Romania. The Act of Union that more than doubled the country's area and population confronted the new state with extremely complex social and political challenges, due to a great diversity in the ethnic and confessional structure of the population and to the heavy regional inequalities in socio-cultural and economical terms.

To refer to the most relevant basic documentation, the statistics of 1899 and of 1930, respectively, give an insight into the transformation of ethnic and confessional structures of the country. While in 1899, from a total of 5,956,690 people, confessional proportions were as follows: Orthodox Christians 91,5%, Jews 4,5%, Roman Catholics 2,5%, Muslims 0,7%, Protestants 0,4% and others 0,4%, in 1930 the population was 18,047,028, whereof 72,6 % were Orthodox Christians, 6,8 % Roman Catholics, 4,2 % Jews, 3,9 % Calvinists, 2,2 % Lutherans, 1 % Muslims and 1,3 % others. 71,7% of the population was composed of ethnic Romanians, and the rest (28,1%) belonged to minorities, that is 5,069,000 people - not much less than Romania's total population in 1899¹.

Each of the newly added regions brought with it some specific traits difficult to harmonize with those in the Ancient Kingdom, a fact that pushed the decisive political forces to elaborate a project of "national domination", a strategy for the integration of all culturally disparate elements into a unified space of the Romanian citizenry. The theory of "social domination" by a change of the titular ethnic elite represented in reality a new burden imposed on those falling into minority status via various forms of political and cultural, but also economic deprivation the latter were exposed to endure.

The present study's aims at the presentation of some characteristic elements of anti-Semitism in inter-war Romania just in the very sphere where it appeared the most clearly, in Universities. The anti-Semitic faction of the academic field grew ever stronger and generated a climate of militant agitation and menace, a climate cultivated and sustained by nationalist student corporations, a climate that was to degenerate into acts of violence under the flags of such

¹ Leonida Colescu, *Analiza rezultatelor recensământului general al populațiunii României de la 1899*, [The review of the results of the general census of the Romanian population from 1899 forward by dr. Sabin Manuilă, București, Institutul Central de statistică, 1944, p.85]; *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. IX [General Structure of the Romanian population published by Sabin Manuilă, București, Edit. Institutul Central de Statistică, s.a., p.376-406, 440-470].

organisations or parties as the Social Christian League, the Romanian Action, the National Romanian Fascia, the National-Christian Defence League, the Archangel Michael Legion, All for the Country, the Iron Guard and so on. Still, it is not easy to clear up the facts and motives of the veritable anti-Semitic crisis which emerged in academe after the First World War due to the scarcity of indispensable basic studies concerning the distribution of anti-Semitic potential in the social space of the new state².

The tension between the dominant national clusters and the Jews arose mainly, at least initially, with reference to economic and social motives. Jews in Romania had always manifested a remarkable competitive force on economic markets and in some modern professions, which caused the local inhabitants a sense of frustration and social failure. The public anti-Semitic discourse had a strongly economic edge in the core as early as the last quarter of the 19th century, generating animosity to Jews, that led to the policy of restrictive legislation and the refusal of their collective civic emancipation, which continued till the end of the First World War³. Later on emancipation was formally implemented only due to the pressure of international organizations. The Constitution adopted in 1923 finally gave full civil rights to Israelites. Civic equality thus granted to Jews ought to have eased such ethnic tensions in after-war Romanian society, yet certain specific traits of the new societal juncture, together with events that took place around the country – the Soviet type Commune of Budapest, the temporary occupation of most of Hungary by Romanian troops and the ensuing “white terror”, the disregard for ethnic realities in the drawing of the new state borders plus the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia – contributed to exacerbate these tensions together with deteriorating Romanian-Hungarian relations.

Although the new Constitution contained provisions for handling the problems of ethnic minorities, confessional discrimination continued as a principle of legislation. Since Article 22 of the Romanian Constitution proclaimed the Orthodox Church as “dominant”, the rest of confessional brackets were secured a marginal status only. Although in the interwar period there was no legislative restriction to the social mobility of Jews, Romania was a country governed by an ethnic-national titular elite, and public functions (in the administration, the army or education) remained practically inaccessible to ethnic outsiders, especially to Jews.

So, until the year of 1938 when the “dark” articles of law brought about new restrictions, Jews elaborated some compensatory mechanisms that gave them a chance of success in branches of activity where the competition of non Jews

² A more detailed documentation is offered in Lucian Nastasă (editor), *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1939). Mărturii documentare*, Cluj-Napoca, Edit. Institutului Pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților naționale, Kriterion, 2011.

³ Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs en Roumanie. De l'exclusion à l'émancipation, 1866-1919*, Aix-en-Provence, Éditions de l'Université de Provence, 1978, and *L'émancipation des Juifs de Roumanie, 1913-1919. De l'inégalité civique aux droits de minorité*, preface de Charles Olivier Carbonell, Montpellier, Centre de recherches et d'études juives et hébraïques, 1992.

appeared to be weaker. That is how Jews have achieved a relative over-representation in some economic sectors, liberal and intellectual professions which were not protected to the benefit of native Romanians. Some important economic fields had always been regarded as “made especially for Jews”, given their commonly recognised ability to invest in progressive and modern branches of the cultural industry, the press, book publishing, filmmaking, etc. Considering the contribution of Jews to modern approaches to intellectual and cultural production via politics, literature, philosophy or the sciences, we can see in Jewry a community defined not only by faith and religious convictions, but also by specific competences and over-qualification of sorts. Thus, the emancipation of Jews after the First World War, their competition for social achievement on legally equal footing with the indigenous element was perceived by many Romanians as an unrestricted and undue form of dominance left in their hands. The main social bases of anti-Semitism were provided by the groups whose situation deteriorated in the after-war crisis, and by those that often found themselves in a more or less direct competition with Jewish partners.

Jews were among the greatest users of the educational system in Romania. Traditionally, education for them was an important strategy to strengthen their ethnic and religious identity. But modern educational pursuits performed for Jews an essential compensatory function for social disadvantages arising from their marginal situation.

After the First World War the younger generation of Jews was indeed prone to give up the earlier ideal of running small shops and workshops, they aspired for hitherto inaccessible patterns of mobility on the social and professional scale through investing in advanced studies. They also hoped that attending institutions of elite education would improve their chances of social integration and free them entirely from their old status of stigmatized aliens. As observable in the data of the tables, in spite of negative attitudes of many towards them, Jews set a high value on personal success in the united Romanian state. The following tables offer a general overview of information related both to the development of the student body and to the presence of Jews in Romanian universities of the inter-war years. For lack of space these data cannot be analysed here in all their details. They should simply illustrate the spectacular development of the presence of Jews in the student body of Romanian universities after 1919, as compared to their rarity earlier, but also their progressively declining representation in the 1930s. The curve of the trend is the same in every university faculty, but not on the same level, except in Cluj – where the general level of Jewish representation appear to be as a rule lower than in the other academic centres, but there is no real decline neither in the years preceding World War II.

Proportions (%) of Jewish Students in Romanian Universities by Study Branches and Selected Periods (1900-1940)⁴

University of Bucarest

	law	medicine	pharmacy	arts, philosophy	sciences	veterinary studies	all (estimation)
Before 1919	2,3% (4334)	10,4% (1870)	7,1% (1279)	1,9% (1266)	3,8% (338) ⁶	–	4,6% (9087)
1920/21-1922/23	0,4% (8479) ²	25,5% (3434) ²	22,8% (478) ²	5,1% (1224) ²	16,1% (1747) ²	2,4% (208) ⁷	8,8% (15570)
1923/4-1929/30	16,7% (45570) ³	23,6% (11388) ³	36,3% (4077) ⁴	6,5% (20231) ⁵	9,3% (13508) ³	1,1% (1577) ³	14,9% (96351)
1930/31-1935/36	15,6% (50445)	23,4% (6039)	31,6% (6001)	9,4% (18555)	11,2% (16495)	0,6% (2489)	14,8% (100024)
1936/37-1939/40	5,5% (23637)	13,7% (4687)	27,% (2536)	6,% (10358)	10,1% (5171)	0,8% (1695)	7,9% (48084)

University of Iasi (and Iasi/Chisinau Agricultural Studies)

	law	medicine	pharmacy	arts philosophy	sciences	agriculture	All estimation
Before 1919	4,% (1092)	–	–	–	–	–	4,% (1092)
1920/21-1922/23	12,9% (2916) ²	60,3% (1377) ⁸	75,5% (396) ⁸	–	29,3% (2570) ⁹	–	25,9% (7259)
1923/4-1929/30	17,7% (10146) ³	43,3% (4064) ³	83,3% (2962) ³	14,% (3886) ³	14,% (7560) ³	–	26,7% (28618)
1930/31-1935/36	20,3% (14931)	39,6% (4151)	79,4% (2122)	14,% (5026)	12,2% (6410)	6,5% (1814)	23,1% (34454)
1936/37-1939/40	7,5% (3825)	35,1% (2278)	65,7% (35)	12,4% (1145)	14,6% (1352)	5,5% (584)	16,1% (9219)

⁴ The absolute numbers of students in brackets. Source: Lucian Nastasă (ed.), *Antisemitismul universitar...*, op. cit. pp. 67-82.

² No data for 1921-1923.

³ No data for 1923-1924.

⁴ No data for 1925-1926.

⁵ No data for 1923-1924, 1925-1926.

⁶ No data for 1909-1910.

⁷ No data for 1922-1923.

⁸ No data for 1919-1922.

⁹ No data for 1921-1922.

University of Cluj⁵ (and the Legal Faculty of Oradea)

	law	medicine	dr in medicine	pharmacy	arts philosophy	sciences	all (estimation)	oradea law
1920/21-1922/23	10,7% (1265) ⁹	—	37,2 % (403)	—	8,6% (116) ¹⁰	—	8,2% (1784)	24,9% (670)
1923/24-1929/30	7,5% (7930)	9,3% (2918) ⁴	32,5 % (588)	15,9% (522) ⁴	2,8% (2750) ⁴	2,2% (2282)	7,4% (16990)	16,5% (1900)
1930/31-1935/36	7,9% (10816)	15,3% (5789)		23,1% (1241)	5,4% (4129)	3,3% (2922)	9,4% (24897)	12,9% (2395)
1936/37-1939/40	5,3% (4026)	17,8% (2655)		—	7,8% (1677)	8,2% (1082)	9,6% (9440)	—

University of Cernauti

	law	medicine	pharmacy	arts philosophy	sciences	all (estimation)
1920/21-1922/23	15,5% (1125) ⁹	—	—	27,4% (1657) ²	—	22,6% (2782)
1923/4-1929/30	41,8% (378) ^{3,11}	—	—	31,1% (1140) ^{4,13}	25,6% (768) ^{13,X}	31,% (2286)
1930/31-1935/36	27,5% (2281) ¹²	—	—	35,1% (1591) ¹²	26,% (1146) ¹²	29,6% (5018)
1936/37-1939/40	10,9% (2179)	—	—	22,2% (854)	23,4% (594)	15,6% (3627)

The path to higher education was in a way generally enlarged after 1918 when, due to the acquisition of new territories, so that the entire Romanian population saw an extension of the market of posts and jobs where university degrees were welcome assets. The Great Union aroused great expectations in post-war Romanian generations about an easier access to middle class standing

² No data for 1921-1923.

³ 1923-1924.

⁴ 1925-1926.

⁹ 1921-1922.

¹⁰ 1920-1923.

¹¹ 1925-1930.

¹² 1930-1933.

¹³ 1928-1930

^X No data for 1924-1925 + pharmacists

thanks to the multiplication of positions to be occupied on the basis of academic titles. The state policy of “Romanising” the new provinces (especially Transylvania and Bukovina) required specifically that the existing administrative body be replaced by a native Romanian one. The study by Sabin Manuila, *Les problèmes démographique en Transylvanie*⁶ clearly shows the extent and the rapid progress of this policy: while in 1910 there were 62% Magyars and 19,6% Romanians in the administration and the proportion did not change until 1918, by 1930 their ratio had become almost equal, 38,4% for the former and 35,3% for the latter. In Bukovina a population of 794,869 in 1910 was distributed as follows: Romanians 34,4%, Ruthenians 38,1%, Jews 12,9%, Germans 8,6%. But the composition of the body of high officials in a total of 4941 was rather different : Romanians 23,9 %, Jews 19,5 % while others (especially Germans) made up a majority of 56,6 %. In urban populations, like in Czernowitz, the relevant proportions were once again different : Jews 43.3%, Poles 18,8%, Ruthenians 18,3%, Germans 9,6% and Romanians only 9,1%. As for Suceava, the second largest town in Moldavia, there were 32,4% ethnic Romanians, 37,1% Jews and 19,9 % Germans⁷. In this context, the great rush of young people towards the universities was easy to understand: This was a response to the political discourse about the forthcoming Romanisation of the elites, favourable to the ethnic Romanian element.

So, during the first years after the war, the situation of the academic market seemed propitious for the young generation in general, for ethnic Romanians in particular. Moreover the national university network became enlarged with the two additional provincial centres of higher education, those of Cluj and Czernowitz. At the same time the number of those looking for post-university jobs also increased. From a demographic point of view there was an understandably rapid growth of student populations with the return to normality after the hostilities. A great number of earlier students returned from the trenches, who had been compelled to interrupt their studies because of the war. This effect of “recuperation”, which is easily noticed in statistics, went together with a growing number of girls entering into universities. The rigid unbalance of genders before the war, as women had been largely excluded from public life, tended to soften up already during the war, when women started to be employed in the most diverse fields of activity to replace men in the front. This generated a change of attitudes as regards women in elite education, since women appeared in great many jobs that had been traditionally reserved for men⁸. This had an effect in university recruitment as well. If in the academic year of 1903/1904 in Bucharest

⁶ In “Revue de Transylvanie”, I, 1934, no.1, p.45-60. [Republished in Sabin Manuila, *Etudes sur la démographie historique de la Roumanie*, ed. by Sorina and Ioan Bolovan, Cluj, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 1992, pp.33-48].

⁷ Cf. I.E. Torouțiu, *Poporația și clasele sociale din Bucovina*, [Population and social classes from Bukovina], Bucharest, Bukovina Library, 1916, p.61, 75, 82, 194.

⁸ *Femeile în învățământul universitar*, in „Patria”, Cluj, I, 1919, no. 189 (October 12), p.2; *Femeile care studiază*, in „Patria”, II, 1920, nr. 197 (September 14), p.1 ș.a.

girls represented only 6,2%, after the great conflagration the ratio rose to 21,9 % in 1924/25 and to 30,7% in 1934/1935, a noticeable growth for all the university centres.

All these modified the public approach of school investments to a great extent, a phenomenon that seems to be specific to the logic of collective behaviour during crises or prolonged disturbances. In such cases long term existential investments appear to be the best. Not by chance, we notice considerable increase in secondary and advanced schooling during the immediate period after the war as well as during the economic crisis of 1929-1933.

In order to clear up the profound reasons for the progress of anti-Semitism and for the dramatic situation at Romanian universities in the inter-wars period (the intimidation of Jewish students, the organizing of aggressive anti-Jewish commandos, violent actions that often led to closing up these institutions etc.) we must review other conditions of this agitation, like the modification of the university system, long and short term political developments, plus motives specific to one university centre or another.

In politics changes were really spectacular. However, in spite of the large autonomy given to universities, in spite of the effort to conciliate the liberty in education with the state control, the latter had reserved all the levers of power in order to finance, develop and control, even ideologically, the network. Besides the task of modernising, this interventionist attitude proved often to be oriented to a clientele (*clientelar*), either on the level of the students' body or, even more often, on that of the professors, depending on their ideological options and their membership in some political parties. Not few were the cases of voluntaristic manipulations of the professors' council and senate, especially when the nomination to a university chair was in question. An example was the attempt to appoint the Jewish professors Eugen Ehrlich and Adolf Last to the university of Czernowitz, a case that triggered off a hectic press campaign on the basis of nationalistic and anti-Semitic motives. On the other hand, a discrimination between universities was more than obvious, even if only on the level of the budget. While the university of Bucharest, and even more that of Cluj, profited largely from new investments, which placed them among the most endowed institutions of Central and South-Eastern Europe, those of Iasi and Czernowitz had to accept a marginal status, particularly in terms of teaching careers, a nomination there being regarded just as a first step toward the others, especially for university politicians. That's why in a study of anti-Semitism one has to consider these restrictions of the post-war years together with their immediate and long-term impact.

Though at that time no formal measures were in force to restrict the access to education, and there was no preferential or discriminatory social recruitment neither (there was just a talk of "democratisation"), the discrepancies between university centres and the economic realities of their regions (Bessarabia and even Moldavia were backward in comparison to Transylvania) were in practice conducive to unequal chances of accession for different sections of the people.

After 1918 in Iasi, the old capital of Moldavia, the new generation of students encountered a rather grave situation. For the last two years the town had been overcrowded with war refugees which made it financially bankrupt. Then, after the Great Union, the town received millions of subsidies for purposes of reconstruction and modernization, but the money was dilapidated due to bad finance (and corruption) in the political turmoil of the after-war years. At the beginning of the 20th century Iasi and, generally speaking, Moldavia appeared often for uninformed observers to be a territory mostly populated by Jews. Although in 1899 the population in the region was Orthodox up to a 84,2% and only 10,6% were Israelites, the latter, with their essentially urban habitat, formed an active and enterprising group which left a strong mark on the towns. In places like Iasi, Botosani, Piatra Neamt, Bacau and Dorohoi Jews represented a proportion of about 5% in the population, while in Barlad, Focsani, Roman and Husi they were half as many.

The incorporation of Bessarabia brought even more heterogeneity with it. Young Bessarabians - Romanians but mainly Israelites – would attend the university of Iasi, because of its geographic proximity (for Romanians), as well as due (for Jews) to the powerful Jewish community that existed there. They could enjoy the special support and facilities offered to them by both the Romanian state and the university at that time under the aegis of “the Bessarabian students’ support for education” fund. The latter secured for them a priority for lodging and scholarships, all the more because most of them had certificates of poverty (the people of the region were indeed mostly very poor, and rural) etc. This flood of Jews from the former Russian *gubernia* to the university was a reaction of this confessional group to the socially discriminated and marginal situation that had been imposed on them, even more severely than in the ancient Kingdom of Romania. This rush took place simultaneously with the Civil War in Russia. Among the refugees at the university of Iasi in 1919 there was a considerable number of students from Odessa (a southernmost centre in the Ukraine with a powerful Jewish community), taking advantage of the facility with which all kinds of degrees of preliminary studies were accepted and registered by the administration of the University.

As always in such cases, there irregularities happened to occur, false papers produced as school documents and identification, money was able to buy anything of the kind. In 1921 in Iasi the whole staff of the university professors’ secretariat was dismissed, and the copyist Louis Stifler, discovered to possess blank documents with the seal of the Rectorate, was brought to trial⁹.

The confused state of things was aggravated by the Communist propaganda carried on mainly by the newcomers. The whole Romanian press of that time was full of hints at the “Communist danger” with large reports from Soviet Russia, and about the events of the autumn 1918 and spring 1919 in Hungary, the October revolution first and later the proclamation of the Council’s

⁹ *The State Archives of Iassy, Law Court, section II, file 169/1921.*

Republic, in which Jewish intellectuals and activists had an important part. They were often spoken of as “Freemasons” and “Judeo-bolsheviks” which awoke old animosities and generated distrust and intolerance.

Nearly all political trials in the first years after the war exposed Bessarabian Jews as Communists, and the confidential reports from the Romanian secret services often referred to the activity of the students as being in that spirit. In an address from the major general of the 4th Army Corps in March 1920 it was shown that 32 students at the university of Iasi “had been in the service of Russian Bolsheviks as propaganda agents, and were going on with their activity”¹⁰. The Club of the Bessarabian students was permanently under the surveillance of the secret service as a nest for propagandists of Communist ideas. The security services discovered that “Bolshevik and Communist cells in Iasi possessed secret printing houses and had Bessarabian Jewish students as members”. Most of them had false identification documents and hardly attended the university lectures. “The Bessarabian students’ homes and especially that of the Jews – the report concluded – are nothing but powerful centres of Communist propaganda, and the fact that all the members wear Russians shows clearly that they are far from having Romanian feelings”¹¹.

The strike at the university of Iasi in 28-30 March 1921 was initiated also by Bessarabian students to protest against the arrest of their colleagues Timotei and Elisei Marin, Liuba Elbert and others, notorious Communists, accused of association with students of Bucharest with the aim of giving their action a greater amplitude¹². With a lot of similar examples in view the Association of Christian Students in Iasi, in December 1924, wrote a *Memoir* demanding that “the great Bessarabian groups of students be dismembered in the Ancient Kingdom and divided in small groups in student homes”¹³.

We must not forget about the effect of the White Terror and the anti-Semitic movements in Hungary that triggered an exodus of Jews, directed mainly to the West, but also to Transylvania, where its weight made itself felt even in university statistics. But here, the situation was different from that of the Old Kingdom. While Romanians looked upon Jews as ‘inassimilable’, in old Hungary on all fields of modern activities Jews held important, if not predominant positions, with a high degree of integration in their host society, to the extent of embracing a profound Hungarian cultural identity - which was maintained for a long time even in the inter-wars period¹⁴. Apart from the strong nationalist

¹⁰ *The State Archives of Iassy, Law Court, Rectorate*, 926/1920, f.44-47.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 953/1921, f.110.

¹² *Ibidem*, f.109. Jewish socialist students were caught spreading manifestoes. The fact that Bessarabians displayed a strong spirit of unity and that they were speaking Russian, made the Romanian authorities think of the existence of a conspiracy.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 1087/1925, f.93.

¹⁴ *Jews in the Hungarian Economy 1760-1945*, Studies Dedicated to Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger on his Eightieth Birthday, ed. by M. K. Silber, Jerusalem, 1992, p.161-184; Vera Ranki, *The politics of inclusion and exclusion. Jews and nationalism in Hungary*, New York, Holmes & Meier, 1999; V. Karady, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek (1867-1945). Történeti-*

discourse against Transylvanian Magyars in official public opinion, Hungarians, Jews and Romanians lived together on tolerant, if not cordial terms, if state level politics was disregarded, a fact that made anti-Semitic manifestations much less violent here than in the Old Kingdom. Centuries of coexistence in widely diversified confessional networks (there were at least ten significantly distinct confessional clusters in Transylvania), a certain degree of modernism and a relatively high level of urban civilization had imposed on active collectives a more decent behaviour. Thus open violence was rare, unless instigated by political forces in search of electoral capital. The efforts that accompanied the creation of “Superior Dacia’s University”, the exceptional care of the institution’s administration to provide good conditions of study, lodging and food for the students at a time when Cluj was an overcrowded city, the high prestige professors enjoyed even outside academe kept the inter-confessional and inter-ethnic frictions from turning excessively violent.

However, at the end of the First World War the fulfilment of Romanian national aspirations, beyond giving rise to a general enthusiasm, also loosened the passions of intolerance, sometimes even inside the same ethnic body. According to the royal decree of 21st January 1919 all professors suspect of “anti-national attitudes” were suspended from their chairs¹⁵. Even in the intellectual elites the spirit of revenge, the need to take sides in politics, the formation of new pressure groups, behind-the-scene games and intrigues, animosities, etc., all this exerted a negative influence on the student body which, preparing to go on with the aspiration of the old elites – and, in the name of war-time sacrifices, hoping for more respect and consideration – saw itself neglected and largely maintained its very pre-war conduct. The idea of generation was omnipresent, consisting itself in an obsessive and mostly nationalistic discourse suggesting a new start in the nation building (and cleansing) process.

“The Optimism of the Heroic Generation” (to quote the title of a press article¹⁶) was far from being justified. Always seeking *models*, the studying young people from the inter-war period had to face the spectre of a society tormented by convulsions, challenges and search for societal options. More than anything, “the moral crisis of ideal, the crisis of orientation” was very serious. As the periodical *Voice of the Students* noticed: “the present generation had no childhood. Its psychology is built on the dead of the war, having in its heart only disgust and hostility towards the profiteers of the war”. The answers to the questions “What are we doing? Where are we going?” were all but optimistic: “The disorientation

szociológiai tanulmányok, /Jewry and social inequalities, 1867-1945, studies in historical sociology/, Budapest, Replika Kör, 2000; V. Karady, *Symbolic Nation-Building in a Multi-Ethnic Society. The Case of Surname Nationalization in Hungary*, în vol. *Ethnizität, Moderne und Entraditionalisierung*, herausgegeben von Moshe Zuckermann, Tel Aviv, Wallstein Verlag, 2002, p.81-103.

¹⁵ Vezi Lucian Boia, „Germanofilii”. *Elita intelectuală românească în anii primului război mondial*, Bucureşti, Edit. Humanitas, 2009.

¹⁶ În „*Patria*”, Cluj, I, 1919, nr. 176 (23 September), p.1.

of the young people and, especially, of the academic youth increases because they are lured by Fascism from the West and by Communism from the East, and in our country we take part in a most disgusting show”¹⁷.

Perhaps Mircea Eliade expressed in 1927 in the best way the basic dilemmas of his generation connected to the “plurality of the soul’s experience”, that not everyone was prepared to assume in a convenient way and without inner torments¹⁸. From this point of view, we can talk of a crisis of young people in search of inedited political formulas, new references in terms of philosophy and culture. And this confusion of values was exploited ideologically by a few characters of Romanian public life. Anti-Semitism, though only a piece in the foundation of right-wing radical ideology, contributed essentially to the formation, integration and cohesion of some new communities of ideas, first of all in the university environment, to the development of a powerful spirit of togetherness – one specific to periods of socio-cultural crisis.

The arsenal used by anti-Semites included the pseudo-scientific discourse that stresses the traditional opposition of the Semite and Aryan races, of two confessional clusters that in local history could never find points of convergence. And, since any religious problem in Romania has always been marked by important political connotations, the nationalist-Christian doctrine found a great resource in its the mystical elaborations. “Christianity, in a militant sense – as an article entitled *Nationalism at school* tried to explain it – is a fight against other religious trends that deny it. So it is also anti-Semitism. Taking into account that all Communists are Jews – the author concluded –, it is obvious that Jews are the most dangerous enemies of the Romanian state”¹⁹. Alongside the mystical and anti-Communist rhetoric of the anti-Semitic movement, Jews were repeatedly accused that they lacked civic spirit, had not taken part in the efforts of the war, more than that, they had even taken advantage of it and made fortunes thereof (through military supplies, fraudulent businesses, etc.)²⁰.

At the universities anti-Semitism remained also – as illustrated in the student statistics above - a numerical problem, given the ethnical composition of the student body with the strong over-representation of Jews. Although the Great Union should have opened large possibilities for the young generation, this latter found itself facing less secured life perspectives than earlier. Especially after the economic crisis of 1929-1933, its situation seemed to be totally compromised. The growing of “intellectual proletariat”, a class of university graduates without employment in their profession, this predicament had become an unsurmountable problem of a whole generation always present in the debates of the thirties. Notwithstanding, the student status still offered the only practical way to preserve

¹⁷ V. Măărăscu, *Unde mergem?*, in „Glasul studențimii”, I, 1934, nr. 1 (18 March), p.2-3.

¹⁸ Mircea Eliade, *O generație*, in “Cuvântul studențesc”, IV, 1927, nr.2 (December 4th), p.1.

¹⁹ *Glasul studențimii*, I, 1934, nr.13 (September 7th), p.3.

²⁰ An idea contradicted by the reality. See W.Filderman, *Adevarul asupra problemei evreiesti din Romania in lumina textelor religioase si a statisticii*, Bucharest, “Triumful” Tip., 1925.

a modest, apparently middle class standing²¹. Yet the anti-Semitic discourse became harsher in student circles, turned against the competition of Jews in the liberal professions (juridical careers, journalism, medicine, pharmacy etc.) that attracted young Jews in relatively big numbers. While in the years before the war the faculties of Law and Philology had attracted the large majority of students, in the post-war years a great change can be observed in academic options with growing interest for medical and technical studies additionally to the continued congestion of juridical studies.

Disparities in career choices between ethnic Romanians and Jews can be explained by the fact that Jews had to face hostilities mostly in professional faculties. On the opening of the academic year 1920/1920 in Cluj, the rector, Sextil Puscariu expressed worries about the numerical disproportion among the different faculties. At the Faculties of Laws and Medicine, he stated, “most of the students must have made this choice with the hope of a more secure and profitable career, as the want of physicians, administrative officials and magistrates in the new Romanian State excludes the competition for graduates of these faculties”²². Mainly the over-application for student places in Medicine gave the University Senate the idea to discuss the introducing a *numerus clausus* to stop the affluence of Jewish students from Hungary²³, where the admission to universities was severely limited for them by the Law XXV of 1st September 1920. This basically anti-democratic idea had to be rejected by the university forum at a moment when the new juridical concept of minority rights had been imposed on Romania by the Peace Conference in Paris.

So the Romanian students, choosing a liberal profession, saw their chances enhanced by getting rid of the Jewish competition. This idea, together with a major carelessness of the political power about existential problems of the young generation, stimulated the anti-Semitic student movement to evolve in the direction of a political organisation of their own, that is, to turn their corporation into a political party (the “Archangel Michael’s Legion”) and to elaborate a totalitarian ideology as a means of imposing their demands. The Iron Guard doctrine, beyond the annihilation of Jews, also took up a discourse against politicians themselves in order to “morally renovate society” through the expulsion of those powerful parties led by an “occult Jewish camarilla” which was

²¹ See, under this aspect, the image offered by Nae Tudorica, an ex-student in laws and iron-guardist, in his book of memories: *Mărturisiri în duhul adevărului*, Bacău, ed.by “Plumb”, 1993.

²² *Anuarul Universității din Cluj. 1919-1920* [The Yearbook of the Cluj University, 1919-1920], ed. II, Cluj, Tip. Națională, 1931, p.14-15; “Patria”, II, 1920, nr. 219 (Oct. 12th), p.2.

²³ Cf. „Patria”, Cluj, II, 1920, nr. 219 (12 October), p.2. [In the first semester of the academic year 1919/1920 707 students were enrolled at the Medical School and 33 in Pharmacy; in the second semester the number passed over 800, from which 343 were Jewish, many of them coming from Hungary]; cf. *Facultatea de medicină din Cluj*, în „Înfrățirea”, Cluj, I, 1920, nr. 58 (13 October), p.4.

dominant in the Romanian financial system²⁴. This discourse received its first public expression in Iasi (23-25 August 1923) at the Congress of the leaders of the right wing students' movement. The meeting made decisions about a new political agenda: the fight against the political parties "alienated from the nation" and unwilling to support the demands of the students.

As shown above, the anti-Semitic movement had their roots in Iasi and Bucharest where the socio-economical frustration and the nationalistic discourse had an echo in large categories of the Romanian society²⁵.

Those who entered the university system immediately after 1918, mostly ex-servicemen, tended to require immediate and direct compensation for the years of fear and misery spent in the trenches with no regard to post-war poverty. Many of them enjoyed great prestige in students' corporations on the strength of their military past experiences. Others, endowed with an sense for political agitation and pressure, could represent veritable models for young people of modest origin that had not experienced the war. New student leaders, making their way via anti-Semitic (and other) activism in student societies or outside them, could capitalize on the persecutions they had suffered (expulsion from the university, police investigations, trials etc.), generating thus an extremely prolific cult of personality. Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, I. I. Mota, V. Marin and others entered the Iron Guard "mythology" as martyrs. They were worshipped even after their physical disappearance. When the Senate of the university of Cluj, 4th November 1937, dissolved the Society of Students in Letters and Philosophy for political activity within an academic institution (which was forbidden by the academic regulations) and for possessing insignia in the society's headquarters that demonstrated their affiliation with the Iron Guard movement, the members protested against the accusations saying that, in their opinion, their only crime was that they had worshipped the memory a Mota and Marin²⁶.

The cult of personality was one of the ideological levers that belonged to a carefully elaborated and excessively mystical stage design, attracting indeed masses of people. That doesn't mean that all Romanian students were anti-Semitic. In fact they were heterogeneous, coming from different regional, social and political environments, which kept them from getting closer to a consensus. However, the great mass of anti-Semites came from a population of modest origin, mostly rural and poor. This heterogeneity was specified in the request for recognition (3rd March 1919) of the Law Students' Society in Iasi, a body which will be most active in anti-Semitic manifestations: "There are differences between

²⁴ Al. Tomescu Baltesti, *Pe cand românul moare de foame, jidanul Max Auschnitt se scaldă în milioane*, in "Glasul studențimii, I, 1934, nr.11 (August 5th), p.3; N.Astratinei, *O ploșniță națională: Auschnitt*, in cit. mag., nr.17 (November 4th), p.1 a.o.

²⁵ Besides this, as it was shown in a *Memoir* of the Romanian Christian students of Oradea (February 3rd, 1925), in which the necessity of the *numerus clausus* is justified. "It is very natural that the big struggle took place in Iasi, because there, the Moldavian together with the Bassarabian Jews being in an overwhelming majority, put in danger the destinies of our country" (*The State Archives of Iassy, University "Al.I.Cuza" Iassy, Rectorate, 1087/1925, f.41-42*).

²⁶ *State Archives of Cluj, Faculty of Letters, Correspondence, 138/1937-38*.

the students from the provinces and those from the kingdom, and on this we cannot write as much as we could say; it is dangerous for the Romanian State, this chaotic outlook, the lack of a leading principle and unifying ideals among those who, tomorrow, will be dispatched and scattered in the administration, the free professions, justice and politics, where they would find themselves strangers". Therefore the Society gave itself a "national character" and decided that "the ultimate ideal was the maintenance of a conscience of brotherly solidarity among the Romanian students of anywhere"²⁷.

Although in the inter-war period there did not exist a formally anti-Semitic legislation, and the government authorities prevented any encroachment upon Constitutional principles, during all those years there were manifestations in university premises with the purpose not only to limit, but even to expel the Jews from institutions of higher education. The attitude of the extremists evolved from the project of an anti-Jewish *numerus clausus* to the radical *numerus nullus*. Any malfunctioning in the relations of Romanians and Jews had always been used to instigate demands of expelling Jews or at least restricting their numbers. If, for instance, the contractor Solomon Grunberg failed to provide, as he was obliged to, fuel to schools in Iasi and they had to remain closed for the whole month of February²⁸, if the newspaper "Lumea" ("The World"), owned by Alfred and Jean Hefter, published an article titled *The Epoch of Exams*, in which the professors of the Faculty of Law in Iasi were denounced for their facility in giving grades and diplomas²⁹ – and the examples could be multiplied for the whole period –, all such events pushed students to organise anti-Semitic manifestations.

Such manifestations found an excellent field of action at the faculties of Medicine where there was a most visible disproportion between Romanians and Jews. Incidents, that started in Cluj and continued violently in Iasi and Bucharest, were specifically due to a debate about dissection where a parity was demanded for the access to the didactic material (Christian or Jewish corpses). From December 1922 on there were debates on inter-confessional separatism and the application of a *numerus clausus*. Some student corporations, claiming a "Christian" designation without obtaining their recognition from the University Senate, led more and more violent actions. Through a decision by the headmaster of the Institute of Anatomy (No. 76/15th 1923)³⁰ Jews were expelled from dissection rooms, a case of grave confessional discrimination in a discipline where practice was essential. This state of things persisted, until on 26th June 1924 the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine informed the rector's office that Jewish students

²⁷ State Archives of Iassy, University "Al.Ioan Cuza", Rector's Office, 897/1918, f.132-133.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f.231.

²⁹ On this occasion there were great anti-Semitic manifestations that had as result, on the 13rd and 16th of June 1920, the laying waste of the editorial office, the printing house and the manager's house, and the burning, in the Union Square, of the whole edition, etc. (cf. "Lumea", III, 1920, nr.495/June 17th, p.2; *State Archives of Iassy*, cit. fund, 930/1920, f.35-38).

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 1037/1923, f.5. A similar decision, in the session of the Senate, November 5th, 1923(f.10). See the protest movement of the Jewish students, f.14-15.

would be permitted to pass the exams in descriptive anatomy on corpses only after the Christians' having passed the practical tests, if there remained available corpses³¹. When the agitation of the students reached the maximum, in Bucharest the leader of Romanian Jews, Dr W. Fildermann promised to secure the necessary corpses collected from the different Jewish communities all over the country³².

The discriminatory practice against Israelites was extended to all the faculties. "Guards" of anti-Semitic students stood at the entrance of the university, resorting to violence to keep Jews from attending the courses: This brought about the intervention of the police and the closing down of all the educational institutions. As the protest of the Jewish students in Law made it clear, "the abnormal situation that Christian students prevent us systematically from attending numerous university courses tends to be perpetual, and puts us unjustly and arbitrarily in a position of inferiority"³³. The Memorandum of the Christian Students Association on 28th November 1924 gave reasons of their attitude: "The day of 10th December will be the third anniversary of the beginning of the struggle that Romanian students have carried on for a *numerus clausus* in order to defend the ruling nation against the foreign elements that had invaded it and, through their superior material conditions and other specific characteristics tend to annihilate it, so that they could become the leaders of the Romanian nation. These days when despairing students, wherever they go with their complaints, find only indifference, blasphemy, even beating, we will continue our actions until Romanians realize that the conscious students defend the ruling nation and spare no hard work and sacrifices to reconquer it from the foreign hands and keep it safe from invasions in the future"³⁴.

In absence of an anti-Semitic legislation that could have satisfied the nationalist extremists, the agitation of the students continued during the 1930s in close connection with the Iron Guard, which was by then organised as a political force that functioned sometimes legally, sometimes illegally. In an atmosphere of violence the principle of "proportional exclusion" gained force and became tacitly adopted by these extremists. Though the radicalism of *numerus nullus*, proposed in Iasi by the president of the Students Centre (Virgil Gavrielescu) in 1933³⁵, could not be put into practice, much later³⁶ the principle of ethnic proportionality began to function tacitly, through regulations concerning the number of students enlisted in the first year, without mentioning discrimination³⁷. However,

³¹ *Ibidem*, 1047/1924, f.663.

³² "România", III, 1925, nr.410 (February 27th), p.4.

³³ *State Archives of Iassy*, cit. fund, 1047/1924. See also f.324-325, 389.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 1057/1924, f.16-17.

³⁵ A reason for which he was sued in court. See "Glasul studențimii", I, 1934, nr.10(July 22nd), p.4 and R.Filimon, *Numerus Nullus*, in cit.place, nr.11 (August 5th), p.1.

³⁶ The Decree-Law to settle the Jews'situation in the educational process (In the "Official Monitor", nr.240 from October 14th, 1940) and which stipulated that those born from Jewish parents or from a Jewish father could not enter a state University, no matter of their religion.

³⁷ C. Kiritescu, *Suprapopulația universitară. Proportii, cauze, remedii*, in "Viitorul", XXVIII, 1935, nr.8236 (July 2nd), p.1-2 (see also nr.8239, p.1).

boycotting courses and exams, organising strikes etc. led to the actual diminution of Jewish enrolments (as it is visible in the tables above). In Cluj for instance, as well as in the other centres, student associations carefully watched the numerical weight of ‘aliens’, having obtained in 1936 the “optimum” proportions: “Magyars 24%, Saxons 1%, Jews 3%”³⁸. Moreover, to ease tensions, always present, the Board of Education in Cluj and Iasi decided in 1934 to abolish the provincial faculties of Pharmacy and to concentrate them in Bucharest. The reasons invoked for this measure were explicitly “the growing number of graduates” as well as “the excessive weight of those from the minorities”. In spite of the protest of the professors in Iasi and Cluj (“we must not upset our educational institution for fighting minority people”³⁹) the abolition of provincial pharmaceutical institutions led to a considerable decrease of the number of Jewish students in the two university centres.

Many of the Jewish graduates and students concerned could only choose emigration, as it is indicated by the growing number of passports released after 1935 by police agencies, a very important source of archival data for a sociological study of the motives for a temporary or a final exile. (Such an analysis would deserve great attention, since it could demonstrate an important mutation in educational strategies in form of an almost unprecedented degree of transfer of symbolic and intellectual capitals.)

Therefore, without insisting upon numerous factual details that marked the evolution of academic anti-Semitism in inter-war Romania, one has to state that the latter constituted one of the major factual givens conferring a veritable specificity on higher education in the country. It generated numerous functional disorders on the state’s level, but also prepared the murderous policy of racial purification of the 1940s, that was gaining force in contemporary Europe.

Chronology

21st December 1919, Cluj – Jewish students of Medicine refuse to use a Jewish corpse for dissection; Security notes speak also of their anti-Romanian attitude as they continue to speak Hungarian.

26th January 1920, Cluj – Headmaster of the Institute of Anatomy in Cluj, Victor Papilion reports on the December event, explaining the circumstances in which the corpse got to his institution, and on the “agitation” of the Christian students about the issue.

6th April 1920, Chisinau – A ministerial delegation presents a petition in Bessarabia for establishing a university in the province as a means of forming a Romanian intellectual elite, as Russians and Jews together are in majority

6th June, 1920 Iasi – Christian students set fire to the editorial office of the periodical *Light* owned by the Brothers Hafner.

³⁸ See also “Glasul studențimii”, II, 1935, nr.27 (Sept.22nd), p.4; III, 1936, nr.43 (December 20th), p.4.

³⁹ *The Yearbook of the University of Iassy from 1930-1935*, Iasi, 1936, p.62.

9th October 1920, Czernowitz – The Senate of the local university, at the request of Jewish students, approves that a Semitic language course be held, but with double fee.

22nd November, 1920 Iasi – Students from Bessarabia submit a protest to the rector of Iasi University against the aggressive attitude of the local police towards them: they were arrested, beaten and jailed without real reason.

2st April 1921, Iasi – The newsletter Fourth Body Army demands that non-Romanian students from Bessarabia should have to obtain local Security visa as they, mostly Jews, are involved in Communist propaganda.

2nd June 1921, Iasi – The Journalists' Union of Moldova protests against the aggressive acts of Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu against journalists.

5th June 1921, Iasi – Student societies approve of the expulsion of Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu from the university.

12th June 1921, Cluj – Nicolae Lövi applies for his admission to the so-called “war semester” as he served in the army throughout the war.

2nd July 1921, Czernowitz – The Disciplinary Committee excludes three Jew students for a semester who signed a protest addressed to the University Senate.

15th December 1921, Iasi - Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu applies for cancelling the order of the Senate on his exclusion.

21st February 1922, Briceni (Hotin County) - The local police warns the rector of Iasi University that two Jewish students have collected money for Communist propaganda purposes.

16th May 1922, Iasi – Max H. Goldner claims compensation for the damages caused by some nationalist students in the printing house of his local newspaper *Opinion*.

8th June 1922, Iasi – The foundation of “The Association of Christian Romanian Students in Iasi University” is announced.

October 1922, Iasi – Violent clashes between Christian students and the members of the Jewish Maccabi Society

1st November 1922 Iasi - Violent manifestations by Christian students during a sporting event organized by Maccabi, and on a theatre performance where a Jewish actress played.

16th November 1922, Iasi - Reports for the Ministry of Education on anti-Semitic incidents in Husi, Barlad and Iasi caused by “nationalist” students.

1st December 1922, Bucharest - A hearing in the Parliament about the anti-Semitic excesses at Cluj University

7th December 1922, Cluj - Anti-Semitic incidents at the Faculty of Medicine. The possibility of a *numerus clausus* is deliberated; the Senate orders that bodies for dissection should arrive to the Institute of Anatomy without noting their family or religion.

12th December 1922, Cluj - Jewish students request efficient measures of the dean in order to stop anti-Semitic manifestations.

15th December 1922, Cluj - The access of the Jewish students to the Faculty of Medicine classes is still blocked, reports Prof. Urechia to the Rector.

20th December 1922, Cluj - Professors are asked by an informal bulletin to retain the names of the students that block the way of the Jewish students to the classes.

21st December 1922, Cluj – Prof. Abramescu condemns the attitude of Christian students towards their Jewish colleagues

2nd January 1923, Iasi – Prof. Sumuleanu complains that Jews are unwilling to deliver corpses for dissection, while it is required that Jewish students should dissect only bodies from their race.

29th January 1923 – Gh. Ionescu, student of Medicine explains why he refuses to let Jews attend laboratory classes.

10th March 1923, Iasi – Motion of Christian students that a *numerus clausus* be introduced at Romanian universities.

15th March 1923, Bucharest – B. Straucher questions the minister in Parliament about the anti-Semitic manifestations at the University of Cluj, and demands that the Prime Minister send a commission to investigate the case.

22nd March 1923, Cluj – The Rector of the university gets a notification from the Prosecutor's Office about the Christian students that provoked anti-Semitic demonstrations.

17th April 1923, Cluj – Jewish students of Medicine notify the rector that they were hindered by others in attending their classes.

23rd April 1923, Iasi – Christian students occupy the University and demand the introduction of *numerus clausus*.

26th April 1923, Iasi – The Senate of the university organises a referendum on *numerus clausus* and on the autonomy of the university; decision to postpone classes until the autumn.

28th April 1923, Cluj – During anti-Semitic events Rector Iacob Iacobovici is insulted by militant Medicine students. A demonstration of students against Rector Iacob Iacobovici.

1st May 1923 Cluj – The Rector reports to the Ministry of Education on the anti-Semitic demonstrations of the previous month and the presence of Christian students from other universities.

7th May 1923, Iasi – 68 students petition the Rector to find remedy against the anarchy in the university caused by the anti-Semites.

30th May 1923, Bucharest – The Ministry of Education confirms the order of expelling the leaders of anti-Semitic students from the University of Cluj.

23rd May 1923, Suceava – Some high school professors manifest anti-Semitic attitude which they acquired during their studies at Iasi University.

14th November 1923, Iasi – Christian students forcefully enter the dissection room of the Institute of Anatomy and throw out Jewish students. They demand that Jewish students should provide bodies of their own race for their dissection practice, that police be forbidden to enter university premises, and should release the students they already imprisoned.

14th December 1923, Iasi – The rector reports to the Ministry of Education on the disquieting state in the university which would necessitate help from the Army to protect them, and on certain professors that are implied in the acts that maintain disorder.

23rd December 1923, Iasi – Jewish students apply to the Law School for a permission that they could pass their exams of Economy in some other university because their lecturer, A. C. Cuza stuffs his lectures with racist and xenophobic commentaries.

15th February 1924, Cluj – The police marshal informs the Rectory of recent anti-Semitic incidents and demands measures against students who plan new assaults on legal forces.

8th April 1924, Suceava – A professor of the local university denounces a Jewish colleague in Czernowitz for lack of patriotism; the official investigation refutes the accusation.

28th November 1924, Iasi – Christian students petition that 10th December be declared an anniversary of the public demand for the introduction of *numerus clausus* three years earlier, and that classes be cancelled that day.

30th November 1924, Iasi – Their petition rejected, the Christian students warn the rectorate that they won't take responsibility for further incidents.

4th December 1924, Oradea – Prof. D. D. Motolescu of Law School complains of the anti-Semitic attitude of some Romanian students who attend his class of Roman Law.

5th December 1924, Oradea – Christian students condemn Prof Motolescu in their memo of being a supporter of Jews.

11th December 1924, Iasi – A debate in the University Senate on the violent clashes on the previous day, the opinion of the professors about them and the necessity of asking for the Army's intervention.

12th December 1924, Oradea – The police marshal's report on the 8th December events (a clash between Christian and Jewish students) that led to arrests.

15th December 1924, Iasi – In the anti-Semitic incidents of the previous day Christian students were supported by several professors.

15th December 1924, Oradea – The board of professors approves of the intervention by Mototolescu, professor of Roman Law, in defence of his Jewish students.

16th December 1924, Timisoara – Principal of the Hebrew High School complains to the local police marshal about the aggressive actions of Romanian students against their Jewish comrades.

15th January 1925, Oradea – Several Law School students want to take up again their classes with Prof Monotolescu, though he offended their Romanian feelings.

3rd February 1925, Oradea – Christian students appeal to the Rector that their expelled comrades should be taken back, "otherwise their places would be occupied by Jews".

3rd February 1925, Iasi – The Investigating Commission reports on cases of violence against Jewish students.

3rd April 1925, Bucharest – Rabbi L. Tzirelson MP, raises questions in Parliament on the violent acts by Christian students in Focsani, occasioned by the trial of Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, who murdered marshal Manciuc.

10th April 1925, Iasi – Jewish students complain that they are harassed at exams. An investigation concludes that their low rate of pass grades is not due to their level of achievement but to their confession.

14th December 1925, Bucharest – The University of Bucharest decides to suspend classes because of anti-Semitic disturbances.

26th January 1926, Bucharest – No Jewish body was brought for dissection that academic year, the dean of the Medical School complains to the minister, so he cannot let Jewish students attend anatomy classes.

9th February 1926, Cluj – A Christian student from Cluj university, accused of aggression against a Jewish comrade, is tried in Iasi.

6th March 1926, Iasi – A group of Medicine students complain to the dean of having been insulted by Christian students.

9th March 1926, Bucharest – The Rector of the University asks the approval of the Ministry of Education to bring in police to the premises of the University in order to stop violence.

14th March 1926, Iasi – As violent manifestations continue, the Ministry decides on the closure of the university.

8th April 1926, Iasi – The Rector applies to the minister for reopening the University, being sure that police and army will assure order.

12th June 1926, Iasi – Jewish students of the Medical School drop their earlier complaints before a committee of investigation and accuse nobody of having insulted them.

3rd February 1927, Bucharest – An organisation called “National Jewish Club” offers support to Jewish students if they choose to continue their studies abroad.

24th February 1927, Bucharest – State Security memo on unrest because of the acquittal of young student Nicolae Totu from Czernowitz, who killed his Jewish comrade David Falik during an anti-Semitic demonstration.

10th October 1927, Iasi – A senior Jewish student applies for being re-enrolled at the University after his earlier expulsion and arrest with suspicion of espionage which turned out to be false.

26th November 1927, Iasi – Students demand new election for the leadership of the “Student Society of Philosophy and Letters” claiming that anti-Semitic comrades falsified the outcome.

12th December 1927, Bucharest – In Parliament MP Filderman raises questions about the events in Oradea, reminding the Prime Minister of the measures already taken in order to stop anti-Semitic manifestations.

23rd December 1927, Bucharest – A communiqué issued in the capital condemns the anti-Semitic atrocities in Oradea and Cluj and threatens with the

expulsion of their participants. – Students from the University of Bucharest are present on an anti-Semitic Student Convention held in Oradea.

2nd January 1928, Bucharest – Christian students disturb a Jewish ritual act and destroy their sacred book, a State Security memo says.

3rd January 1928, Bucharest – Jewish ceremonies: the fragments of the destroyed Torah are buried in Isai, Chisinau, Bacau and Oradea.

10th January 1928, Iasi – The Senate of the University condemns the recent anti-Semitic atrocities in Oradea and warns the Ministry of Education against granting permission to such conventions in the future.

12th January 1928, Bucharest – The Rabbinic Council complains about the desecration of synagogues during the Student Convention in Oradea.

26th January 1928, Bucharest – Senator I. Clinciu questions the Parliament about the student conventions held in Oradea, Hunedin, Targu Ocna and Iasi later last year.

6th March 1928, Chisinau – State Security warns about possible unrest among students on account of a trial against A. C. Cuza.

6th March 1928, Bucharest – W. Filderman questions in the Parliament about the aggression against Jew students of Law in the capital.

7th April 1928, Iasi – A student complains that the Dean will not apply ethnic discrimination at the contest for internment practice in the “Saint Spiridion” Hospital.

21st April 1928, Chisinau - Anti-Semitic conflict provoked by a few Christian students in the city.

20th June 1928, Chisinau – Anti-Semitic students try to attack Jews crossing the local park.

23rd June, 1928, Chisinau – Bessarabian students from Iasi University attack several Jewish students that came home by train.

4th July 1928, Chisinau – Police warning about local students and those from other campuses who might instigate anti-Semitic incidents in the town.

17th November 1928, Cluj – New instances of anti-Semitic violence; a connection is established between the National Christian Defence League (LANC in Romanian) and the anti-Semitic incidents.

2nd December 1928, Bucharest - A meeting of Romanian Jewish Union discusses the attitude of the government towards anti-Semitic movements and criticizes the position taken by Filderman in the issue of bodies for dissecting.

4th December 1928, Bacau – Christian students assault a Jew on the train; other Jews defend him in Bacau railway station.

5th December 1928, Cluj – Academic Society “Petru Maior” warns the Dean of the Faculty of Letters to suspend classes on 10th December which is an anniversary day of the demand for the introduction of the *numerus clausus*, for fear that Jewish students might be insulted or attacked.

17th December 1928, Bucharest – The Ministry of Interior orders special measures to be taken to prevent anti-Semitic incidents when students leave for and return from the holidays.

20th December 1929, Iasi – Violent clashes between Christian and Jewish students on 16th and 18th December; police inspector takes a list of complainants on both sides.

9th January 1930, Bucharest – Ministry of Defence orders the Army to intervene in universities, at the explicit request of the rectors.

28th January 1930, Iasi – A violent clash between Christian and Jewish students in the Chemistry Laboratory of the Faculty of Medicine.

30th January 1930, Iasi – The rector punishes the Christian students responsible for the recent anti-Semitic disorder and revokes the licence of activity from the Christian Students' Association.

14th February 1930, Bucharest – S. Rozenberg questions the Parliament on the recent anti-Semitic incidents in Chisinau, instigated by the students of Theology, and on the obvious connections between the violence and the electoral propaganda of certain political parties.

26th February 1930, Chisinau – The Dean of the Faculty of Theology investigates the case and finds Christian students behind the events.

12th March 1930, Cluj – Leaders of the nationalist student organization protest against the brutal police intervention during their demonstrations.

22nd March, 1930, Iasi – The Rector reports to the ministry on some anti-Semitic incidents and on the passivity of the police.

25th March 1930, Iasi – Several Jewish students are arrested and convicted for “rebellion”.

1st April 1930, Iasi – A conflict between Christian and Jewish students at the Faculty of Medicine

2nd April 1930, Iasi – Prof. Gr. T. Popa's statement on anti-Semitic violence at the Faculty of Medicine during two days in a row; his suggestions to prevent further actions of this kind.

7th April 1930, Iasi – A Jewish student complains that he was forced to leave the university, having been repeatedly attacked by anti-Semitic students.

14th May 1930, Iasi – Two Jewish students from the Faculty of Science complain about being insulted or brutally beaten by their Christian colleagues.

23rd May 1930, Bucharest – A.C. Cuza questioned in the Parliament about the “provocative” attitudes of Jews that caused “great anxiety” in the Christian population.

31st May 1930, Bucharest – Police reports on anti-Semitic violence committed by members of the Christian Student Union.

22nd June 1930, Czernowitz – Bucovina lawyers protest against devastation provoked by adepts of A. C. Cuza, and demand that authorities should do their best to prevent more serious violence.

October 1930, Iasi – A young Jewish student from the Faculty of Medicine appeals to the King for another try of his examination, because Prof. C. Sumuleanu failed him as a punishment, he had namely witnessed in a trial against anti-Semitic students.

3rd January 1931, Bucharest – The Ministry of Education instructs the rectors to dismiss from the universities the anti-Semitic students who provoke violence.

10th February 1931, Bucharest – News of violence in Czernowitz against the typography of a Jewish newspaper *Vorwärts* and anti-Semitic agitation against an actress from the National Theatre.

15th February 1931, Paris – The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris presents statistics to the Romanian minister of public instruction about Romanians that study in Paris. As the quarter of them are Jews, he considers the introduction of a *numerus clausus* for them.

10th March 1931, Bucharest – In his question in the Romanian Parliament A. C. Cuza condemns the attitude of the Rector of Polytechnic School in Timisoara who turns down anti-Semitic students who have sent him accusations against their comrades.

22nd April 1931, Bucharest – The minister of public education requires the Rector of the Bucharest University to investigate how a Zionist student convention could be held there.

24th October 1931, Bucharest – The Ministry of Public Education orders the exclusion from the University of Cluj of a Jewish student, member of a Communist organization.

24th January 1932, Iasi – Anti-Semitic demonstration with the participation of some local students.

5th April 1932, Cluj – The Society of Medical Students requests the Senate to inquire after and to punish several Jewish students they accuse of holding Communist views.

28th November 1932, Bucharest – Jewish and Hungarian students from the Academy of Commerce and the university are suspected to be Communists or to be involved in the Zionist movement.

21st January 1933, Turnu Magurele – The local synagogue is damaged by some students from Bucharest, many of them from the Academy of Commerce.

13th February 1933, Iasi – Several professors accuse state authorities of too much tolerance in restraining student movements and violence outside the university.

13th March 1933, Cluj – Jewish students from the Law School are excluded from Law Students Society at the demand of the Christian Student Union; so they inform the Rector that they want to create their own professional association.

21st April 1933, Cluj – The Pharmaceutical Student Society denounce a Jewish colleague who would spread handouts among those of his race to propagate the boycott of Christians.

1st May 1933 Cluj – the Medicine Students Society decide not to allow Jewish students to attend classes for a week.

8th May 1933, Cluj – Prof. V. Papilian from the Faculty of Medicine asks for effective measures against the students who hinder their Jewish comrades in attending their classes.

9th May 1933, Cluj – The University Senate condemns Christian students for keeping their Jewish colleagues from attending their class.

11th May 1933, Cluj – Many Jewish students complain that they are kept from their classes.

12th May 1933, Cluj – The head of the Faculty of Pathology explains that the suspension of classes is the outcome of anti-Semitic violence.

15th May 1933, Cluj - The anti-Semitic actions of the Christian students continue.

15th May 1933, Iasi – Christian students in turmoil as their leader - who advocated *numerus clausus* - is expelled from the University.

16th May 1933, Cluj – the Law Student Society decides not to allow Jews in the future to attend university classes. The head of the Faculty of Pathology notifies the Dean of the situation.

19th May 1933, Cluj – The University Senate decide to punish the members of the Law Student Society's committee for having participated in unauthorized meetings and wanted to expel Jews from the university.

30th May 1933 Timisoara – State Security notifies that Jews buy guns to protect themselves in case of anti-Semitic attacks.

10th June 1933, Cluj – Jewish students pursue Communist propaganda at the University Library spreading the magazine "Revolutionary Student".

20th May 1935, Bucharest – A Court Martial convicts several students for participation in anti-Semitic violence in the previous month.

20th May 1935, Cluj – the Medicine Student Society refuses to attend classes until *numerus clausus* is introduced; their decision is also an act of solidarity and protestation against the conviction of their colleagues in Bucharest for anti-Semitic violence.

23rd May 1935, Bucharest – The Medicine Student Society proves by statistics that "minorities" dominate the profession of medicine.

19th August 1935, Bucharest – A Jewish student from Romania who studies in Brno proves allegedly to be a "passionate pro-Hungarian".

20th Januar 1935, Cluj – The newspaper "Új Kelet" intercedes with the University Rector for two Jewish students who want to continue their studies in Cluj.

6th May 1936, Cluj – Christian students ask the intervention of their professors for their leaders arrested for taking part in a student's Convention in Targu Mures.

19th November 1936, Cluj – Christian students refuse to attend the classes of the Faculty of Medicine because Jews too have been enrolled.

16th April 1937, Cluj – The Relief Association of Transylvanian Jewish Students requests the Rector to revise the list of scholarships and to include more Jewish students.

27th July 1937, Upper Vicov (Suceava) – Minor anti-Semitic incident reported.

28th September 1937, Bucharest – On the day of the admission exam intruders enter the University - Christian students from the Medical School and the Academy of Commerce with the declared purpose of hindering the Jews in passing the exams.

14th December 1937, Bucharest – The General Association of Medicine Students called for a maximum of severity in the equalisation of medical diplomas obtained abroad.

23rd February 1938, Cluj – The penalty of expulsion is maintained in case of some Jewish students, if they were condemned for “crimes against the state’s security”..

12th April 1938, Alba Iulia – The general Association of Jewish Students in Romania is denied the prolongation of its activity licence.

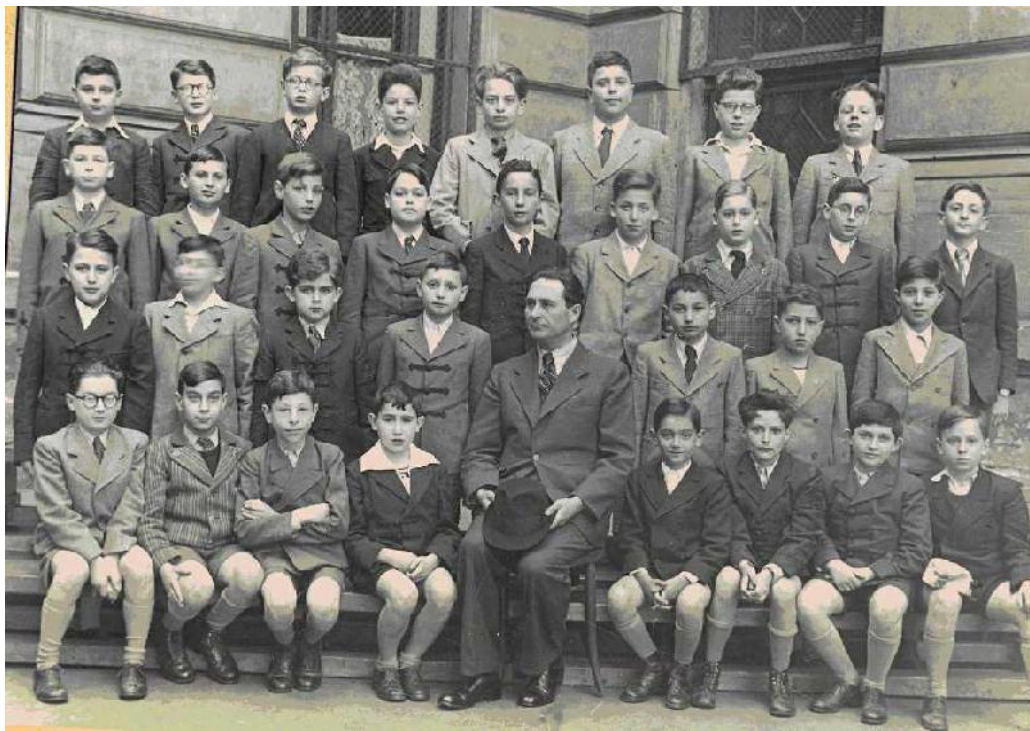
June 1939, Iasi – a Jewish practitioner who has studied in Pavia complains that the university of Iasi refuses to recognize his diploma.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ I express my special thanks to István Tótfalusi for his stylistical work on my paper.

János M. Bak

Memories about a segregated “Jewish Class” in a Budapest grammar school - 1939-1947

On 8 September, 1939, just a week after the first gunshots of Second World War were fired, thirty-eight ten year old boys (myself included) entered the I/B class of the (eight-year) Humanist secondary school named after a nineteenth-century poet, the *Budapesti V. kerületi magyar királyi Berzsenyi Dániel gimnázium* [Dániel Berzsenyi Hungarian Royal Grammar-School in Budapest fifth district] (henceforth: BDG).¹ It was a historical moment, not only in the life of the youngsters, but also, because this was the first *gimnázium* class in Hungary organized according to religion: it was a segregated Jewish class.



The I/B class in Spring 1940

In the wake of the Second Law on Jews (Law IV of 1939), it was decided that a *numerus clausus* would be introduced in high-schools: most schools would admit at most 2-3 Jews to every class (by religion, “Israelites,” not yet according

¹ An earlier version of the article was published in : *The Hungarian Quarterly* 50 (2009) 195 (Autumn), pp. 81-91. Reprinted with the kind permission of the editor.

to Nürnberg racial criteria, although the law was already stricter) and three Budapest boys' grammar schools open entire segregated "Jewish classes."² The I/B of BDG was such a class.

BDG was one of the best state grammar schools in Budapest. Several of its faculty members held honorary or part-time university positions as dr. habil. (advanced scholarly degree), thus eligible to professorship. (At least two of our teachers became well-known professors of Budapest University.)³ Founded in 1858, BDG was located in centre city, in Markó utca, near to the seat of the local and high courts (and their jail), in what was called Lipótváros (named after the Archduke Leopold of Habsburg). Part of this district was on the northern side of the *körút*, the ring-road, developed in the early twentieth century, an area of modern housing (*Újlipótváros*=New Leopold town), inhabited in great part by members of the professional middle class, many of them assimilated Jews. As an indication of this concentration of Jews, I remember that a great number (perhaps some 40%) of the so-called "Jewish houses" were located in this district. (In June 1944, Jews had to move from other blocks into crowded flats: one room per family in houses marked by huge yellow stars of David.⁴) Moreover, the "International Ghetto" (houses under the protection of the foreign embassies), was also located here, in the neighborhood of St Stephen's Park.⁵ Students of BDG came in their majority from Leopold-town, old and new.

In the following, I attempt to reconstruct, as far as possible, the fate of the thirty six boys and men of the I/B class (two pupils left before the end of the first year and we know nothing about them), during their study at BDG and in the sixty-two years since their graduation (*érettségi*, baccalaureate) in 1947. While this is certainly not a random sample, it is rather a typical cohort of Jewish middle class males of the generation born in 1928/9. It may be, thus, of interest as a "case study" of sorts. My summary is based on the memory of those classmates whom I

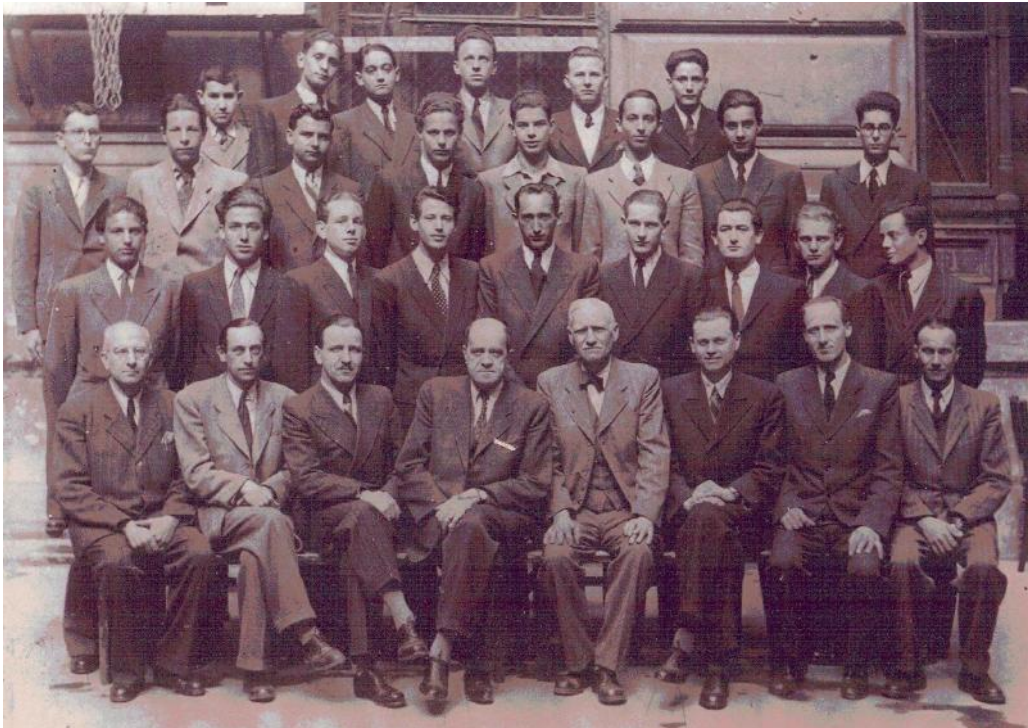
² I do not know how many "Jewish classes" were opened in girl's grammar schools. Before WWII schools in Hungary were not coeducational. It is worth noting that due to the school's location, the pupils of BDG were in the previous years also in the majority Jews or of Jewish background. In the year before us ca. 60% of the pupils were identified as "Israelites" by religion.

³ Tibor Kardos, a renaissance scholar, was professor and for many years dean of the Arts Faculty of ELTE University, Budapest; István Borzsák was professor and for long time head of the Dept. of Latin Philology at ELTE. László Vajthó taught at the Technical University and was a famous editor and sponsor of both old and modern Hungarian literature. Our science professors Pál Bite and László Karádi also held positions in higher education. There could have been more. Actually, the director of BDG during our first years, János Pálffy, taught also at the university as Egyptologist.

⁴ See Szabolcs Szita, "A budapesti csillagos házak (1944-45)" [The houses with star in Budapest], Remény Spring 2002 [<http://www.remeny.org/node/36> accessed at on 20 May, 2009]. My family had to give up a four-room flat in a house declared "non-Jewish" and move into a room near the River Danube. I wasn't too unhappy, for there were a number of young people, some friendly and pretty girls, and good company.

⁵ Actually, presently the district is (again?) seen as a quarter of liberal Jews and was a target of right-wing groups, including a Molotov-cocktail attack at a shop just a year ago. The nickname "New-Zs-land" (where Zs stands for "zsidó"—Jew) seems to be current for the area.

have been able to consult in 2007-10 personally or by correspondence, and on information available in the public domain, documents or biographical entries in encyclopedias. Five of us live in Budapest, and I was able to contact ten others in different parts of the world. However, besides the original class who started school in 1939, our “community of memory” is larger: we remember an additional few boys, who joined the class in the course of the subsequent eight years for longer or shorter periods of time. In 1942, BDG was amalgamated with a neighboring school, the former *Bolyai reálgimnázium* (science oriented high school), whence four students joined the class. After the war, the class was reorganized—now, of course, not on religious or racial lines—thus we graduated in the VIII/A or the VIII/B class

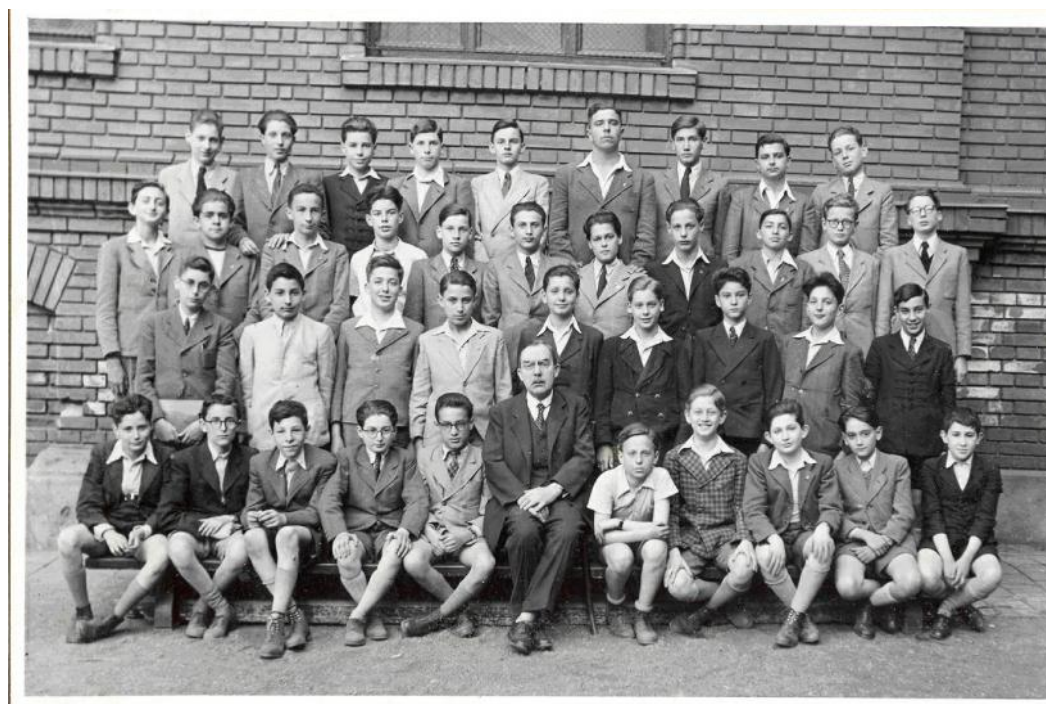


The VIII/B graduating class with its professors, May 1947.

As can be expected from a group long ago separated, the response of the surviving classmates to my information-gathering was very diverse. The few, who first responded, were émigrés, but not the academics. Then, some of them were skeptical about the whole project (of putting together a “virtual class reunion” on the web) and suggested that I just list the “famous” members (those who in politics or otherwise acquired public name) and forget about the rest. I found it typical for the social-cultural group that achievements in science or business counted little in their/our minds. Two or three former classmates did not wish to be, by name, associated with a “Jewish” history or simply did not want to have their names or whereabouts made publicly accessible (at that point we were

planning to make a homepage with the class list). Gradually, most others—some only after two-three letters and my insistence—supplied me with information, but a few remained, who did not feel like sharing their life history with me/us. Finally, I circulated my collection to all known class mates and most of them were pleased with receiving it; a few helped me formulate this commemoration of our past. Some even got in touch with long lost friends through the list.

Our memories of the eight years (or less) at BDG are, of course, a mix of typical high-school experiences and some specific ones as being young Jews in the ever more repressive atmosphere of Horthy's (and then Szálasi's) Hungary. In general, it seems that the school did not actively discriminate against the "Jewish classes" (there were four more following ours). That, for example, when, because of war-time shortages the heating of the building became a problem and some classes were taught in the afternoon (while usually secondary school instruction ended at 1 or 2 p.m.), two of the Jewish classes were moved to the less comfortable afternoon hours, may not have been motivated by Anti-Semitism. But, perhaps, it was.



The IV/C class in 1943, with Dr Égner in the middle

Actually, in the annuals of BDG between 1939 and 1943 the words *zsidó osztály* (Jewish class) features, if I am not mistaken, only once, when it is stated that in the second semester of 1943, "National Defence" was not taught to them. (By that time some of the pupils' fathers were serving as unarmed conscripts in labor companies at the Russian front, often exposed to murderous treatment by their superiors.) At some point, we were also separated from the mandatory

paramilitary training as “Levente,” and assigned—in a way parallel to our parents’ fate—to some auxiliary tasks. Surveying the faculty assigned to these classes, there is no indication whatsoever that they would not have been taught by the best professors.⁶ Moreover, there were such gestures as the initiative of our class teacher and Latin professor Sándor Égner in 1941 or 1942 to hold a Chanukah feast in the class instead of (or besides) the general Christmas celebrations of the school. (Dr Égner, a polyglot maverick of German background, grew up in Máramaros [Marumureș], a multiethnic region with a sizeable orthodox Jewish population, thus well acquainted with Jewish holidays.⁷) I am not sure, whether Professor Vajthó, who regularly prepared publications of old Hungarian literature with his Berzsenyi pupils, selected our class for a planned volume of “Quotation from World Literature,” assuming a more “cosmopolitan” attitude of ours. Most of us knew at least German well, as we had Austrian nannies (*Fräuleins*) as kids. (The several hundred index cards collected got lost in the war.)

One of my classmates went as far as wishing to record that “BDG was an island of peace and tolerance in the midst of the storm of blood.” Surely, there were plenty Anti-Semitic teachers⁸ (even card-carrying Nazis) and the nationalist-chauvinist rituals, mandatory in the Horthy-era—public recital of revanchist poetry, prayer for our soldiers fighting a ‘defensive war’ (!) in Russia—were also imposed on us, but *grosso modo*, this statement holds true. Someone knew that one or another of our teachers was helping pupils to escape persecution.⁹ Classmates remember fights with pupils of the non-Jewish classes, but I also remember fights with the pupils of the high-school across the street, which counted as “BDG-tradition.” How much of that was different from typical boys’ roughing it up is difficult to decide *ex post*. Actually, in the darkest months of persecution in 1944, we did not attend school, anyhow. We could not after April 8, when Jews, obligated to wear a yellow star were under a partial curfew and allowed to be on the streets only for a few hours. And, of course, in the Fall of 1944, when most Budapest Jews were confined to a walled-in ghetto, we were equally excluded from going to school.

⁶ I do not know, whether that kind of petty corruption enjoyed by some teachers who “organized” that mothers bring them box-lunches on set days, was special for (rich?) Jewish pupils or not, but I suspect so.

⁷ I understand that Dr Égner attended several family receptions a propos the bar mitzvah of my classmates.

⁸ One may risk to assume that those who were members of Admiral Horthy’s “Order of the Valiants” (*Vitézi Rend*), an institution founded for rewarding active supporters of the régime, were *ex officio* Anti-Semites; and both the first director and one of our teachers over several years were proud members of it. But, I believe, this title was also granted to decorated officers of the First World War without explicit political involvement.

⁹ Gyula Horváth, gym-teacher, at the same time instructor of the paramilitary Levente classes, allowed me to manufacture a good number of blank Levente-ID cards with the stamp “Of Christian origin including four grandparents” which could be written out in any name, even with photo. They were very helpful for many friends of mine at police or Arrow-cross [Hungarian Nazi] raids.

As said above, after the war the sixth grade (for the short spring time, as the school was damaged during the siege and reopened only in March 1945) was restructured and remained thus for the last years. We registered sadly our—in comparison of the project of *Endlösung*, relatively few—losses caused by the German and Hungarian Nazi mass murder of Jews. That only (!?) three boys of the class (maybe four) were killed during the Shoah, is not surprising: the survival chances of the sons of professional upper middle class of Budapest with ample financial means and good connections to non-Jews were generally good. Many of us were able to procure false papers,¹⁰ find Gentile friends who hid Jews, and most of us had simply good luck. (Such as the Arrow-cross thug taking fancy at the pretty sister of one of our classmates and let them go, but time ran out on him to show up and “collect reward”...). I have no precise data on the fate of my classmates from these months, but as far as I know many of them were in hiding with false identity papers, others survived in the Budapest Ghetto and a few in houses (more or less) protected by foreign embassies. Two or three boys were taken into marching groups towards Germany, but managed to escape. By age, we were just at the margin of those who survived as “children” and those who were more endangered (taken to labor battalions or the like) as “young men.” To be sure, the adults, such as our parents and older siblings, fared much less well. I have no precise numbers, but great many of them were killed in forced-labor companies, extermination camps, or were shot on the shores of the Danube in Budapest.

One boy was killed by a splinter during the allied bombardment of Budapest and one died in an accident soon after liberation. A few classmates emigrated before the end of the eight years, so only twenty of the original thirty-six graduated together in 1947. During the two post-war years many of us were engaged in politics outside of school and also spent quite some time attending the war-crimes trials (and public executions) in the court buildings next door to BDG.

In the sixty-odd years that passed since our graduation, Hungary went through several changes of régimes, which I need not repeat here. Not surprisingly, some of our classmates families left just before the Shoah (one, I believe, by *allijah beth* [illegal immigration] for Palestine), or soon after the war (at least eleven, mostly to the Americas), when Communist take-over threatened the existence of entrepreneurs and free professionals alike. But it seems that the majority remained in Hungary and studied at universities or academies. And/or did his duty as conscript in the Hungarian Peoples’ Army (at least five of us). However, during the Stalinist period, some were not allowed into higher education because of their “bourgeois origin.” Yet, finally, as far as we know, almost all earned a diploma or a respectable trade.

¹⁰ A good method was to pretend to be refugees from Transylvania, by that time occupied by the Soviet Army Romanian troops, and thus having lost original documents. Once one identity card as “refugee” was issued, one could proceed to obtain other useful documents, e.g. ration-cards for bread and meat.

Many of us—but I have no exact data on this—supported the Communist régime at least for some time. This was, of course, typical for young Jews, who expected that the Communists would be the most consistent Anti-Fascists and lead the retribution for the crimes committed against Jews and other enemies of Nazism. It seemed logical that the explicitly declared enemies of the past régime, in which we were discriminated and persecuted, would be the right friends. In spite of our liberal, democratic—or Social Democratic—education, many of us embraced Communism, as it seemed to offer unequivocal solutions for the complicated post-war situation. Let us not forget that in the first years it was by no means clear (to us!) that this militant movement with its romantic underground past and impressive intellectual heritage would become the instrument of ruthless repression. It took us a few years to realize that our initial expectations would be betrayed. The show trials, the inner-party purges, and the realization of the country's having been driven to ruins by “our Party” gradually opened the eyes of many of us.¹¹ This process was different with each person and some of my classmates seem to have decided to stay with the “winning” party—by conviction or for their carriers—till the bitter end.

The next round of emigration followed the defeat of the revolution of 1956, when at least five of us left Hungary. The emigrants about whom we know live or lived all across the world: four ended up in Europe (UK, France, Spain), five in North America, five in Brasil, three in Australia. Several spent shorter times in other countries, including Israel. Because of the “unknown” category, it is not quite clear, whether a slight majority or a slight minority remained in Hungary. I am the only one who returned to Budapest after the fall of Communism; several émigrés visited Budapest in the last decades.

A few summary statistics. According to the Annual [*Évkönyv*] of BDG for the school-year 1939/40 (pp. 55-6), the profession of the parents of the I/B class were:

Factory owner	1
Industrial employee*	7
Wholesaler	4
Retailer	3
Commercial employee*	7
Other professional**	13
Retired	1

* I translate *tisztviselő*, ‘clerk’ as employee, since this category covered persons from bookkeepers to senior managers alike. [My father was, for example, at that time something like vice-president of a firm, but would have been included in one of these categories.]

¹¹ More on this, regarding also my personal experience, see György Litván, “Finding (and Losing?) The Right Path Together (1945-48),” in: *...The Man of Many Devices, Who Wandered Full Many Ways... Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. Balázs Nagy & Marcell Sebök (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), pp. 13-7.

** The catch-all category ‘other professionals’ (*egyéb értelmiségi*) does not allow more than stating that a third of the pupils came from families of lawyers, medical doctors, engineers, and the like. It is, of course, conspicuous that such categories as public servant or army officer (very much present in the other classes) are empty, in the wake of the “restriction of Jews in public life.”

The fate of the class (including some temporary classmates) in a few categories was, approximately, as follows. In terms of demography: six or seven died before 1947 (three or four as victims of persecution); three died young (before 1967), seven in middle age (before 1994, the last well attended class reunion). Nine died since, eighteen are still alive, while we know nothing of six others.¹² A few classmates wrote to me about their family, but not enough to include anything about them into the “statistics.” As to post-secondary studies: arts and social sciences 10; economics 6; engineering 6; medicine 6; science 6; other or none 4; unknown 5. Professional life: social sciences and humanities 6; engineering 5; medical (clinical and research) 6; other science 5; media 2; management 9; other 2; unknown 8. (In the case of change of career, I took the one longest pursued.)

As much as I was able to reconstruct of the careers of the classmates, almost everyone about whom we know had a fairly successful life. A few of us acquired a public profile. András Román (born Rechnitz), an architect, is regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern monument preservation efforts in Hungary; the rescue of the World Heritage Village, Hollókő, was his major project. Emil Horn, historian and museologist, sat up the first historical exhibition (still under Communism) about the persecution and mass murder of Hungarian Jews. Dan Danieli (born Dénes Faludi), who had served several years in the Israeli Air Force, became known as a researcher of the Holocaust and for his successful efforts in getting the merits of Captain Ocskay in rescuing the life of a great number of Hungarian Jews acknowledged in Hungary and abroad. György Litván (who studied with us for a year) was not only a highly regarded historian,¹³ but also famous for having been the first to openly call upon the dictator Rákosi to resign in the spring of 1956. He suffered several years of jail for it and for his role in the revolution and the resistance thereafter. Fittingly, in 1989, he became the founding director of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Revolution. Márton Tardos (born Neuschloss), an economist, who graduated with us, was a leading figure of the democratic opposition, theorist of transitional economics, and MP for the Free Democrats for several years. Early losses of the class were the philosopher Péter Ladányi, throughout eight years one of the two always eminent students—straight As—in competition with the similarly straight-A fellow

¹² Most of these are from the category of “transient” classmates. That holds true for the “unknown” group in the other statistics as well.

¹³ One of his major opponents in Communist times was a schoolmate of ours from the parallel (“non-Jewish”) class, for a while head of the Marxism-Leninism Dept. of the Ministry of Education, who denounced Litván’s “heroes,” the Hungarian non-Marxist progressive authors (such as Oscar Jászi, whose biography he wrote). Actually, he is the only person from that class whose name became known later—at least, to me.

philosopher, Róbert Pártos. Both of them studied with George Lukács, Ladányi was remembered as an excellent teacher, though not a Marxist¹⁴—and both died young. János Korda, our post-war classmate (as baptized Jew) became a renowned engineer in Hungary, vice-president of the National Chamber of Engineers. Among the six classmates in medicine and related fields one earned merits in developing medication for tuberculosis, another (external member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) in the field of interferon research; a mathematician became well-known for his work on calculus. Two classmates were active in Hungarian film and television; four are professors emeriti of universities in Hungary and abroad; six retired as senior managers of major companies. We know only of one or two failed existences, but maybe those who vanished from our horizon were not exactly successful either.

All in all, it seems to be true that in spite of first Nazi and then Communist discrimination and persecution of the Jewish (later also non-Jewish) middle class, the ca. fifty men of my larger sample managed to retain—or regain—the social status that their parents had held, at home or abroad. Several of my classmates underlined that the years spent at BDG were most important for their professional development and looked back at them with pride and satisfaction. If I am not mistaken, those, who had left Hungary, succeeded in rising higher than their parents, while to achieve public acclaim was more likely for those, who stayed. An exact comparison of the profession of the parents and the sons is not possible from my fragmentary information, yet I guess that it would be rather similar. The factory owner and the commercial (wholesale and retail) categories would be replaced by entrepreneurial and senior managerial positions and among the sons of free professionals several would have become university teachers. An American friend of mine summarized the story thus: “Take a bunch of *Bildungsbürger* kids, add depression, discrimination, war, persecution of Jews, Stalinism, revolution and counterrevolution—and half a century later you get a bunch of *Bildungsbürger* grandpas.” Quite.

Even though this was a “Jewish class” I know not enough about the relationship of my classmates to Judaism during our school-time or thereafter. From my limited impressions, I suspect that for the majority religion and Jewish culture was and remained rather marginal. While the grandparents had been mostly more or less observant Jews, already the parents went to temple only rarely, on the great holidays or for the sake of their parents. None of us remembers, for example, classmates in whose households Jewish dietary rules would have been strictly observed, while I know that in many a family Christmas

¹⁴ The philosopher, Mihály Vajda remembered about him: “In my second year at the Lenin-Institute, we could chose between ‘scientific socialism,’ and ‘philosophy.’ I took, of course, the latter. And lo and behold, a young man by the name of P. L. taught us history of philosophy, someone, who understood the Greeks and who did not talk about an author unless he read all his surviving words. He committed suicide a few years later; I know not, whether because of the persecution he suffered after the revolution ...”. [<http://epa.oszk.hu/00700/00775/00036/1372-1382.html> – Accessed 1 May 2009] – my translation.

trees were set up, even if the presents were not assigned to “little Jesus.” No doubt, all of us were made aware of the negative implication of being Jews (even though the fact was hardly unknown before to all of us) when we encountered official discrimination.¹⁵ If I remember well, during the dark years of 1942-44, several of my classmates observed Jewish customs (such as bar-mitzvah) more seriously than they might have without the external pressure of discrimination. (True, one of them pointed out that it was a good occasion to get nice presents. The watch he received then is still working.) Religious instruction in school—mandatory until 1946—was rather formal. We were supposed to attend synagogue service every week, but nobody controlled it seriously.¹⁶ For most of the six or seven years our teacher was Adolf Fisch (a.k.a. Andrew József) otherwise inspector of religious teaching, but as far as we remember, his classes were more about problems of life and everyday psychology than strictly Jewish subjects.¹⁷ Still, we seem to have learned enough liturgical Hebrew for one of our classmates, who served on an American aircraft carrier, being able to act as “lay rabbi” on the ship for a few years; thus he was the only “official Jew” among us. As to our later life, I know about quite a few mixed marriages and we have seen that none of us remained (even if started out there) in Israel.¹⁸ I am not aware of any of my ex-classmates being an active or observant Jew (or serious practitioner of any other religion, for that matter). I know that the one who married to a Sabra keeps the high holidays, but more for family reasons than for religiosity. Such attitudes are not surprising for the Lipótváros professional (and other) middle class of then—or now.

A certain Jewish identity was enforced, by discrimination, for many of us—I think, at least a dozen boys from the class—who belonged to one of the boy-scout troops expelled from the Hungarian Boy Scouts Association in 1940, as “Jews.” The No. 311 Vörösmarty and the No. 191 Miklós Toldi Boy Scout Troop were either expressly Jewish or at least consisting mostly of assimilated Jewish

¹⁵ In contrast to the famous survey of Erős Ferenc-Kovács András-Lévai Katalin: “Hogyan jöttem rá, hogy zsidó vagyok?” [How did I find that I am Jewish?], *Medvetánc*, 1985/2-3 pp 129-145, which found that some persons did not know this till late in age if at all, none of us would have been unaware of our official denomination, as in inter-war Hungary religious instruction at school was mandatory. All those who were registered as “izr.” had to attend classes on Jewish religion and learn a little bit of liturgical Hebrew.

¹⁶ I believe, it is characteristic that the Nobel Prize laureate Imre Kertész (slightly younger than us) found it credible that the hero of his *Fatelessness*, a 14-year old Budapest Jewish boy, heard the Kaddish recited first time in the concentration camp. We learned a little bit more.

¹⁷ His postwar activity is recorded by Attila Novák “Jewish Homes and Orphanages in Hungary after World War II” [<http://iremember.hu/text/articles/israel60novak.html> – Accessed May 10, 2009]. He was arrested in the infamous “Zionist trial” and released only after Stalin’s death. He finally became a math teacher in a Budapest school. We always had the impression that he lived of religious instruction only *faute de mieux*.

¹⁸ I heard recently that one of the grandchildren became a religious Jew (after a visit to Hungary!) and is presently studying in a rabbinical institute in Jerusalem.

youth.¹⁹ Scouting was a very important youth movement in inter-war Hungary. Troops were supported by churches, schools, even factories. (In 1933, one of the major international Jamborees was held in Gödöllő, near Budapest and the scholar-politician, twice prime minister, Count Pál Teleki, was chief scoutmaster.²⁰) The Vörösmarty troop was founded in 1924 by—and remained connected to—the Buda Israelite Congregation. The Toldi was even older, amalgamated from several earlier troops in 1922.²¹ While Vörösmarty was formally connected to a religious sponsor, Toldi was supported by a consortium of schools and later by the Hungarian Esperanto Society, but had only very few non-Jewish members. Tolerance for believers and non-believers was characteristic for both.

At the 80th anniversary of the foundation of No. 311, the speaker spelled out: “Our identity was fourfold: that of Magyars, of Jews, of Boy Scouts—and, above all, we were Vörösmarty boys and girls.” We were deeply disturbed when, in 1941, we were being disallowed to display the triangular badge hungaria on our (now also prohibited but in parts retained) uniforms. We had been just as keen in gathering and singing Hungarian folk songs and saluting the red-white-green tricolor, as any other boy scout troop in Hungary, and (as I see from Vörösmarty publications as far back as the 1930s) “Christmas hikes” were listed unproblematically besides Chanukah celebrations. Our perception of being persecuted increased, and our patriotism certainly decreased when first the oldest and then all the senior scouts were called up into labor companies and the long-cherished tents of summer camps and other equipment were sacrificed to have good wind jackets and backpacks made for them. Few of them returned after the war.²²

However sketchy and subjective all this may be, I know of no similar inquiry about the fate of a comparable group, such as the other Jewish classes at BDG, that started in 1940-43 (one of them including George Soros). A few years of age difference made their fates in many respects different from ours.²³ Yet,

¹⁹ Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-55) was one of the leading poets of the reform era. Toldi was a knight in the fourteenth century, made famous by an epic poem of the nineteenth-century writer János Arany. The choice of names indicates the essentially “Magyar” orientation of both troops.

²⁰ He was, actually, attacked by the far right wing for supporting such a “British” thing as scouting.

²¹ Jewish Scouting in Hungary—including some 12 troops with ca. 2000 boys and a few hundred girls—is, of course, a subject for itself. I include this paragraph only because for many of us the boy-scout troop was a much more important community than the school class. Actually, when in the late twentieth century, we planned to hold class reunions, we scheduled them for dates when there was an “ex-Toldists” meeting, because for that occasion more classmates were likely to travel across the world.

²² At a recent Vörösmarty anniversary meeting more than a hundred former Boy Scout brothers killed by Hungarian and German Nazis were remembered. The troop may have counted some 200-250 boys and girls in the 1940s. I have no comparable numbers for Toldi, but they would hardly be lower.

²³ As mentioned above, the majority of pupils of the previous years, not separated by religion, would have suffered fates more tragic than ours, being in the age group of those taken to labor

from a cursory look at their class lists and the fragmentary information about some of them (quite a few being younger brothers of my classmates), I risk saying that our story is fairly “typical” and thus, perhaps, not uninteresting.

camps or murdered in forced marches towards Germany. It would be interesting to compare the life-stories of the parallel “non-Jewish” classes, but I have not enough information to attempt anything of the sort. To be sure, there were several boys in those, who, as baptized “Jews,” would have been in a situation rather similar to ours during the war—and, maybe, thereafter.

Vera Pécsi

Chronology of the *numerus clausus* in Hungary

16 January 1907: In their speeches in Parliament, Károly Hencz and Károly Kmety (members of opposition) recommend the introduction of restrictions on the number of Jewish students in universities and secondary schools, respectively.

1918

26 May: In his article, „Pro juventute catholica” in the periodical *Alkotmány* /Constitution/, Bishop Ottokár Prohászka demands that Christian University students be placed at an advantage over Jewish ones.

22 June: The periodical *Alkotmány* /Constitution/ demands that the Jewish Question be placed on the political agenda.

31 July: Bishop Ottokár Prohászka stresses in a speech delivered in the upper house of Parliament that the Hungarian people must be protected from the power of the Jews, rooted in their “excess of intelligence”.

11 September: Bishop Ottokár Prohászka demands the forceful limitation of opportunity for Jews in an article entitled „Have we had enough?” in the periodical *Alkotmány* /Constitution/.

1919

7 August: At the Plenary Session of the Faculty of Medicine, three professors recommend that the admission of women to the Faculty be limited as strictly as possible.

Early August: Paramilitary university organizations form in the Capital’s higher education institutions to maintain order and to remove left-leaning and Jewish students.

6-10 August: Attacks on Jewish students in Budapest’s universities begin.

10 August: The head of the universities office of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction warns the Rector of the Polytechnic University that „the exclusion of Jewish students is completely unlawful”.

10 August: The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction rescinds by decree (no: 4.507/1919) the educational and cultural policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republican government.

14 august: A memorandum of the „Hungarian Christian Youth of the Technical Universities” demands the „the exclusion of all Jews and Bolshevists” from the universities.

18 August: Formation of the Preparatory Council of the „*Turul*” Alliance of Hungarian National Universities and Polytechnics.

22 August: Prime Minister István Friedrich instructs the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction Károly Huszár to prevent violent anti-Semitic movements at the universities. The Ministry orders the universities closed until the end of September.

The Hungarian Zionist Organisation petitions the Government, assuring it of their financial support and co-operation, while at the same time calling on it to put a stop to anti-Semitic attacks and incitement.

The Council of the Medical Faculty of Péter Pázmány University recommends a „*numerus clausus* for students”. The recommendation is presented by professors Károly Hoór and János Bársony. They recommend the restriction of the participation of women in higher education, and the exclusion of anyone found to have participated in the Revolutions.

27 August: The Council of Péter Pázmány University discusses the Faculty of Medicine’s recommendation. This is the first appearance of the plan for an ethnic/racial quota: Mihály Kmoskó, dean of the Faculty of Catholic Theology, recommends that „each Faculty should establish, based on religion, past behaviour and race, the proportion of students to be admitted”. The Faculty of Catholic Theology suggests at the same meeting that the quota should be extended to include the various national ‘ethnic minorities’ too.

6 September: The Council of the Polytechnic University – at the behest of the Department of Chemical Engineering – decides upon the implementation of the *numerus clausus*, and asks the University’s various Departments to work out the details.

17 September: The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (Philosophy) of Péter Pázmány University accepts by verbal majority Professor Ernő Fináczy's motion, which declares the recommendations for ethnic and racial quotas to be illegal, since such quotas are in contravention of „those fundamental national laws that stipulate that every citizen of the Hungarian state is equal before the law, regardless of religion or ethnicity”.

25 September: At a Péter Pázmány University Rector's meeting, the head of department of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction is informed that „a large mass of the students have formed a strong union...to enforce their desire that...not a single Jew should be allowed to take exams or enroll”.

27 September: Right-wing students demand the closure of the universities, citing the „lack of coal and continuing tensions. Károly Huszár, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, orders the temporary closure of Budapest's two Universities. Teaching resumes in the spring of 1920.

The Faculty of Law of Péter Pázmány University adopts by verbal majority the recommendation of the Faculties of Medicine and Theology. The *numerus clausus* is to be implemented by „respecting the proportionality of nationalities, religions and races” in the admissions process.

12 November: The Union of Hungarian Jewish University and Polytechnic Students holds its first general meeting (it is superseded in 1927 by the National Union of Hungarian Israelite University and Polytechnic Students).

4 December: In a decree, the Council of Péter Pázmány University comes down on the side of implementing the *numerus clausus*. It draws the attention of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction to the recommendation of the Legal and Catholic Theological Faculties that „in the case of a shift to the *numerus clausus* system, the admission of students belonging to religious...and racial minorities should only be in proportion to their proportion in the overall population of the country”. Alfréd Doleschall, the dean of the Faculty of Law in Budapest, emphasizes in his conclusive statement that the *numerus clausus* is „directed against the excess of Jews [in higher education]”, and that the „forcing into the background of elements which, by their ethnicity or religion, are destructive,” is „justified by, nay necessary to, the basic interests of self-defense” of the society and the state.

9 December: The *Turul* Student Alliance organises a general meeting in the *Gólyavár* (University of Budapest), to discuss the „Jewish Question in the Universities”.

1920

2 January: Prime Ministerial Decree no. 272/1920 is published, regarding the establishment of the Faculty of Economics in Budapest. The Faculty begins operating in the 1920-21 academic year.

28 January: The Council of Péter Pázmány University establishes in a resolution that „it is a veritable cultural scandal that our University has, to this very day, not been able to commence its lawful operation for the 1919/20 academic year”. They call for an immediate inquiry into the *numerus clausus* issue.

7 February: István Haller convenes a conference of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction with the participation of the rectors and deans of the Universities. They agree on the general limitation of the number of students and also that the mode of selection of the students should be left up to the individual Faculties. They agree that „in the selection process, they do not wish to apply either racial or religious criteria”. The Minister declares that Parliament will adopt a decision in this matter. They also decide that teaching in the 1919-20 academic year will begin with a four-month supplementary term.

9 February: Formation of the National Union of Hungarian University and Polytechnic Students (MEFHOSZ). The *Turul* Union leaves the organisation a few months later, and continues as a federation of right-wing student clubs.

11 February: Formation of the *Hungária* Association of Hungarian Technicians.

11 February: Publication of decree no. 4.131/1920 of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, which establishes a four-month „replacement course” for the academic year (which counts as two semesters). Exams begin on 16 February, applications on 1 March, and lectures on 16 March.

27 February: The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction publishes an amendment to its decree of the 11 February, no. 16990/1920: of those applying for admission to the replacement course for the 1919-20 academic year, only those can be admitted and allowed to take examinations who „are able to justify their behavior during the so-called Dictatorship of the Proletariat”. Members of university-based paramilitary student battalion do not have to provide proof of their behavior.

2 March: The Rector of Budapest University orders admissions to be suspended and the University closed until the paramilitary student battalion leaves

the University's buildings. On 8 March, the paramilitary cell leaves the University.

16 March: The *Turul* Union – in protest against the Rector's actions – holds a meeting in the Domed Hall of the University, and submit their written demands to MPs. The signatories of the demands, the *Turul* Union, the National Presidential Conference of The Awakening Hungarians' Association [*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete* – ÉME], The United National Christian League and the Central Secretariat of the National Christian Socialist Union, demand that Parliament „urgently bring a law that the Jewish race, regardless of the religion of its individual members, be allowed to participate in all higher educational establishments only in the same proportion as those of Jews in the overall population of Hungary”.

17 march: Prime Minister Sándor Simonyi-Semadam mentions in his speech outlining the government's legislative programme that „the first task of the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction will be to implement the reform of education with a national and Christian bias”.

Prime Minister Sándor Simonyi-Semadam reads in Parliament a letter from Count Albert Apponyi in Paris, in which the head of the Hungarian delegation to the Peace Talks warns the government that the news of the general conditions prevailing in Hungary and the reports of anarchy and havoc staged by anti-Semitic units that reach the West are having a significantly deleterious effect on the position of his delegation (I/21. 59-61. lj.).

26 April: István Haller, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction announces in a speech to Parliament that the *numerus clausus* must be realised, and that the number of University Students be maximized.

28 April: MP Gyula Zákány, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Awakening Hungarians' Association [ÉME] presents a motion to Parliament incorporating the legal introduction of *numerus clausus* in the Universities, and its extension to high schools as well.

According to Károly Ereky, an MP for the National Christian Party, the main goal of the introduction of the Jewish quota is to „expropriate, by legal means, within the lawful framework of the political system, the billions of income of Jews”.

8 May: Students of the Polytechnic University prepare a resolution demanding that Parliament „within the very near future prepare a draft law to solve the Jewish Question in the Universities”.

4 June: The three-thousand strong student body of the Budapest Universities, having debated the *numerus clausus* question, issue a memorandum calling upon the government to „move to an institutional politics that defends the nation”, having previously despatched a delegation to Bishop Ottokár Prohászka MP, to inform him that „the next academic year...can only begin, if the *numerus clausus* is law by then implemented”.

On the day of the signing of the Trianon peace treaty, an anti-Semitic rally is organized in Budapest and 85 Jews are injured.

10 June: The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction – on the advice of the Council of Péter Pázmány University – bars 54 medical students from all domestic universities for their behavior during the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

29 June: The *Turul* Union holds a general meeting in the Gólyavár (Budapest University). They inform the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction of their demands for the introduction of the *numerus clausus* in a memorandum. Their starting point is that: „In a Hungary robbed of two thirds of its territory, only Hungarians have the right to live and support their existence and themselves”.

Formation of the right-wing Catholic student society, *Foederatio Americana*.

June (?): Publication of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction decree no. 113.240/1920 – about admission exams to secondary schools. (The so-called secondary school *numerus clausus* is abolished in 1924.)

5 July: István Haller, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, presents to the government the first official draft of the proposed *numerus clausus* law, sending copies to the universities. There is no mention as yet of an ethnic quota in this draft.

21 July: The government discusses the draft *numerus clausus* law.

22 July: Pál Teleki, in his Prime Minister’s speech outlining the government’s legislative program promises „to defend institutionally the interest of Christian society”.

István Haller, Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, submits to Parliament the proposed legislation to control admission to Universities, the Economic Faculty of Budapest University and Legal Academies; this is the so-called *numerus clausus* legislation.

27 July: A group of members of the Awakening Hungarians' Association [ÉME] burst into a central Budapest café and beat the Jewish guests bloody, killing a bank manager and a lawyer.

28 July: László Budaváry MP, one of the leaders of ÉME, calls for the adoption of an overarching „racial purity law” in Parliament. He calls for the law operational not only in the sphere of education, but in every sphere of life in the framework of an anti-Jewish legislation.

5 August: MEFHOSZ with the co-operation of MPs and right-wing youth organisations makes an inquiry into the draft *numerus clausus* legislation. Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, chairing the meeting, formulates his recommendation, which meets with general approbation, that „admissions should be proportionate to the overall proportion of races and ethnic groups”.

9 August: The Treasury and Education Committee of Parliament debates the *numerus clausus* draft law. In their joint report, they recommend that the following be inserted into the first paragraph of the draft: „only such persons may enroll [at the universities], who are absolutely reliable from a patriotic and moral standpoint”.

11 August: The governing party – with Ottokár Prohászka chairing – debates the draft *numerus clausus* law. Nándor Bernolák MP, a professor of Law at Debrecen University, outlines the need to fix ethnic, racial, and religious quotas. (At the next debate, on the 24 August, it is left to Bernolák to submit an individual amendment to make an ‘open’ *numerus clausus* proposal.)

20 August: István Haller, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction regulates the number of students to be admitted for the 1920-21 academic year by decree. According to the decree, „Israelites are to be considered a separate ethnicity” (cf. *Magyarországi zsidótörvények és rendeletek* [Hungarian anti-Jewish Laws and Statutes], p. 7.)

1 September: The United National Christian League, the *Turul* Union and the Hungary Rising Association recommend, in their petition to Parliament, that the Jewish quota be extended to secondary schools, as well as demanding that „in the fields where Jewry is excessively over-represented, no Jews should be allowed to join until the proper proportion is restored”.

2-12 September: Parliamentary debate of the *numerus clausus* law (2, 3, 16-18, 20-21 September). 20 MPs speak in the debate; 13 for, 7 against. In the specific debate on 21 September, Nándor Bernolák formally submits the amendment – already mentioned in the general debate on 3 September – to create

a quota for ethnicity. Of a total of 219 MPs, only 64 are present at the final vote on the proposed legislation, of whom 57 vote yes.

21 September: Parliament rejects Pál Sándor MP's motion that a Jewish University be established.

22 September: Károly Ereky attacks the government in Parliament by saying that „nothing is being done to bring down Jewry” (I/57. 168.lj.)

26 September: Publication of law XXV (1920) pertaining to the control of the admissions process to the Scientific and Technical Universities, the Economics Faculty of Budapest University and Legal Academies, the co-called *numerus clausus*.

27 September: Publication of statute no. 123.033/1920 of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction regarding the execution of law XXV (1920). In its appendix can be found the figures on the division of the population by mother tongue, with the comment that „Israelites are to be considered a separate ethnicity”. The statute confirms that the Jewish quota can only be applied to first-year admissions.

11-31 October: There are disturbances at the universities because of the perceived „inadequacies” of the *numerus clausus* law as enacted by Parliament. In the main building of Budapest University, right-wing student organizations block the doors, demanding identification from anyone wishing to enter, beat up Jewish students from higher semesters, take away their papers, and throw them out of the building. On 14 October, the Rector suspends admissions, teaching does not start. The attacks spread to the other Faculties and the Polytechnics.

13 October: The scandals at the universities are taken up at cabinet meetings. The government decides that it will be as determined as possible in the matter of university admissions and the freedom to study.

14 October: 40 representatives of the *Turul* Union meet with István Haller, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction. They present their demands verbally, and in writing. They want „the extension of the *numerus clausus* to all institutions of higher education, the invalidity of acquired rights, and finally the involvement of the youth in the approval committees.

On the same day, a deputation from MEFHOSZ also visits the minister. On the one hand, they sharply condemn the unlawful actions taking place in the universities, while on the other they support the *Turul* Union's demands.

19 October: The Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction publishes an amendment to the statute on the execution of the *numerus clausus* law, no. 136.515/1920. Accordingly in those faculties where the admission of candidates has not yet finished, the approval committees can be complemented with two deputed members of right-wing student associations. The young delegates to the committees „can examine the documents, but have only a consultative vote”.

End of October the admissions process restarts at the Polytechnic University and teaching starts.

11 November: The Arts and Sciences Faculty of Budapest University decides that in the future it will not authorize admission to members of the liberal Galilei Circle. Later all the other Faculties follow suit and the Council of the University adopts a similar resolution.

1921

3 March: After a lengthy debate, the cabinet accepts the Ministry of Defense's motion that the paramilitary right-wing student battalions should be maintained – with an amendment by Treasury Secretary Lóránt Hegedüs – until July of 1921. The members of the battalions ceasing to exist will be „enlisted” among the members of the university sports societies and will continue to operate under the cover names *MAFC Diákokotthon* [Student Home] and the *Polytechnic University Hall*. Later, from the autumn of 1921, they will make up the University and Polytechnics groups of the National Labour Protection organisation (NMV).

16 June: Parliament adopts law XXV (1921) regarding the temporary transfer of the Royal Hungarian universities of Kolozsvár/Cluj and Pozsony/Bratislava. The two universities, the Franz Josef University of Kolozsvár and the Erzsébet University of Bratislava, annexed by successor states in the Trianon Peace Treaty, are transferred to Szeged and Pécs respectively.

November: The Joint Foreign Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Anglo-Jewish Association and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* present a joint petition to the League of Nations in the matter of the Hungarian *numerus clausus*. The Council of the League of Nations debates the issue, but does not come to a decision.

A confidential Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction decree no. 91.487/1921, extends the effect of the *numerus clausus* law to those who wish to continue their education in Hungary, having begun it abroad.

The British Jewish politician Lucien Wolf, foreign correspondent of the Times, outlines in his submission to the League of Nations that the Hungarian *numerus clausus* contravenes points 56, 57 and 58 of the Trianon Treaty.

1922

Motions to abolish the law came one after the other in Parliament: between 1922 and 1924, eight such motions failed when put to the vote. Prime minister István Bethlen openly opposed the motions at abolition.

20 July: The Bishops of the Hungarian Churches of Transylvania ask the Hungarian government to abolish the *numerus clausus* law, because this would help the situation of Hungarians who now found themselves in a minority status in Romania.

18 September: The General Assembly of the League of Nations unanimously accepts Hungary as a member.

30 September: The Council of the League of Nations asks the Hungarian government for detailed information on the implementation of the *numerus clausus* law. In his response, Foreign Minister Miklós Bánffy denies that the law represents a severe restriction for Jews. The League of Nations acknowledges the response, but asks for further information on admission procedures.

October: at the University of Pécs, right-wing students beat up their Jewish colleagues bloody during a chemistry practical. The Rector suspends practicals throughout the University, and all the students in that year have to repeat the semester.

16 December: MP Gyula Gömbös, Vice-President of the Party of Unity [*Egységes Párt*] in a speech to Parliament demands the introduction of the *numerus clausus* to all fields of economic life.

1923

January The Hungarian government transmits the information requested regarding admission procedures to the League of Nations. The League appoints a three-member committee to examine the statistics. The committee's report – based on the data – is condemnatory of the *numerus clausus* law.

15 March: In Budapest, university students stage protests in favour of the anti-Semitic periodicals *Szózat* and *Nép*, and against the *Est* newspapers.

16-17 March: Attacks on Jewish students begin at the Veterinary School and the University of Economics. Teaching is temporarily suspended.

Summer (?): University students in Pécs threaten a boycott and organize a protest demanding that the University's council adhere to the *numerus clausus*. In a memorandum addressed to all the universities in the country, they demand that Jews should not be allowed to be employed as assistant professors or lab assistants, and that every university review the status of the Jews enrolled as students there.

1924

4 January: Pál Sándor MP, president of OMIKE, introduces a motion into Parliament in which he recommends the abolition of the *numerus clausus* law and the establishment of a Jewish University. The motion is rejected.

4 June 4: Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction declares in Parliament that the fate of the *numerus clausus* law depends on what concessions the Great Powers are willing to make in the question of Hungary's borders.

23 September: In a supreme court case against an extreme right-wing journalist charged with incitement, the court determines that „according to our laws, Hungarian Jewry represents neither a separate ethnicity, nor a distinct social class”.

1925

Beginning of January: The Joint Foreign Committee presents another petition to the League of Nations in the matter of the *numerus clausus* law, where the issue of the classification of Jews as a race, ethnicity or religion is raised.

1 January: Lucien Wolf turns to the League of Nations for a second time, requesting that the League refer the matter of the *numerus clausus* to the International Court in the Hague. The League refers the case not to the Hague court, but to the Council of the League of Nations.

19 May: The Hungarian government, in its note to the League of Nations explains that the *numerus clausus* law „deliberately avoids any reference to the religious minority...since it is within the individual's power to change their religion at any time”.

18 August: In response to a question from the delegation sent by the Council of the League of Nations, seeking to know whether the government is

planning to modify the *numerus clausus* law, the Foreign Minister Lajos Walko in his brief reply declares that there is no need to modify either the law or its method of application.

23 November: The Jewish community – at Prime Minister István Bethlen's behest and with the formulation worked out by Vilmos Vázsonyi, a Jewish MP - accepts a unanimous declaration: „We are Hungarians, we hold ourselves to be part of the Hungarian people, and the Peace Treaty, which is our Nation's sorrow, should not be made the source of our legal rights...we want to deal with the matter of the *numerus clausus* on a domestic level, with the help of our own government and our own legislature. In other words, we have not, and will not, turn to any foreign power for help, and though its motivations be good, we would refuse such help”.

30 November: Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, presents his submission to the League of Nations regarding the *numerus clausus* law.

10 December: The Council of the League of Nations adds a detailed debate on the *numerus clausus* law to its agenda. They acknowledge the representative of the Hungarian government, Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, argument and promise that the law is a one-off and temporary measure and will be modified as soon as the social situation permits.

1-17 December: Klebelsberg and Vázsonyi's exchanges in Parliament.

17 December: In Parliament, to Vilmos Vázsonyi MP's question as to whether the government considers Jewry a racial minority or a religious group, Prime Minister István Bethlen replies: „the law brought about the *numerus clausus* declared Jewry to be a racial minority...Needless to say, this does not mean that this is the Government's standpoint.

1926

9 September: Kunó Klebersberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, accepting the April petition of the Pest Jewish Community, orders that Jewish converts when applying for admission to universities and the Polytechnics, are to be treated in the same way as Christian applicants.

Early October: Lucien Wolf's letter to former Treasury Secretary Lóránt Hegedűs informing him that his White Paper on the discriminative practices of the *numerus clausus* law was ready and would be submitted to the League of Nations and the International Court in the Hague in December.

22 October: Lóránt Hegedűs' letter to Prime Minister István Bethlen, in which he offers to act as a go-between between Lucien Wolf and the Hungarian government. Bethlen forwards Hegedűs's letter to Kunó Klebelsberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, for his opinion.

3 November: Kunó Klebelsberg's reply to István Bethlen, in which he recommends the rejection of Hegedűs's offer. In his letter, Klebelsberg declares that „we will have to revise the law”, since it really does contravene international law, but that the change cannot lead to a situation where „we dump thousands of Jewish university students once more in the nation's lap”.

16 November: Prime Minister István Bethlen, in his campaign speech at the *Vigadó* theatre officially announces that the *numerus clausus* law will be modified.

1927

13 May: Béla Fábián's recommendation for the modification of the *numerus clausus*.

2 September: The Council of the League of Nations announces that the League will discuss the Hungarian government's complaint against Romania in the case of the *Optans* landowners.

4 September: The *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and the Joint Foreign Committee (on 14 September) again approach the League of Nations regarding the *numerus clausus*.

14 September: Lucien Wolf writes personally to the Secretary General of the League of Nations in the matter of the *numerus clausus*.

17-18 September: The Council of the League – following the complaint of the Hungarian government – debates the Hungarian-Romanian *Optans* issue. There is no decision, and the matter is deferred to the next meeting, in December.

7 October: Lucien Wolf again makes a formal complaint against the Hungarian government. Under the rules of the League of Nations, the matter of the *numerus clausus* has to be added to the timetable of their December session.

19 October: Prime Minister István Bethlen announces at a meeting of the Unified Party [*Egységes Párt*] that the government will erase the restrictions applicable to Jews from the *numerus clausus* law.

18 November: Kunó Klebersberg, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, following cabinet approval on the 4 November presents a motion to modify law XXV of 1920.

November: The right-wing student battalions make posters protesting against the planned changes to the *numerus clausus* law. They check Jewish students' papers, molest and beat them, and prevent them from entering university premises. Because of these disturbances, the government delays the changes to the law until the spring of 1928.

2 December: István Bethlen informs the League of Nations of the planned changes to the *numerus clausus* law, at the same time – by means of delegates – conducts meetings with the representatives of international Jewish associations.

1928

9 February: The debate to modify law XXV of 1920 begins in Parliament. The changes are approved on the 24 February with a majority of 139 votes against 34. The upper house debates and accepts the changes in March.

13 February: University students organize protests and strikes against the softening of the *numerus clausus* law.

March: The international Jewish organizations submit another petition to the League of Nations regarding the opportunities for discrimination hidden in the modified law. The League of Nations does not consider the petition, and considers the matter of the Hungarian *numerus clausus* closed.

26 April: Publication of law XIV (1928) concerning the modification of law XXV (1920) regarding the regulation of admissions to Universities, the Polytechnic University, the Faculty of Economics of Budapest and the Legal Academies. The modification removes the restrictions according to „racial minorities and ethnicities”, but prescribes that the children of various occupational clusters should get admission to the universities and the Polytechnics in proportionate ratios.

15 – 25 October: Outbreak of university protests due to the softening of the *numerus clausus* law.

17 October: University admissions councils do not comply with the requirements of the execution of law XIV (1928), therefore Kunó Klebersberg issues ministerial instructions for the admission of 14 Jewish students with exemplary high-school degrees. He mentions the Jewish students by name in

Parliament. The universities of Pécs, Debrecen and Budapest are closed for several days following disorder and violence in the wake of his announcement.

1929

25 October: At a cabinet meeting, the Foreign Minister Lajos Walko declares that „the constant student protests and anti-Jewish attacks in our higher educational institutions are indeed harming the country's standing”. Prime Minister István Bethlen calls on Kunó Klebelsberg, the Minister of Culture, to stop these anti-Semitic incidents.

1931

27 August: Prime Minister Gyula Károlyi in his introductory speech to Parliament highlights that „it is my personal understanding, an understanding shared by the entire government, that in this country we cannot differentiate whatsoever on the basis of religion”.

1932

October : In the course of violent incidents at the Universities of Szeged and Budapest, it is demanded that the admission of Jewish students be regulated according to the original 1920 law.

14 November: Outbreak of anti-Jewish atrocities at the University of Debrecen. In a memorandum, the „Christian Hungarian Youth” demands that during the admissions process the „already very much diluted *numerus reductus* be applied as strictly as possible”.

26 November: The National Union of Hungarian Students – the top body of radical right-wing university students – in a memorandum asks Bálint Hóman, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction to rescind the 1928 modification of the law.

29 November: Bálint Hóman Minister of Cults and Public Instruction in response to a question in Parliament declares that „I will use all means to ensure the freedom to study at the universities for every student, regardless of social or religious belonging”.

1933

November-December There are a number of serious physical attacks on Jewish students at the University of Debrecen, and street protests against budget cuts caused by the recession. The disturbances then spread to the universities of

Budapest, Pécs and Szeged. The organisers demand the reinstatement of the original *numerus clausus* law. Teaching is suspended.

20 November: In a memorandum addressed to Bálint Hóman, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, the youth organisations at the Polytechnic University demand that „Jewish students should not be admitted to the universities until the number of Jewish students already enrolled is reduced to the same percentage as represented by Jews in the overall population of the country”.

29 November: Bálint Hóman, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction explains in Parliament, having repeatedly condemned the attacks, that „we must strive towards the result that there should be no difference in the proportion of Hungarian Christian and Jewish youth at the universities compared to the proportion of Christians and Jews in the country as a whole”.

7 December: Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös and Bálint Hóman Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, meet the leaders of university youth groups. The Prime Minister declares that although there is no question of modifying law XIV (1928), the university admissions councils will in practice enforce controls on admitting Jewish applicants as required in law XXV (1920).

1934

16 January: At a cabinet meeting, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, Minister of the Interior, announces that the „Jewish quota” will be enforced in the next academic year.

1935

20 November: *Emericana* organises a demonstration against Jewish students at the University of Szeged.

29 November: Between 60-80 students of the Budapest Law Faculty and Polytechnics disrupt lectures, expelling the Jewish students from the lecture halls. Teaching is suspended for several days.

1936

2 December: At the general assembly of the *Turul* Union, the representative of *Hungária* demands that „Jewry be classified as a race and that the *numerus clausus* be applied accordingly”.

1937

24 February: A group of students wearing hats with nationalist symbols insults Jewish students at the Arts and Sciences Faculty of Budapest University. At the University of Pécs, Jewish students are prevented from taking part in lectures.

11 May: In a parliamentary speech, István Bethlen protests against the Jewish law under preparation. He finds it unconscionable that the equality of citizens before the law be prejudiced on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

15 September: Bálint Hóman Minister of Cults and Public Instruction announces at a meeting with the rectors of the universities that the „racial quota” of the *numerus clausus* „is being respected”. He asks them to prevent renewed disturbances among the youth.

October: At a demonstration in the Trefort-gardens in Budapest, right-wing youth groups demand a *numerus nullus*. At the request of Elemér Császár, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the police intervenes and 19 students are placed in preliminary detention.

1938

8 April: Prime Minister Kálmán introduces the so-called First Jewish Law into Parliament.

23-24 April: *Emericana* at its National Diet in Pécs, issues a resolution demanding that stricter limits be applied to Jewish converts in the university admissions process.

5 May: 59 prominent Hungarian writers, artists and scientists publish a declaration protesting against the proposed Jewish Law.

29 May: Publication of law XV (1938), “to ensuring greater efficiency in securing the balance of social and economic life” (the so-called First Jewish Law). The law makes explicit that Jews can only be admitted to the various professions if the percentage of Jewish members does not exceed 20%.

23 December: The Government submits to parliament the draft of the proposed Second Jewish Law. The draft does not include arrangements regarding the *numerus clausus*.

1939

8 March: Prime Minister Pál Teleki meets with the leaders of youth groups about the proposed amendment to the Second Jewish Law regarding the *numerus clausus*.

11 March: Bálint Hóman Minister of Cults and Public Instruction receives leaders of right wing youth groups and promises that the *numerus clausus* for the universities will be applied in the form that they requested.

11 April: Hungary leaves the League of Nations.

5 May: Publication of law IV (1939), “on the restriction of the role of Jews in public and economic life” (the so-called Second Jewish Law). The law fixes the proportion of Jews in the professions at 6%. Paragraph 7 states that „Jews may be admitted as students or undergraduates to the first year of universities and the Polytechnics only in such proportion that their numbers do not exceed six per cent of all the students admitted to the university, or to the specific Faculty (class); in the case of the Faculty of Economic and Trade of the József Nádor Polytechnic and Economic University, this percentage is 12%”.

25 July: Publication of statute 7.300/1939 ME regarding the implementation of paragraph 7 of law IV (1939). In the statute, unlike in the 1920 *numerus clausus* law, the Jewish quota is to be implemented in the artistic academies as well as. Higher-year students, who are applying for specific subjects or faculties for the first time, are to be treated as first-year students.

„It follows from the spirit of law IV (1939) that Jewish [secondary school] students are to be admitted in proportion to the percentage that the Jewish population compared to the Christian population of the country represents” – according to the text of a secret decree of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction concerning the introduction of a *numerus clausus* for new entries into secondary schools.

1940

15 November: Bálint Hóman, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, explains in his justification of the draft law on the regulation of admissions of university and polytechnic students (law XXXIX, 1940) that new regulations will now be introduced instead of the Jewish quota, abolished under international pressure. Instead of „naming [Jews] directly, they will serve the same goal „indirectly” as the original 1920 Jewish quota, by introducing quotas targeted at the professions.

1941

8 August: Law XV (1941) comes into effect, on the modification and expansion of law XXXI (1894) on marriage, and concomitantly the necessary arrangements “for the protection of racial purity” (the so-called Third Jewish Law).

11 November: At a meeting of Parliament, during the debate of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction’s 1942 budget, Dénes Tömböly, a government MP, declares in his speech presenting the budget, that „we must fix as a principle that no Jew should be allowed to participate in Hungarian higher education”, adding that „in the Jewish question at the universities, it is not the letter of the law that should be obeyed, but its spirit”.

1942

18 November: Publication of decree of the Minister of Defence, no. 69.056/1942, which imposes on male Jews between the ages of 18 and 48 the obligation to accomplish forced labor service.

1944

31 March: Publication of government order 1210/1944 ME, which ends the employment of Jews in the public sphere, as well as ending their public contracts and further preventing them from working as lawyers.

13 April: The 1943-44 academic year is ended due to the state of the war.

25 April: Publication of statute no. 1540/1944 ME prohibiting the employment or activity of Jews in white collar jobs.

30 April: Publication of statute 10.800/1944 ME on the protection of Hungarian intellectual life from the works of Jewish authors.

6 May: Publication of decree 8.700/1944 of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, which forbids Jewish students from wearing school uniforms.

12 May: Publication of decree 8.960/1944 of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, which withdraws existing authorization from Jews for the maintenance of schools, courses, or houses of learning.

20 May: István Antal Minister of Justice and also Minister of Cults and Public Instruction gives verbal instructions that in the draft law to be prepared on the exclusion of Jews from the public, cultural and economic life of the country,

there should be a passage laying down a *numerus nullus* to be applied in institutions of higher learning. This however, does not come to pass.

24 June: Publication of decree 11.300/1944 ME on removing works of Jewish authors from public circulation.

5 December: Publication of decree 960/1944 BM of the Ministry of the Interior on changing the names of streets, roads and squares.

29 October: Teaching is suspended, the 1944-45 academic year never really starts due to the emergency situation.

1945

19 January: Publication of decree 444/1945 ME by the pro-Nazi government on erasing students of Jewish descent from student rosters of secondary schools, high schools and vocational schools.

17 March: Decree 200/1945 ME of the National Provisional Government abolishing all anti-Jewish Laws, stating in paragraph 2 that these laws contravene the constitutional spirit of the Hungarian people and proudly declaring the renewed equality of all citizens before the law.

1946

15 November 1946: Publication of law XXV (1946) stigmatizing the persecution of Hungarian Jewry and the easing of its consequences.¹

¹ I express my special thanks to Mark Baczoni for his stylistical work on my paper.

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