

PEREGRINATION IN THE AGE OF THE NUMERUS CLAUSUS: HUNGARIAN  
JEWISH STUDENTS IN INTERWAR EUROPE

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the dynamics between academic antisemitism, Jewish social mobility and Jewish migration through the case study of the “*numerus clausus exiles*” – as Jewish students who left interwar Hungary due to the antisemitic *numerus clausus* law (Law XXV of 1920) were called by contemporaries and historians. After a conceptual and historiographic introduction in the first chapter embedding this work in the contexts of Jewish studies, social history and exile studies; interwar Hungarian Jewish peregrination is examined from four different aspects in four chapters based on four different types of sources.

In the second chapter an analysis of contemporary Hungarian (Jewish and non-Jewish) discourses is based on pro-Horthy, Conservative, Liberal, Social Democratic, assimilationist Jewish and Zionist press. It is argued that peregrination from Hungary was in the general press recognized as a mostly Jewish phenomenon, caused by the restriction of Jewish access to Hungarian universities, rather than a voluntary movement motivated by thirst for knowledge. In the meantime, the plight of *émigré* students became a central topic in Jewish press because a new Hungarian Jewish community of fate and identity was built on the support mechanism for *numerus clausus exiles*.

Based on a database of over 1000 Hungarian medical and engineering students enrolled in universities abroad between 1920 and 1938 – Czechoslovakia, the First Austrian Republic, Weimar Germany and Fascist Italy – that the dissertation’s author constructed; the third chapter analyzes the social background of *émigré* students – most of whom were Jewish. In this way the case is made that studying abroad was a phenomenon of lower middleclass Jewish youth’s upward social mobility through education rather than an escape route reserved for privileged Jews.

Ego documents written and edited (in most cases even published) by *numerus clausus* exiles provide the source base for the fourth chapter which reconstructs their own narratives on their peregrination. The prevalence of interpreting their student migration as exile from the Hungarian homeland unfolds both from autobiographies and memoirs written decades later and from letters sent while studying abroad, albeit with important individual variations.

Based on digital databases, the fifth chapter follows up the career and life trajectories of students after their studies abroad. Four basic patterns are distinguished among the biographies of the over 1000 subjects: the most successful ones emigrated to the Western world usually through step-migration through Weimar Germany and did not return to Hungary. Few *numerus clausus* exiles immigrated to Palestine, however, they played important roles in the higher education and scholarship of Mandate Palestine and later of the State of Israel. Most *numerus clausus* exiles were forced to return to Hungary in the late 1930s due to the spread of hostility towards foreign Jews across Europe. They belong to two main groups, namely Shoah victims and Shoah survivors. The latter were likely to stay in Hungary for the rest of their lives after liberation, their experience with emigration notwithstanding, because they received opportunities for career advancement earlier denied to them and many believed this was also a chance to redeem Hungary from inequalities and injustices through Socialism. At the same time, quite a few *numerus clausus* exiles were put on show trials in the Stalinist period due to their past abroad and many more got disillusioned by the discrepancies between the ideal of Communism and the reality of State Socialism.

Finally, it is argued in the final conclusions that this study speaks to the larger questions of how a minority can respond to discrimination and how individual initiatives from below can develop into communal agency based on solidarity.

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## I. “Symbol of Hungarian Jewry, you wandering student!”<sup>1</sup>

### I.1. Introduction

Sad and great is our destiny. Yet it is fascinating. Since we not only study, but we also feel the responsibility of all our deeds. Hungarian Jewry looks after us. We cannot just pass the exams, we cannot only become doctors, engineers, teachers – we have to become the best doctor, the best engineer, the best teacher.... We must prove that the sacrifices were not in vain.<sup>2</sup>

Thus concluded Lili Fenyő, one of the thousands of “*numerus clausus* exiles” – as Jews were called who left interwar Hungary to study abroad, with the implication that they became wandering students against their will. Fenyő’s choice of emigration and experience of exile were not unique, but rather characteristic of Hungarian Jewish youth in the interwar period.

For Jews, higher education became an important channel of upward social mobility and integration after their emancipation. Exactly for this reason universities were central to antisemites.<sup>3</sup> Restriction of Jewish enrollment in higher education was a key to reverse both Jewish social mobility and integration. In 1919-20 antisemites, previously marginalized by the liberal political establishment of the Habsburg Monarchy, came to rule Hungary and by establishing a restrictive Jewish quota in universities with the new regulation of higher education known as *numerus clausus* (Law XXV of 1920),<sup>4</sup> they set in motion the process of de-emancipating Jews.<sup>5</sup> Importantly, the state defining the number of admissible students was in itself a novelty, as previously high school graduation entitled for university enrollment (in

<sup>1</sup> “Nincs többé bujdosó diák... [No More Wandering Students...],” *Egyenlőség*, August 25, 1938, 3-4. All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Lili Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek a külföldön élő magyar diákság életéből* [Snapshots from the Life of Hungarian Students Abroad] (Budapest: Jupiter Nyomda, 1929), 75.

<sup>3</sup> I intentionally use “antisemitism” and its derivatives without a hyphen (except in quotes where they are hyphenated), seconding the concern of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) that “the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called ‘Semitism’, which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews”. <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/spelling-antisemitism?usergroup=5> (Last accessed: June 20, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> 1920. évi XXV. törvénycikk a tudományegyetemekre, a műegyetemre, a budapesti egyetemi közgazdaságtudományi karra és a jogakadémiákra való beiratkozás szabályozásáról [Law 1920:XXV on the Regulation of Enrollment to University, Polytechnics, Faculty of Economics at the University of Budapest and Law Academies] <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=92000025.TV> (Last accessed: July 17, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Guy Miron, *The Waning of Emancipation: Jewish History, Memory, and the Rise of Fascism in Germany, France, and Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2011), 157.

the case of men in all faculties, in the case of women only in faculties of humanities, medicine, and pharmacy and only if achieving a certain level of grades).<sup>6</sup> The justification for the reform was the “overproduction of intellectuals”, thus that the labor market needed much less intellectual professionals than the number of university graduates. However, in addition to the state’s intervention in the regulation of the number of intellectuals to be trained, the *numerus clausus* law also stipulated that Jewish enrollment as first-year students should not exceed the Jewish proportion in the general population (6 %). Since in the last academic year during the Great War (when all secondary school graduates were entitled to university enrollment) Jews constituted over one third (34%) of university students,<sup>7</sup> the new quota meant a grave limitation of the formerly free and indeed large-scale educational mobility of Hungarian Jewry. From 1920 onwards, the majority of Jewish applicants were turned down every year. In addition, those admitted often faced antisemitic violence on campus.<sup>8</sup> “Jew beatings” and “Jew free days” organized by radical right-wing student fraternities (whose main organization was the *Turul* fraternity) were a regular occurrence in every November. Jewish students were prevented from attending classes by threats and by physical abuse so that they would miss enough classes to be failed for excessive absence.<sup>9</sup>

Due to such limitation of study possibilities in Hungary, thousands of Hungarian Jews became part of the broader story of Eastern and Central European Jews’ westward student migration. Although the idea of establishing a university in Hungary for Jewish youth came

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<sup>6</sup> In 1918 the Károlyi-government abolished gender-based discrimination, however, this reform was abolished in 1919. Barbara Papp and Balázs Sipos, *Modern, diplomás nők a Horthy-korban* [Modern, Intellectual Women in the Horthy Era] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2017), 98–99.

<sup>7</sup> Mária M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva. A numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1920–1945* [Smitten by Law. The Numerus Clausus in Hungary, 1920-1945] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2012), 135.

<sup>8</sup> See more details about university youth and violence in Andor Ladányi, *Az egyetemi ifjúság az ellenforradalom első éveiben, 1919-1921* [The University Youth in the First Years of the Counter-Revolution, 1919-1921] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Klein, “Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the Inter-War Period,” *Jewish Social Studies* 28, no. 2 (1966): 79-98 (84-85).

up,<sup>10</sup> emigration to existing foreign universities and fundraising for that aim became incomparably more popular. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century stories of young Jews who had left Hungary between the two world wars to study abroad found their way into fiction, most notably in Julie Orringer's novel *The Invisible Bridge* where the main character studies architecture in Paris.<sup>11</sup>

Interwar contemporaries quickly coined the term *exiles of the numerus clausus* (“*numerus clausus száműzöttek*”) to describe Hungarian Jewish émigré students and the expression found its way into historiography. Through their story this dissertation analyzes how a minority can respond to discrimination and how individual initiatives from below can turn into communal agency based on solidarity. As it will be argued, peregrination was first an individual choice of numerous young Jews and then became a consciously and communally organized coping strategy. The first pioneers followed an existing pre-WWI pattern, since it was customary for Hungarians, and especially for Hungarian Jews, to study at a university in Vienna or further away. After 1920, however, this became a necessity.

Jewish public intellectuals, most notably Lajos Szabolcsi, chose to not only support this firstly spontaneous emigration of students but to expand and consciously organize it. Szabolcsi was editor-in-chief of one of the most important Hungarian Jewish newspapers, *Egyenlőség*. Hence the Jewish community of Pest<sup>12</sup> set up the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* (*Központi Zsidó Diáksegítő Bizottság*)<sup>13</sup> to coordinate a number of student aid committees all over the country which consisted of leaders of the local Jewish communities. The central aid

<sup>10</sup> Gyula Gábor, *A numerus clausus és a zsidó egyetem* [The Numerus Clausus and the Jewish University] (Budapest: Fráter Nyomda, 1924).

<sup>11</sup> Julie Orringer, *The Invisible Bridge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Its official name was *Pesti Izraelita Hitközség* (*Pest Israelite Community*). Before WWII, Buda and Pest had separate Jewish communities.

<sup>13</sup> Occasionally simply called *Central Jewish Student Committee* (*Központi Zsidó Diákbizottság*). I use the name as Lajos Szabolcsi and the *Jewish Lexicon* (1929) used it. Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő. Az Egyenlőség évtizedei (1881-1931)* [Two Generations. The Decades of “Egyenlőség”, 1881-1931] (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993), 349; Péter Ujvári (Ed.), *Zsidó lexikon* [Jewish Lexicon] (Budapest: Edition of the Jewish Lexicon, 1929), 818.

committee financially helped *émigré* students through student committees that had emerged in the student colonies abroad earlier. Also very importantly, it helped the wandering students morally by continuously framing their plight as a central issue to Hungarian Jewry in the interwar period, even though the issue of higher education concerned a few thousand<sup>14</sup> of the approximately 473,000 Jews of post-Trianon Hungary.<sup>15</sup> Their symbolic importance, however, was great because the *numerus clausus* that hit them functioned as a statement of purpose of the new Hungarian political establishment, the self-proclaimed “Christian Course”, to reverse Jewish integration through narrowing Jewish participation in higher education. In this sense wandering students became symbols of interwar Hungarian Jewry as this chapter’s title – “symbol of Hungarian Jewry, you wandering student!” – states with a journalistic quote from 1938.

The *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* also did its best to keep track of who was studying where and what happened to them after graduation. In 1924 the committee knew about 5,000 Hungarian Jewish students abroad. The *Joint Foreign Committee* – an organization set up in 1918 in Great Britain to advocate for Jewish rights in all parts of the world – estimated their number at a lower level (3,300) in 1925, a thousand of whom were studying in twelve different cities of Germany, another thousand in Vienna, six hundred in Czechoslovakia and the rest spread across Italy, France and Switzerland.<sup>16</sup>

While the issue of financial aid for the wandering students created tensions within the Hungarian Jewish community structure, it was ultimately a cause around which a new Hungarian Jewish community of fate was built. This was a desire of many Jews since

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<sup>14</sup> In 1920 there were altogether 10,005 university students in Hungary. Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 151.

<sup>15</sup> According to the census of 1920. Ujvári (Ed.), *Zsidó lexikon*, 555.

<sup>16</sup> Pál Bethlen, *A magyar zsidóság almanachja. A numerus clausus* [Almanach of Hungarian Jewry. The Numerus Clausus] (Budapest, 1925), 137-147; Nathaniel Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews: Policy and Legislation, 1920-1943* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), 61.

Hungarian Jewish identity – prior to WWI based on Hungarian patriotism – was greatly challenged in 1920 by the double shock of Trianon and the numerus clausus. The Treaty of Trianon separated half of Hungarian Jewry from Hungary in terms of citizenship and the executive ordinance of the numerus clausus law listed Jews among the country’s national minorities thus contesting their previous status of “*Hungarians of the Israelite faith*”. The numerus clausus was seen as a consequence of Trianon so much that Jenő Lévai, one of the first chroniclers of the Hungarian Shoah, defined the numerus clausus as the starting point of Hungarian Jewry’s story of sufferings and framed it as a consequence of Hungary’s dismemberment by the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>17</sup> Lévai saw the limitation of the “overproduction of intellectuals” as justified in the “truncated” country. In his opinion the tragic mistake was to apply a measure that did not concern the whole population equally, but targeted Jews specifically.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, it is important to add that Jews were not the only group discriminated against in universities, so were revolutionaries and women as well. Evidently, there were overlaps between the three groups. The text of the numerus clausus law itself excluded revolutionaries more than Jews (who were explicitly mentioned only in the law’s executive ordinance and not in the text of the law). The law defined “loyalty to the nation”, thus non-involvement in the 1918 Aster revolution and the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, as a prerequisite for enrollment in the universities. Universities set up committees to determine who were considered participants in the revolutions. Even previously enrolled students of the older cohorts were excluded on this ground. Needless to say, in a few years the revolutionaries disappeared from the cohorts of applicants to universities. Yet, “loyalty to the nation” remained

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<sup>17</sup> Jenő Lévai, *Fekete könyv a magyar zsidóság szenvedéseiről* [Black Book About the Sufferings of Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest: Officina, 1946), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Máté Zombory, “A nemzeti tragédia narratívái: Lévai Jenő, az írás és a történelem (1932-1948) [The Narratives of the National Tragedy: Jenő Lévai, Writing and History, 1932-1948],” *Múltunk* LXIII, no.3 (2018): 197-236 (224).

a requirement for admission even after 1928 when the law was modified so that instead of a Jewish quota the proportion of students coming from fathers of certain professions (commerce) was restricted. Nearly a decade after the revolution legislators were presumably not worried about the concrete participants in the revolutions, but more generally about left-wing youth.

Neither the 1920, or the 1928 version of the *numerus clausus* restricted women's admission in universities by law, however, numerous faculties excluded all female applicants. As Katalin Fenyves so tellingly put it, “the *Numerus Clausus* was the symbolic moment when anti-Semitism and sexism met”.<sup>19</sup> Hence, academic misogyny's role in the emigration of Hungarian female students must be recognized throughout the interwar period, just like the role of the ongoing enforcement of the Jewish quota in the emigration of Jewish students. The first post-WWI proposal for a *numerus clausus* was in fact sexist, the “racial quota” was added later and finally the exclusion of women was dropped.<sup>20</sup> The law itself targeted Jews as a religious group, as it stipulated that the student body of university faculties had to mirror the proportions of the denominations in society. The executive order, however, enabled clerks to disregard convert Jews' conversion and usually everybody born Jewish was treated as a Jew in the application process. Thus, the *numerus clausus* worked as a racial quota.

In a literal sense, the term “*numerus clausus exiles*” should still refer to both Jews and non-Jewish left-wing youth who emigrated to study. In practice, however, when the law was executed, thus, during the university application process, Jewishness mattered more, since religion was included on secondary school degrees and birth certificates, thus easier to check

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<sup>19</sup> Katalin Fenyves, “When Sexism Meets Racism: The 1920 *Numerus Clausus* Law in Hungary,” *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 87-102 (87).

<sup>20</sup> Mária M. Kovács, *Liberalizmus, radikalizmus, antiszemizmus: A magyar orvos, ügyvéd, és mérnöki kar politikája 1867 és 1945 között* [Liberalism, Radicalism, Antisemitism: The Politics of the Hungarian Chambers of Medical Doctors, Lawyers and Engineers between 1867 and 1945] (Budapest: Helikon, 2001), 76. This book has an earlier English version: Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994).

than political engagement. Hence – as it is detailed below – both contemporaries and historians meant students of Jewish origin by the “*numerus clausus exiles*” and I follow suit.

## 1.2. Conceptual framework

Hardly any of the concepts used in this dissertation is neutral. This dissertation most often refers to Jewish students abroad in the age of the *numerus clausus* as “*numerus clausus exiles*”. At the same time, I argue that such interpretation of students’ peregrination was purposefully constructed by Jewish intellectuals who supported the youth’s studies abroad to counteract the *numerus clausus* (See Chapter II). The students themselves interacted with their supporters and contributed to the construction of this narrative, even though some of them challenged it.

The dominant variation of the exile narrative was the negative one – propagated by the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* and Neolog Jews – that Jews were Hungarian nationals of the Israelite religion and hence Jewish students’ coerced emigration was an exile from their homeland. And yet it was the responsibility of Jewish youth to prove their patriotism and the unfairness of the *numerus clausus* by returning to Hungary and use the knowledge gained at foreign universities for the homeland’s sake.

The most interesting challenge to such framing was the positive version of the exile narrative represented by cultural Zionists. Zionism in interwar Hungary was more cultural than political, thus it first of all aimed to foster a new kind of Jewish identity in the diaspora rather than actively organizing Jewish immigration to Palestine. In this spirit, Zionist students saw emigration in the aftermath of the *numerus clausus* as a useful wakeup call from the false consciousness of assimilation. In this interpretation, Jews’ homeland was the Land of Israel and the target countries of peregrination were possibly merely stations in a step migration towards the genuine homeland. The in-between stations, however, filled an important function, even if students afterwards returned to Hungary or settled in the Land of Israel, since in

countries (such as Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy) where numerous foreign Jews studied, Hungarian Jews finally got inspired by the Jewish national consciousness of their Romanian and Polish Jewish peers. Thus, Hungarian Jewish students received a possibility to recognize that being in Hungary itself – in its quality as a country in the diaspora – was just being in exile from the Jewish homeland. In this sense, being exiled from Hungary was not tragic, hence I call this chain of thought the positive version of the exile narrative. It is important to note that the establishment of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1925 – while first and foremost served the purpose of Jewish cultural revival in the Land of Israel – was also a response to the problem of Jews being excluded from universities in East Central Europe and from elite universities in the United States.<sup>21</sup> The role of this institution in the story of numerous *clausus exiles* will be dealt with in the dissertation (See Chapter V.2).

By choosing to call interwar Hungarian Jewish migrant students “*numerus clausus exiles*,” I intend to embrace the concept of exile in general without taking sides in the assimilationist-Zionist debate whether it was ultimately good or bad for Jewish youth to leave Hungary. Exile is a good term for these students’ emigration because it contains the idea of a person either choosing or forced to live abroad. The students here concerned indeed *chose* to study abroad rather than giving in to the legislators’ will and abandoning their intellectual ambitions, or were *forced* to leave if they were not only Jews, but also involved in left-wing politics. Furthermore, exile is a key term in the historiography of Jewish escape from antisemitic and Nazi persecution, used by several historians before me.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, it must

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<sup>21</sup> Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen – The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> For instance: Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Tibor Frank, *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Oxford-Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009); Helmut F. Pfanner, *Exile in New York: German and Austrian Writers After 1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983); Claus-Dieter Krohn and Rita Kimber, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

be noted that Hungarian Jewish students' exile was less harsh, since they were allowed to return to Hungary.

Contemporaries, however, applied the term “*bujdosó diákok*” more often than “*numerus clausus száműzöttek*”. I translate *bujdosó diákok* as wandering students because none of the English equivalents of *bujdosó* would embed my topic into the English discourse on Jewish history to such an extent as wandering does with its allusion to the figure of the *wandering Jew*. Students were indeed often portrayed as 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestations of the eternally persecuted wandering Jew. Yet it is important to add that the literal translation of *bujdosó* is someone hiding as an outlaw. Concretely, it refers to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian rebels against the Habsburgs who after the defeat of the uprising led by Ferenc Rákóczi II (1703-1711) went into hiding or emigrated. Applying this term to youth who emigrated due to the *numerus clausus* was an attempt to place them in a Hungarian national discourse, since the figure of 18<sup>th</sup> century *bujdosó* was a romanticized national(ist) point of reference. So much so that in 1923 the antisemitic writer and right-wing activist Cécile Tormay published a novel entitled *Bujdosó könyv (An outlaw's diary)* to record the suffering of the nation during the 1918 and 1919 revolutions.<sup>23</sup> Thus, claiming the term *bujdosó* to Jewish students meant a demand to recognize Jews as victims of the Commune like other Hungarians were and as sufferers of injustice due to the *numerus clausus*. It was possibly a re-appropriation of a Hungarian nationalist term for Jews.

Nonetheless, in my own narrative I prioritize the expression *numerus clausus* exiles over wandering students. An argument for calling them exiles is to connect my subjects to the rich literature on Jewish intellectuals in exile from Germany after 1933 to whom a distinct research center is dedicated (the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies at the

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<sup>23</sup> English translation: Cécile Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary* (London: Allen, 1923).

University of London). As it will be detailed later, some of those known as German Jewish refugees originally came from Hungary and left it around 1920 due to the *numerus clausus*. And an argument against favoring “*bujdosó diákok*” is that by now (2019) *bujdosó* has become too archaic to speak to a topic of 20<sup>th</sup> century history. Nevertheless, “*szerűzöttek*” and “*bujdosók*” reflect different discourses on the same phenomenon and they coexisted in interwar Hungary.

Emigration is as loaded a term as exile. It implies that moving abroad is a result of coercion or intentional gesture of protest against a regime in one’s home country. When historians refer to Hungarian *émigrés* during the Horthy-era, they usually mean intellectuals who were either Jewish or left-wingers or both and hence found Hungary unbearable.<sup>24</sup> Thus, they *emigrated*, they did not simply *move abroad*. The present dissertation will refer to the exiles of the *numerus clausus* also as *émigrés* and not only to avoid repetitiveness, but also because the term *émigré* highlights agency more than exile. In certain contexts, I intended to highlight this aspect of the experience of studying abroad in the age of the *numerus clausus*, thus that thousands of Hungarian Jews took initiative and moved abroad to study, rather than the aspect of being excluded from Hungarian universities which is better captured when calling them exiles.

In contemporary discourses, the *émigré* students were often simply referred to as “*külföldi diákok*” (students abroad) which in itself seems neutral. However, it rarely occurred in the interwar period outside of the context of the *numerus clausus*, as the systematic overview of interwar Hungary’s most widely read (not only Jewish) journals demonstrates (See Chapter II). *Numerus clausus refugees* (“a *numerus clausus menekültjei*”) as an expression, on the contrary, was very telling and came up rarely in the contemporary discourses, almost

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<sup>24</sup> Such as Eszter B. Gantner, *Budapest-Berlin. Die Koordinaten einer Emigration, 1919-1933* [Budapest-Berlin. The Coordinates of an Emigration, 1919-1933] (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011).

exclusively in Jewish media. Introducing it was probably an attempt to compare the plight of Jewish students to that of Hungarian refugees who in the aftermath of Trianon moved from the lost territories to the post-Trianon Hungarian “rump state”. It would have been beneficial to make Jewish students part of the discourse on Hungarian refugees from across the new state borders, because the latter were framed as people needing and deserving protection, moreover, whose existential well-being was the responsibility of the Hungarian state. In addition, had this attempt been successful, the expression *Jewish refugees* could have been separated from the Galician Jewish refugees who had arrived during WWI to Hungary and were surrounded with hostility. Such framing strategy of Jewish journalists failed as the quick fading of the term *numerus clausus refugees* from the press demonstrates.

Peregrination would be a more neutral term to describe student migration than exile and emigration, and this is exactly why it features rarely in this dissertation, only when migrant students in general, not only Jewish students, are meant. Obviously, different individuals thought about the same situation differently, thus not all Jewish students necessarily suffered from the notion of having to study abroad. Nevertheless, when referring to the Jewish migrant students collectively, the connection between their studying abroad and the existence of a Jewish quota in Hungarian higher education cannot be disregarded. Yet another reason for not prioritizing the term peregrination is its widespread association with medieval and early modern student migration and thereby it would overemphasize continuity between pre-WWI and *numerus clausus* provoked migration. Whereas I aim to highlight that the *numerus clausus* was a turning point in European history, it put an end to the age of emancipation in Hungary, triggered de-emancipation and provided an inspiration for antisemites abroad.

As this is a work on Jewish history, the question of whom to regard a Jew must be confronted. The question is especially sensitive when the subjects lived (and died) during the Shoah. Is the historian allowed to refer to them with a potentially unwanted label for which

they were murdered in a genocide? The numerus clausus, just like all anti-Jewish laws, imposed a definition of being Jewish and thereby also targeted people who did not identify themselves as Jews. This issue makes the term “numerus clausus exiles” preferable to “Jewish students”. For the purposes of my dissertation those will count as exiles of the numerus clausus whose documents (birth certificates, high school diplomas) indicate Jewish denomination, because this was the decisive fact for being targeted by the numerus clausus in Hungary. Even though the executive order of the numerus clausus law referred to a Jewish nationality rather than religion. While antisemitic legislators and university clerks had in mind a Jewish “race”, their proxy to define Jews was religion (which was a piece of data in personal documents unlike race and nationality), when they made sure to keep the proportion of Jews low in the student body. The Jewish race was a legal fiction without a pre-1920 precedent in Hungarian legislation. Besides the shock of being excluded from the Hungarian nation by racism, this was the reason why the Jewish leadership, especially the assimilationist one, had difficulties to fight the numerus clausus.

In the end, a reflection on the terms of “overrepresentation” and “overschooling” is due. The very notion of a group being “overrepresented” or “underrepresented” somewhere is based on singling it out and counting its share in different walks of life. This may be done out of good will and be a basis for affirmative action or may be done out of hostility and used to legitimize discrimination against a group. The high share of Jews among university students, intellectuals, liberal professionals, merchants and bankers was an obsession of antisemites and they used it as an argument for discrimination. Hungarian politicians of the 1920s framed the numerus clausus several times as affirmative action, especially in front of Western diplomats. As the argument went, Christian Hungarians were underrepresented in the universities and this needed to be remedied by the Jewish quota. The text of the law indeed advocated for Hungary’s nationalities being proportionally represented in higher education. The devil that is in the detail

manifested itself in the executive ordinance and in the application of the law – thus the university application process. The first converted a denominational group (Israelites) into a nationality (Jewish) and the second did not help unprivileged nationalities such as Ruthenians, but only made sure to keep the proportion of Jews among admitted students under control.

The numerus clausus law was amended in 1928 and the original racial Jewish quota was replaced with a new one based on the applicant's father's occupation. The student body of each faculty now needed to mirror the proportions in the general population according to the professional sectors, thus favoring children of people working in public administration and in agriculture at the expense of children of merchants. (Theoretically this should have favored children of agricultural workers, but this was impossible due to their low proportion being secondary school graduates.) Due to historical reasons, Jews were unlikely to work in public administration and agriculture, while they were likely to work in commerce. The legislators' intention was again not affirmative action for the sake of national minorities, but to marginalize Jews.

The fact that Jews' share in the student body was higher than in the general population obviously had to do with a higher proportion of them being secondary school graduates. This was not only a consequence of their urbanization, but also of the phenomenon that Victor Karady calls "Jewish overschooling".<sup>25</sup> This social historical notion refers to situations when Jewish families invested more in their children's education than non-Jewish families living under the same socio-economic circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Historians must be cautious when working with notions that are based on counting proportions of social groups, as it has to do with their 'othering'. Yet they do not need to shy away from such terms because they are not neutral.

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<sup>25</sup> Viktor Karády, "Jewish Over-Schooling Revisited: The Case of Hungarian Secondary Education in the Old Regime (1900–1941)," *Yearbook of the Jewish Studies Programme at the Central European University* 1 (2000): 75-91.

<sup>26</sup> Other groups' overschooling exists as well in history.

While interwar antisemites used Jewish overrepresentation among university students as an argument for discrimination, I use Jewish overrepresentation among émigré students to analyze a Jewish response to antisemitic discrimination.

### I.3. Historiography and literature review

Regarding the genesis and the general consequences of the numerus clausus there is a rich scholarly literature.<sup>27</sup> The two main bones of contention are the duration of the age of the numerus clausus and the question of continuity between the numerus clausus and the Shoah in Hungary. Both historians and the general public often call the 1928 *amendment* (Law XIV of 1928) of the numerus clausus law (Law XXV of 1920) as the *abolition* of the numerus clausus. Róbert Barta also argues that after the new law the Jewish quota lost its significance and only the new antisemitic legislation of the late 1930s worsened again the situation of Jews.<sup>28</sup> Andor Ladányi challenged such interpretation in several studies<sup>29</sup> and so did Mária M. Kovács in her 2012 monograph *Smitten by Law*.<sup>30</sup> Ladányi and Kovács assert that in fact the new law was a phony amendment conceptualized with the purpose of

<sup>27</sup> Most importantly the following books, two of which are edited volumes: M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*; Claudia Farkas K., *Jogok nélkül. A zsidó lét Magyarországon, 1920-1944* [Deprived of Rights. Being Jewish in Hungary, 1920-1944.] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2010); 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* (Budapest: Pasts Inc. Centre for Historical Research, History Department of the Central European University, 2012); Judit Molnár (Ed.), *Jogfosztás – 90 éve: tanulmányok a numerus claususról* [Deprivation of Rights – 90 Years Ago. Studies about the Numerus Clausus] (Budapest: Nonprofit Társadalomkutató Egyesület, 2011); Katalin Szegvári N., *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon: a zsidó és nőhallgatók főiskolai felvételéről* [Numerus Clausus Regulations in Counter-Revolutionary Hungary: On the Admission of Female and Jewish Students to Higher Education.] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988).

<sup>28</sup> Róbert Barta, “A numerus clausus és a baloldali magyar zsidó politikai közvélemény [The Numerus Clausus and the Left-Wing Hungarian Jewish Political Public Opinion]” *Sic itur ad astra* 40, no. 1-2 (1990): 8-32 (26).

<sup>29</sup> Andor Ladányi, “A numerus clausustól a numerus nullusig [From the Numerus Clausus to the Numerus Nullus]” *Múlt és Jövő* 2005/1: 58-65.; Ladányi, “A numerus clausus törvény 1928. évi módosításáról. [On the Amendment of the Numerus Clausus Law in 1928],” *Századok* 128, no. 6 (1994): 1117-1148, Ladányi, “On the 1928 Amendment to the Hungarian Numerus Clausus Act.” in *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, 69-111.

<sup>30</sup> M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*.

excluding as many Jews as possible, only with the excuse that they were excluded because of their fathers' profession and not because they were Jewish.

As for the reason of the amendment there is another debate. Nathaniel Katzburg, a monographer of interwar Hungary's policies towards Jews, argues that the amendment was a result of the pressure of international Jewish organizations.<sup>31</sup> According to Barta such organizations were not in a position to pressure the Hungarian government since the latter had broken out from its diplomatic isolation by this time.<sup>32</sup> Kovács attributes some role to Jewish advocacy at the League of Nations (most notably to Lucien Wolf on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) but emphasizes that even the lobbyists saw that the 1928 amendment of the numerus clausus was not its abolition, only a less salient form of a Jewish quota.<sup>33</sup> It is noteworthy that although Barta underestimates the practical significance of the Jewish quota after 1928, he acknowledges the hypocrisy of the amendment when quoting what Kuno Klebelsberg, Minister of Religion and Public Education, wrote to Prime Minister István Bethlen: "we will need to revise the law, but not so as to make thousands of Jewish students invade the nation again, only so that with some reasonable mitigation we can save the essence of the quota".<sup>34</sup> And the essence was indeed saved, discrimination against Jews continued and became harsher under the next Minister of Education, Bálint Hóman (minister from 1932 to 1942 with a break in 1938-39) and especially harsh between 1939 and 1945. Hence, as Mária M. Kovács argues, the numerus clausus lasted until 1945.

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<sup>31</sup> Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews*, 78.

<sup>32</sup> Róbert Barta, "A numerus clausus törvény módosítása 1928-ban [The Amendment of the Numerus Clausus Law in 1928]," *Történeti tanulmányok* 1, no. 1 (1992): 113-124 (120).

<sup>33</sup> M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*.

<sup>34</sup> Róbert Barta, "Numerus clausus rendelkezések Magyarországon az 1920-as években [Numerus Clausus Measures in Hungary during the 1920s.]" *Iskolakultúra* 3, no. 21 (1994): 45-50 (47). Astonishingly, this article entirely ignores numerus clausus measures that were in place against women in the 1920s, despite the fact that Katalin Szegvári N. had reconstructed their history in a monograph published in 1988: *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon*.

Maria M. Kovacs also argues for the continuity between the *numerus clausus* and the anti-Jewish Laws of 1938-41.<sup>35</sup> She, Gábor Schweitzer and Péter Buchmüller apply the continuity argument in the case of the legal profession in their commemorative volume dedicated to judges and lawyers who fell victims to the Shoah.<sup>36</sup> *Graved Names*, a two-volume book dedicated to the Shoah and WWII victim faculty and students of the humanities faculty at Eötvös Loránd University<sup>37</sup> and to their memorial inaugurated in 2014, also represents the continuity narrative.<sup>38</sup> Several studies in the book are dedicated to the interwar history of the University of Budapest and emphasize the predominance of antisemitism in interwar Hungarian academia.<sup>39</sup>

Ignác Romsics, on the contrary, argues that since without the 1944 Nazi occupation of Hungary the genocide against Hungarian Jews would not have happened, the *numerus clausus* and the Holocaust are independent historical events.<sup>40</sup> Krisztián Ungváry also emphasizes that the fate of Jews during WWII depended on politicians' momentary decisions reacting to war-time situations rather than on pre-WWII antisemitic policies. A case in point

<sup>35</sup> Mária M. Kovács, "A *numerus clausus* és a zsidótörvények [The *numerus clausus* and the Anti-Jewish Laws]," in *A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán. Történelem és emlékezet* [The Holocaust in Hungary After Seventy Years. History and Memory], edited by Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó 2015), 49–58.

<sup>36</sup> Mária M. Kovács (Ed.), *Kései főhajtás. A holokauszt jogász áldozatai* [Delayed Remembrance. The Judge and Lawyer Victims of the Holocaust] (Budapest: Magyar Közlöny Lap- és Könyvkiadó, 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Before 1945 known as Pázmány Péter University or the University of Budapest.

<sup>38</sup> Teri Szűcs (Ed.), *Bevésett nevek* [Graved Names] Vol.1. *Emlékek nélkül emlékezni* [Remembering Without Memories]; Vol.2. *Az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem holokauszt- és második világháborús emlékművének felavatásához kapcsolódó konferencia* [Conference Inaugurating the Holocaust and WWII Memorial of the Humanities Faculty at Eötvös Loránd University] (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> See the contributions by Géza Komoróczy, Tibor Frank, Anna Borgos, and Zsolt Horváth K. Géza Komoróczy, "Egyetem, zsidók, judaisztika. Mire emlékezünk? [University, Jews, Jewish Studies. What Do We Commemorate?]," 44-89; Tibor Frank, "A Budapesti Kir. M. Tudományegyetem a két világháború között [The Royal Hungarian University of Budapest between the Two World Wars], 92-106; Anna Borgos, "... 'a mértéktelen beözönlésnek gátat vetni' A zsidó és a nő hallgatók létszámkorlátozásának retorikája a bölcsészkaron [ 'To Limit the Immoderate Invasion.' The Rhetorics of Restricting Jewish and Female Student Enrollment at the Humanities Faculty]," 110-129; Zsolt Horváth K., "Egyetemi erőszak és a Bildung eszménye. Tábor Béla, a zsidóság, az egyetem [Campus Violence and the Ideal of Bildung. Béla Tábor, Jewishness, University]," 132-153. in *Bevésett nevek* [Graved Names], edited by Teri Szűcs, Vol.2.

<sup>40</sup> Ignác Romsics, "A *numerus clausus*tól a Holokausztig [From the *numerus clausus* to the Holocaust]," in Romsics, *A Horthy-korszak. Válogatott tanulmányok* [The Horthy Era. Selected Studies] (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 2017), 333–348.

is Romania changing sides in the war in August 1944 which saved the Jewry of the Old Kingdom almost in its entirety, even though antisemitism in Romania was no less virulent in interwar Romania than in Hungary.<sup>41</sup>

Both Romsics and Ungváry suggest that it is very important to differentiate conservatives of the 1920s (including István Bethlen, initiator of the 1928 amendment as prime minister) and their antisemitism from right-wing radicals and their murderous antisemitism in the 1930s and 1940s. Holocaust historians Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, however, earlier argued that it is misleading, moreover apologetic, to divide the Horthy-era in different sections from the perspective of antisemitism. The politics of all governments in that period embraced antisemitism.<sup>42</sup>

The present dissertation will confirm, among other things, that the 1928 amendment was not the abolition of the *numerus clausus*. Through the reconstruction of the support mechanism that facilitated Jewish student emigration and through the reconstruction of contemporary discourses it will be argued that 1928 did not significantly improve the situation of Jewish youth in Hungary. Moreover, this was the time to realize that academic antisemitic discrimination was there to stay and would never be abolished under Horthy. Hence the communal support system for *numerus clausus* exiles was reinforced to the extent it was possible under the circumstances of the great economic crisis.

Regarding the continuity between *numerus clausus* and Holocaust, I adhere to the continuity school. The difference between conservative and radical antisemites is narrower than the difference between adherents and enemies of the idea of equality of rights. The Jewish quota at universities was of course not a cause of the Shoah, since the genocide hit

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<sup>41</sup> Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer és antiszemitizmusának mérlege. Diszkrimináció és szociálpolitika Magyarországon, 1919-1944* [The Horthy-System and Its Antisemitism on the Scale. Discrimination and Social Policy in Hungary, 1919-1944] (Budapest: Jelenkor, 2016), 679.

<sup>42</sup> Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Hullarablás* [Robbing the Dead] (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2015), 12.

the Jewry of almost all European countries including those without preceding academic antisemitism. However, the presence of legislative antisemitic discrimination for two and a half decades before the Shoah made antisemitism part of the Hungarian mainstream, made people used to think of Jews as an outsider group outside of the Hungarian community of solidarity and weakened resistance to racist thinking and action. The antisemitic laws introduced after 1938 had a stronger and more direct impact on the behavior of Hungarians in 1944 than the numerus clausus of 1920. However, the numerus clausus was indeed a precedent for setting up Jewish quotas in the intellectual professions that made the acceptance of the so called First anti-Jewish Law (Law XV of 1938) smooth.<sup>43</sup>

The present dissertation is to my best knowledge the first monographic work focusing on the exiles of the numerus clausus rather than other aspects of the law, although the importance of emigration as a consequence of the numerus clausus has been acknowledged by historians before.<sup>44</sup> This is so because until the last decade and a half, research and memory of the numerus clausus was dominated by political and legal history, whereas social historians' interest in it took off more recently. Róbert Barta nevertheless argued as early as 1990 that when investigating the impact of the numerus clausus, research on the Jewish students who left Hungary as a consequence is among the most important tasks. He also called for research to be conducted abroad.<sup>45</sup> In the same article, Barta wrote about his forthcoming larger work on Jewish reactions to the antisemitism of the 1920s. Unfortunately, until now (2019) it has not been published.

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<sup>43</sup> Law XV of 1938 limited the proportion of Jews to 20% in liberal professions and in companies that employed intellectuals. The concept was familiar to the public opinion from the 1920 numerus clausus law which limited the proportion of Jews among university students to 6%.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, by Róbert Kerepeszki when analyzing the impact of the 1928 amendment of the numerus clausus. Róbert Kerepeszki, "A numerus clausus 1928. évi módosításának hatása Debrecenben [The Impact of the 1928 Amendment of the Numerus Clausus in Debrecen]," *Múltunk* L, no. 4 (2005): 42-75 (43).

<sup>45</sup> Barta, "A numerus clausus és a baloldali magyar zsidó politikai közvélemény," 25.

Similarly to Barta, Kinga Frojimovics and Yehuda Hartman examined Jewish reactions to the numerus clausus and antisemitism, their focus, however, being on religious Jews. Frojimovics surveyed sermons by Neolog rabbis,<sup>46</sup> while Hartman focused on Orthodox Jews who are even more neglected in historiography than Neolog religious Jews.<sup>47</sup> My present dissertation is also nurtured by an interest in Jewish reactions, but specifically on Jewish youth who wished to study and did so even on the cost of emigration, poverty and other challenges abroad. The main characters of the story hereby told tend to be secular Jews coming from a Neolog denominational background rather than Orthodoxy.

Just two years after Barta's call for research abroad about the numerus clausus exiles, Victor Karády conducted such research in Vienna, Prague and Brno. His research confirms that after 1920 almost all the Hungarian students of the Viennese medical faculty and of the technical universities of Prague and Brno (between 91% and 98%) were Jewish by denomination.<sup>48</sup> Two decades later Michael L. Miller published three studies about the interwar Hungarian Jewish student colonies in Vienna and Berlin.<sup>49</sup> He explains the mechanisms used by the students to organize financial support and community for themselves. Miller also draws attention to the contradiction that while Kuno Klebelsberg, Hungarian Minister of Religion and Public Education (1922-1931), theoretically regarded

<sup>46</sup> Kinga Frojimovics, "Mételyes már közéletünk és fojtó-fullajtó lett levegője": A numerus clausus magyarországi rabbik templomi beszédeiben ["Our Public Life Has Become Poisoned and Its Air Suffocating": The Numerus Clausus in the Sermons of Rabbis in Hungary], in *Jogfosztás*, edited by Judit Molnár, 233-243.

<sup>47</sup> Jehuda Hartman, *The Attitude of the Jewish Orthodoxy in Hungary Toward the State and Anti-Semitism in the Years 1867-1944*. Ph.D. dissertation. (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Victor Karády, "Egyetemi antiszemitizmus és értelmiségi kényszerpályák. Magyar-zsidó diákság a Nyugat-európai főiskolákon a numerus clausus alatt [Academic Antisemitism and Intellectual Constraint Careers. Hungarian Jewish Students at Western-European Colleges in the Age of the Numerus Clausus]," *Levéltári Szemle* XLII, no. 3 (1992): 21-40.

<sup>49</sup> Michael L. Miller, "From White Terror to Red Vienna. Hungarian Jewish Students in Interwar Austria," in *Wien und die Jüdische Erfahrung 1900-1938. Akkulturation – Antisemitismus – Zionismus* [Vienna and the Jewish Experience 1900-1938. Acculturation – Antisemitism – Zionism], edited by Barbara Eichinger and Frank Stern (Wien: Böhlau, 2009), 307-23.; Miller, "A 'numerus clausus száműzöttjei' a berlini felsőoktatási intézetekben 1920 és 1933 között [The 'Exiles of the Numerus Clausus' in Berlin's Institutions of Higher Education Between 1920 and 1933]"; Miller, "Numerus Clausus Exiles: Hungarian Jewish Students in Inter-War Berlin" in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary*, edited by V. Karady and P. T. Nagy, 206-18.

Hungarian students abroad as potential cultural “ambassadors” of the country, in practice complained that the Jews among them (the majority) spoiled Hungary’s image abroad as forced migrants pushed out by the numerus clausus law.<sup>50</sup>

The Hungarian numerus clausus, however, is not the only relevant topical framework for this dissertation. While the introduction of this law was the first case when a state’s legislation stepped back from earlier granted Jewish emancipation, it was not the first historical instance of higher education becoming a major battlefield for antisemitism and the field of reversing an already initiated process of Jewish integration. The first numerus clausus policy (thus limitation of the number and/or ethnic proportion of admissible students in educational institutions) with an anti-Jewish intention was introduced in the Russian Empire in 1887. An important difference between Hungary and the Russian Empire is that while the first granted Jewish emancipation in 1867, the latter never did (only the revolution that discontinued the Empire brought about Jewish emancipation). Nevertheless, the Russian numerus clausus lends itself for comparison with the Hungarian version, because both were antisemitic policies reacting to a phenomenon of Jewish overschooling; both of them reversed an earlier state policy encouraging Jews to enter secondary and higher education; and both of them provoked massive Jewish student emigration.

The emigration of Jewish students from the Russian Empire between 1880 and 1914 was so significant that they became protagonists of peregrination from Eastern Europe to the West. Among Russian students enrolling in Western European universities Jews surely represented the majority, although the scale of such majority is debated.<sup>51</sup> Jack Wertheimer

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<sup>50</sup> Miller, “A ‘numerus clausus számúztjtjei’ a Berlieni felsőoktatási intézetekben 1920 és 1933 között,” 87. Klebelsberg complained in this way in *The New York Times*, which was an act of hypocrisy from his part, an ardent supporter of the numerus clausus. Probably it was a tactical declaration in line with Hungary’s official policy of amending the numerus clausus law (in a hypocrite way) in 1928 due to international pressure. “Hungarian Minister Attacks Anti-Semitism,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1928, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Irina Manitz, “Die akademische ‘Ausländerfrage’ in russischsprachigen Periodika in Deutschland vor dem 1. Weltkrieg [The Academic ‘Ausländerfrage’ in Russian Press in Germany Before WWI]”, *Universitäten als Brücken in Europa: Studien zur Geschichte der studentischen Migration* [Universities as Bridges in Europe:

estimated their proportion at three quarters among all the Russian subjects studying in German higher education between 1900 and 1914, which was one of the major target countries of peregrination.<sup>52</sup>

With the streams of comparative history, transnational history and the history of transfers coming to the fore in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the topic of peregrination (migration for the sake of studying at universities) grabbed the attention of historians as a manifestation of cultural ties between different countries and regions. Several – often collective – research projects and edited volumes have been dedicated to peregrination from Eastern and Central Europe to Western Europe from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in particular.<sup>53</sup> This was the period when higher education and peregrination slowly ceased to be an exclusive privilege of the elite and when the middleclasses and Jews joined. Women were admitted only from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the time differ between countries.

Jewish migrant students were not many if compared to the migration waves of the whole Jewish population of Europe between 1880 and 1914, but they constituted a large group when examined against the background of general (not Jewish) student migration. Once higher learning was opened for Jews, an eventual restriction of their access (first in the Russian Empire in 1887) meant a great loss and triggered emigration, due to the function of education as means of upward social mobility and channel of integration into the majority society.

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Studies on the History of Student Migration], edited by Hartmut Rüdiger Peter and Natalia Tikhonov (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 213-228 (218–219).

<sup>52</sup> Jack Wertheimer, “The ‘Unwanted Element’. East European Jews in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 26 (1981): 23–46.

<sup>53</sup> Victor Karady and Wolfgang Mitter (Eds.), *Bildungswesen und Sozialstruktur in Mitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Education and Social Structure in Central Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. (Köln–Wien: Böhlau, 1990); Hartmut Rüdiger Peter and Natalia Tikhonov (Eds.), *Universitäten als Brücken in Europa: Studien zur Geschichte der studentischen Migration* [Universities as Bridges in Europe: Studies on the History of Student Migration] (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003); Victor Karády, “La migration internationale d’étudiants en Europe [The International Migration of Students in Europe, 1890-1940],” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 141-143, no. 5 (2002): 47-60.

Natalia Tikhonov pays special attention to late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss universities and their students stemming from the Russian Empire who pioneered in female participation in higher education. These women lead us to another important topic: women in the first generation of female university students tended to be Jewish all over Europe. Thus, Jewish overschooling was stronger among women than men which was motivated by women's quest for double emancipation: achieving equality with non-Jews and with men. Since in Jewish society studying was the most valuable privilege men had, women turned to higher education as a means of emancipation and as an alternative to traditional Jewish higher learning reserved for men.

As Tikhonov revealed, between 1870 and 1910 three quarters of the female students at four Swiss universities (Zürich, Bern, Geneva, Lausanne) came from the Russian Empire<sup>54</sup> and more than two-thirds of Russian female students of German and Swiss universities were Jewish.<sup>55</sup> The special concentration of Russian Jewish female students in Switzerland occurred due to the combination of two historical phenomena: the quest for higher education among Jewish women and the receptivity of Swiss universities towards students not welcomed elsewhere.

Swiss universities were open for female students, because their *raison d'être* was the influx of foreign students as they could not recruit enough Swiss students.<sup>56</sup> The special gap in the market which these institutions filled was the acceptance of foreign female students as women were still excluded from almost all universities in the world. It was this particular phenomenon of a concentration of Russian Jewish women at Swiss universities that “produced”

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<sup>54</sup> Natalia Tikhonov, “Zwischen Öffnung und Rückzug. Die Universitäten der Schweiz und Deutschlands angesichts des Studentinnenstroms aus dem Russischen Reich [Between Opening Up and Withdrawal. Switzerland's Universities Facing the Stream of Female Students from the Russian Empire],” in *Universitäten als Brücken in Europa*, edited by H.R. Peter and N. Tikhonov, 157-173 (159).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 162.

<sup>56</sup> There were seven universities for a population of three million three hundred thousand people, in a period when only a very thin layer of society studied in higher education. Tikhonov, “Zwischen Öffnung und Rückzug,” 173.

the very first female university professor: Anna Tumarkin, extraordinary professor in philosophy appointed in 1909 at the University of Bern.<sup>57</sup>

After WWI, with the disintegration of the Russian Empire and the independence of Poland and the Baltic states, large territories of the Pale of Settlement became part of (old-) new countries. Consequently, students stemming from the same territories – including Jews – appear in foreign universities’ registers as “Russian” if they enrolled before the revolution and the Russian Civil War and appear as Polish, Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian if they enrolled afterwards. Students from what are now Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine, became Soviet citizens.<sup>58</sup> On the one hand, Soviet universities were now open to Jews,<sup>59</sup> on the other hand, peregrination to the West became very difficult if not impossible from the Soviet Union.

Hence, in the interwar period the new protagonists of East-West (including Jewish) peregrination within Europe were not Russian citizens any longer. It is also noteworthy that what “studying abroad” meant changed due to the border changes after the Great War. For example, since Galicia belonged to Austro-Hungary before 1918 and then to Poland, Galicians enrolled in the University of Vienna became foreigners. The trends of Galician Jewish medical students’ peregrination between 1784 and 1918 are examined currently in a research project led by Andrew Zalewski.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly to the pre-WWI decades, Jews constituted a large part of migrant students from Eastern and Central Europe in Austrian, German, Czechoslovak, French, Swiss and Belgian universities in the interwar period. Now their situation worsened in most of Eastern

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 163.

<sup>58</sup> Not all borders changed so simply, for instance, Eastern Galicia was part of Poland before World War II and now is part of Ukraine.

<sup>59</sup> Later, between the 1960s and 1980s informal Jewish quotas did exist in Soviet higher education. Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 185-186.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.geshergalicia.org/projects/galician-medical-students-doctors-project> (Last accessed: February 4, 2019).

and Central Europe due to antisemitism's intensification during WWI. In 2012 a workshop dedicated to interwar academic antisemitism held at the *Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies* brought together researchers from several countries of numerous aspects of the phenomenon including the transnational dynamics of it and Jewish students' reactions to it. The proceedings of this encounter are published in a book that informs my project greatly.<sup>61</sup>

After WWI Jews were pushed out from Romanian,<sup>62</sup> Polish<sup>63</sup> and Hungarian universities by academic antisemitism that was manifested in official or unofficial quotas and repeated violence and humiliation (for instance ghetto benches) against Jewish students. The cadaver affair was an especially macabre manifestation of antisemitism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where modern racial antisemitism intersected with traditional religious anti-Judaism. A comprehensive monograph on the subject by Natalia Aleksion is forthcoming. The term "cadaver affair" refers to the phenomenon that when and where there were no Jewish quotas, a way to still exclude Jews from medical training was to ban them from anatomy seminars unless the local Jewish community provided a sufficient number of cadavers of Jews for all the Jewish medical students. This demand was usually not met, because Judaism in principle does not allow the dissection of bodies. The root of the accusation was thus an ambition to segregate the bodies of Christians and Jews even beyond death. This was, however, disguised as a demand on behalf of modern science and reason, to require Jews to leave behind the irrational ancient laws of their religion. At the same time, in this way it was mostly secular and acculturated or assimilated Jews (who went to study medicine) who were punished for a tenet of the Jewish religion.

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<sup>61</sup> Regina Fritz, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, Jana Starek (Eds.), *Alma Mater Antisemitica. Akademisches Milieu, Juden und Antisemitismus an den Universitäten Europas zwischen 1918 und 1939* [Alma Mater Antisemitica. Academic Milieu, Jews and Antisemitism at Europe's Universities between 1918 and 1939] (Wien: Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Lucian Nastasă, *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919–1939). Mărturii documentare* [Academic Antisemitism in Romania, 1919-1939. Documentary Testimonies] (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Nați-Kriterion, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Harry Rabinowicz, "The Battle of the Ghetto Benches," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 552 (1964): 151-159.

The cadaver affair was usually bound with demands for introducing a Jewish quota and it was most wide-spread in Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian universities, however, it occasionally emerged in Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia as well.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, in Hungary, although antisemitic students often demonstrated for the maintenance of the numerus clausus, they rarely connected it to the cadaver affair. One of such rare occasions was the cadaver affair of Szeged in 1924 when the University of Szeged prohibited Jewish students from dissecting cadavers of Christians in anatomy classes and thereby disabled them from passing the anatomy comprehensive exam.<sup>65</sup>

Jewish peregrination connected to academic antisemitism in the native countries has been studied with special regard to Romania in the framework of a conference in Iași in 2010.<sup>66</sup> Both general and Jewish peregrination from Romania prioritized France, but after WWI Italy became important as well.

While the abovementioned works' starting points are students' countries of origin, in the studies of Pascale Falek and Elisa Signori the organizational principle of researching Jewish peregrination are the host countries. Falek wrote her dissertation on East European Jewish female students at Belgian universities in the interwar period.<sup>67</sup> Signori drew attention to the role of East Central European Jews in the internationalization of universities in Fascist Italy.<sup>68</sup>

Italy emerged as an important host country of modern (as opposed to medieval) peregrination only during the Fascist regime which consciously attracted foreign students to its

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<sup>64</sup> Natalia Aleksion, "The Cadaver Affair in the Second Polish Republic. A Case Study of Practical Antisemitism?," in *Alma mater antisemitica*, edited by R. Fritz, G. Rossoliński-Liebe and J. Starek, 203-220.

<sup>65</sup> "Zsidó orvosnövendékek nem boncolhatnak keresztény hullát [Jewish Medical Students Cannot Dissect Christian Corpses]," *Szózat*, October 22, 1924, 3.

<sup>66</sup> The proceedings of the conference were published in an edited volume: Carol Iancu, Alexandru-Florin Platon (Eds.), *Profesori și studenți evrei [Jewish Professors and Students]* (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Pascale Falek, *A Precarious Life: East European Female Jewish Students in Interwar Belgium*. Ph.D. dissertation. (Florence: European University Institute, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Elisa Signori, "Una 'peregrinatio academica' in età contemporanea: gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle Università italiane tra le due guerre [A 'Peregrinatio Academica' in the Contemporary Age: The Foreign Jewish Students at the Italian Universities between the Two Wars]," *Annali di storia delle università italiane* 4 (2000): 1000-1024.

universities in order to increase Italian influence abroad. In 1923 Italian universities exempted foreign students from tuition fees for two years, as the government instructed them. After those two years, some universities required foreigners to pay discounted tuition fees and in 1926 the halved tuition fees for foreigners were implemented on the national level.

Thanks to this policy and the absence of a strong antisemitic movement, the preponderance of Jews among foreign students was especially conspicuous in Italy whose universities were otherwise less prestigious and attractive than German, French, Belgian and Swiss universities. Most historians who deal with the internationalization of Italian universities during Fascism hold that Jews were not special targets of Italian propaganda which aimed to attract foreign students. Until their Jewishness became a problem due to the regime's antisemitic turn in 1938, university administrators did not deal in any way with the fact that so many of the foreign students were Jewish.<sup>69</sup> At the same time Renzo De Felice argues that it was a well-known fact already in the 1920s. Moreover, the exemption of foreigners from paying tuition fees was a gesture on Mussolini's part to gain the sympathy of Italian Jews.<sup>70</sup>

My Master thesis,<sup>71</sup> focusing on the Hungarian *numerus clausus* exiles who studied in Italy, presented the phenomenon as a result of the curious interplay of the national educational policies introduced in two countries that between the two world wars strengthened both their cultural and their political ties. The higher educational system was reshaped in the early 1920s both in Hungary and in Italy. The same Jewish students nevertheless played two opposite roles: in Hungary they

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<sup>69</sup> Elisa Signori, "Contro gli studenti. La persecuzione antiebraica negli atenei italiani e le comunità studentesche [Against the Students. The Anti-Jewish Persecution at the Italian Universities and the Student Communities]," in *Per la difesa della razza – L'applicazione delle leggi antiebraiche nelle università italiane* [For the Defense of the Race – The Implementation of the Anti-Jewish Laws at the Italian Universities], edited by Giovanna Procacci and Valeria Galimi (Milano: Unicopli, 2009), 173-210 (204).

<sup>70</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* [History of the Italian Jews under Fascism] (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 80.

<sup>71</sup> Agnes Katalin Kelemen, *Leaving an Antisemitic Regime for a Fascist Country: The Hungarian Numerus Clausus Refugees in Italy*. M.A. thesis. (Budapest: Central European University, 2012).

were pushed out, whereas in Italy they were welcome as instruments of internationalizing the universities.

The prosopography of Hungarian students at the universities of Bologna and Padova in the interwar period was compiled by Zsuzsanna Orosz.<sup>72</sup> She reflects on the impact of the numerus clausus on peregrination, but downplays it with a curious interpretation of the fact that 50% of foreign degrees accepted in Hungary between 1920 and 1930s had been earned by Jews while Jews were only 5% of the general population.<sup>73</sup> For Orosz this means that antisemitic discrimination was not applied on foreign degrees. She disregards another relevant fact: 80% of Hungarians who studied abroad were Jewish,<sup>74</sup> thus we could only say there was no antisemitic discrimination when accepting foreign degrees if 80% of the owners of such degrees were Jewish.

The role of Jews in Hungarian peregrination is acknowledged, however, by László Szögi who dedicated a study to Hungarian Jewish students in the German-speaking territories between 1789 and 1919. Szögi concludes that proportionately there were more Jews among Hungarian migrant students in German speaking universities than in the general population of Hungary even prior to 1919. One in five Hungarian students were Jewish.<sup>75</sup> Thus they were “overrepresented” so to say, but not as much as within Hungary where in the period between the turn of the century and WWI one in four university students were Jewish.<sup>76</sup>

A contemporary observer and scholar of Jewish participation in Hungarian higher education and peregrination needs to be referred to as well, namely the antisemitic statistician Alajos Kovács. In 1938 he supported the introduction of the First anti-Jewish law with the

<sup>72</sup> Zsuzsanna Orosz, “A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között [The Hungarian Students of the Universities of Padua and Bologna between the Two World Wars],” in *Tanulmányok az újkori külföldi magyar egyetemjárás történetéhez* [Studies on Hungarian Peregrination Abroad in the Modern Age], edited by Ákos Horváth (Budapest: ELTE, 1997), 223–60.

<sup>73</sup> Orosz, “A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között,” 232.

<sup>74</sup> Alajos Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon [Hungarian Jewish Students in Colleges in Hungary and Abroad],” *Magyar Statisztikai Szemle* 16, no. 9 (1938): 897-902 (898).

<sup>75</sup> László Szögi, “Magyarországi zsidó egyetemi hallgatók a német nyelvterület egyetemén és főiskoláin, 1789-1919 [Jewish Students from Hungary at Universities and Colleges in the German-Speaking Territories, 1789-1919],” *ELTE Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei* 10 (2011): 107-118.

<sup>76</sup> Ladányi, “On the 1928 Amendment to the Hungarian Numerus Clausus Act,” 70.

argument that the impact of the numerus clausus on Jewish preponderance in the intellectual professions was too slow, hence new quotas were needed. Among the effects of the numerus clausus he presented a statistical investigation of Jews among students of Hungarian and foreign universities and concluded that between 1920 and 1938 80% of Hungarian students abroad (not counting the very few students who went with a stipend from the Hungarian state) were Jewish.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, the peregrination provoked by the numerus clausus needs to be placed in the context of political emigration from interwar Hungary and its rich scholarly literature as well. The establishment of the “Christian course” was introduced by the white terror in 1919-1920 where allegedly as a revenge against the perpetrators of the red terror of 1918-1919, diverse military formations murdered Communists, people whom they regarded as such and Jews (both Communists and non-Communist ones). In order to legitimize his rule and gain Western support, Horthy eventually broke away from the white militia, although he had approved their actions. As Hungary’s governor, Horthy assumed the image of the civilized statesman and arbitrary murders were not approved any longer.

However, people who had played any role in the Soviet Republic of Hungary or benefitted from it (such as accepting a university chair) were fired, marginalized and harassed. Liberals and moderate left-wing politicians who had played important roles in the democratic revolution in October 1918 and escaped the Bolshevik takeover (March 1919) by Béla Kun (such as Mihály Károlyi and Oszkár Jászi), were not welcome back to Hungary either. About the interwar left-wing Hungarian political emigration Lee Congdon wrote an important monograph, *“Exile and Social Thought”*. Congdon explains both the historical

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<sup>77</sup> A. Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon.”

context and its impact on these émigrés' social thought, in which their being assimilated Jews and therefore sensitive to the strengthening of antisemitism had a large role.<sup>78</sup>

Interwar Jewish-Hungarian emigration is an important topic in the history of science as well, since numerous geniuses were pushed out either directly by the Jewish quota or indirectly by the general antisemitic and conservative spirit of the Horthy-regime which hindered their careers. Among others, five participants of the Manhattan-Project belong to this phenomenon: Theodore von Kármán, John von Neumann, Leo Szilard, Edward Teller and Eugene Wigner. The two latter are also Nobel laureates. It is noteworthy that if it was not for Jewish background or for politics, intellectual aspirations were not necessarily frustrated in Hungary under Horthy.

In fact, supporting education and scholarship was a priority of successive governments in the Horthy-era. After the pos-WWI financial reconstruction, between 1925 and 1930, 9-10% of the state budget was spent on education, a higher proportion than in the pre-WWI years. The absolute sum spent on education decreased after the great depression of 1929, however, in relative terms an even higher proportion (13%) of all state spending was dedicated to education in 1932-33.<sup>79</sup> Higher education (besides the development of elementary schooling) was a field of enhanced support within education, universities and colleges received one fourth of the budget spent on education.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the number of students in relation to the general population increased during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>81</sup>

Peregrination and research abroad were characteristic of Hungarian scientists and academics also before WWI, as the career of Karl Polányi shows. However, after 1920, scientists not in line with the regime, were less likely to return than during the Habsburg

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<sup>78</sup> Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*. Congdon discusses the non-Jewish members of this left-wing émigré group too, nevertheless the majority's being Jewish has an important role in his narrative.

<sup>79</sup> Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 151.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 152.

Monarchy. The Weimar Republic, on the contrary, was not only intellectually stimulating, but politically democratic as well. Hence it was a typical target country of intellectual emigration. *Double Exile* by Tibor Frank is an important monograph on the step-migration of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals to the United States through Germany. The title refers to their being exiled once from Hungary around 1920 and once again from Germany in 1933.<sup>82</sup>

Eszter B. Gantner conducted a detailed research on the left-wing Hungarian political émigrés living in Berlin during the Weimar Republic. Her book *Budapest-Berlin* focuses on intellectuals who already made a career in Hungary before 1919 and had to leave because of their leading political or intellectual role in the Aster Revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic.<sup>83</sup> Similarly to Congdon, Gantner dedicates attention to the interplay between many of these émigrés' assimilated Jewish background and their thought.

Through the history of the Polányi family which included economist Karl and physical chemist Michael and their sister, the historian Laura, Judith Szapor presents a network of Jewish-Hungarian intellectual émigrés spread across countries and continents even.<sup>84</sup> She focuses on the prominent Polányi family to investigate social historical phenomena, including the changes of family model and gender roles.

The present dissertation, contrary to the abovementioned works that inform it, focuses on students targeted by the numerus clausus law as university applicants in Hungary who therefore studied abroad. It is purposefully a history of a group whose majority did not become prominent and world-famous. My work will enrich the knowledge on this migrant group by establishing their social and regional selection, and career and life paths in addition to their interpretations of the experience of studies abroad through a sample who in the age

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<sup>82</sup> Frank, *Double Exile*.

<sup>83</sup> Gantner, *Budapest-Berlin. Die Koordinaten einer Emigration, 1919-1933*.

<sup>84</sup> Judit Szapor, *A világhírű Polányiak. Egy elfeledett család regényes története*. [The World-Famous Polányis. The Novelistic History of a Forgotten Family.] (Budapest: Aura, 2017).

of the numerus clausus (1920-1945) studied in a few selected cities: Vienna, Prague, Berlin, and Bologna.

#### 1.4. Research questions, hypotheses and methodology

This work investigates the social profile of the numerus clausus exiles as an actual group that came into existence due to antisemitic legislation and practical discrimination in Hungarian universities. At the same time, it also examines them as a consciously constructed group, both in terms of the discourses *about* them and narratives *by* them. The central research questions at stake are who the numerus clausus exiles were in sociological terms (social, geographic and gender selection) and how their peregrination was seen by outsiders and by themselves.

An underlying hypothesis is that student emigration in the interwar period was connected to Hungarian academic antisemitism, thus it was to a large extent a Jewish phenomenon. Even if, naturally, there were non-Jewish Hungarian students abroad as well. There was a continuity between pre-1920 and post-1920 peregrination and many universities abroad were attractive for their quality education. Yet, as it will be argued and empirically proved, the large majority of migrant students (four in five in the here examined universities) were Jewish in terms of the numerus clausus law.

All the following chapters focus on different aspects of Jewish student emigration, from different points-of-views and are based on different types of sources. The second chapter's research question is how Hungarian media presented peregrination, as emigration of victims of discrimination, or rather as voluntary migration for the sake of quality education? To what extent was it acknowledged that the majority of students abroad was Jewish? To answer these questions, I reconstruct the discourses about this migratory movement in the contemporary Hungarian (Jewish and non-Jewish, conservative, liberal, left-wing and pro-government) press. Jewish, non-Jewish, empathetic and hostile opinions about the students get the floor alike. It

will be argued that Hungarian Jewish public discourse was dominated by an interpretation of the Jewish students' being victims of the *numerus clausus* and their peregrination being an exile.

The third chapter analyzes the social background of émigré students through my self-constructed sample of Hungarian students enrolled in every fifth academic year after 1921/22 in medicine and engineering in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna.<sup>85</sup> Their data are collected from university archives' documents, first of all from enrollment forms, but occasionally of folders containing several personal documents. Medicine was by far the most popular study path among migrant students, followed by technical colleges and universities. The other reasons for delineating the sample in such a way was that according to the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* of the period, Austria, Germany, Italy and Czechoslovakia were the most popular target countries of peregrination.<sup>86</sup> The sample includes 1,131 students who were citizens or residents of post-Trianon Hungary, thus were affected by interwar Hungarian legislation, including the *numerus clausus* law. Non-Jews are included as well, in order to prove the large Jewish majority (over four fifths) among émigré students in the age of the *numerus clausus*.

The Jewish students' data are furthermore compared to those Hungarian Jewish students' data who studied in Hungarian higher education in the same period. Such comparison pertains to the question who evaded the Jewish quota by peregrination and who were the Jews who made it into the Jewish quota in a Hungarian university. Thus, who were pushed out by the *numerus clausus*? The case will be made that peregrination from interwar Hungary was to a large extent a phenomenon of lower middleclass Jewish youth's upward social mobility

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<sup>85</sup> The *numerus clausus* law was promulgated in 1920 and thus 1921/22 was the first academic year when the quota had a full impact on university itineraries. Then every fifth year of the period was used to gain snapshots of the history of Hungarian student presence in the cities concerned, since a research including all Hungarians of all academic years was not feasible in the time allotted for doctoral studies.

<sup>86</sup> See the tables titled "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon" [Hungarian Citizens in Universities Abroad] in the volumes of *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek* [Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks] published between 1925 and 1940. (The volumes relevant for 1919, 1920, 1921 and 1922 were published in 1925.)

through education despite the numerus clausus. Thus, studying abroad was not an escape route reserved for wealthy Jews.

In the fourth chapter, the floor is given to students in order to learn how they saw their own emigration, to what extent their narratives differed from the official Hungarian Jewish (Neolog) “exile” narrative. Hence the source base of this chapter is constituted by ego documents by Hungarian Jews who studied abroad in the age of the numerus clausus, including letters, diaries, autobiographies and most abundantly memoirs. As the analysis will show, the available ego documents tell a similar story to that of the media: the students appear as exiled by antisemitism rather than enthusiastic adventurers.

Finally, the fifth chapter reconstructs the post-university career and life trajectories of the 1,131 students of my sample to the extent it is possible. The main questions, investigated through digital databases of sources pertaining to everyday life, scientific publications, professional associations and journals, are how could someone work in Hungary with a foreign degree, to what extent did numerus clausus refugees settle abroad, with what chances they could survive the Shoah and what happened to the survivors after 1945?

Finally, a few remarks are due on why the phenomenon of the numerus clausus exiles, the product and construct of such a short period as the interwar period, deserves a monograph? Not merely because the agents of their peregrination thought so and wrote in 1938 that

it would be worthwhile to write the true history of this student migration whose eternal source will be the twenty volumes of *Egyenlőség* and the archives of the central student aid committee where not only help requests were sent, but also the eternally shining and moving documents of Hungarian Jewish students’ patriotism.<sup>87</sup>

Alas, only a few documents of the student aid committee survived. The relevant volumes of *Egyenlőség* were naturally processed for the purposes of this dissertation. My motivation was also not merely that the wandering students provided a niche in the research

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<sup>87</sup> “Nincs többé bujdosó diák... [No more wandering students...],” *Egyenlőség*, August 25, 1938, 3-4.

field of Jewish history. József Patai, Hungarian Zionist editor, jokingly remarked in 1911 that “our successors are deprived of all possible and impossible dissertation topics by the antecedents”.<sup>88</sup> However, I was not looking for a topic for the sake of writing a dissertation, but I pursued a Ph.D. for the sake of writing a monograph on the *numerus clausus* exiles.

In view of a virtual lack of a Hungarian equivalent of the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (facing the Nazi past), my work is also a response to the call by István Hargittai for making up for the absence of proper remembrance of how great losses antisemitism caused to Hungarian science and academia, for two and a half decades between 1920 and 1945. I echo Hargittai’s statement that the losses are not only due to the German occupation, the Arrow Cross terror and the Shoah, because the Hungarian Holocaust was also a culmination of state propagated antisemitism of two and a half decades.<sup>89</sup>

During my Master studies, I pursued a project dedicated to the curious interplay of interwar Hungarian antisemitism and Italian Fascism resulting in the somewhat counterintuitive phenomenon of a fascist regime providing shelter for youth escaping antisemitism. Annamaria Habermann’s documentary film about her discovery of her Hungarian father’s Jewishness was a great inspiration for me.<sup>90</sup> Since I learned that Italy was but one country of many where *numerus clausus* refugees studied, struggled, and potentially settled, I felt I must expand my research. My curiosity for what a person can and is willing to do when they are forbidden from studying is also inspired by my Jewish grandfather’s story who graduating from high school in 1942 in Budapest had no chance to pursue higher learning until after surviving Mauthausen.

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<sup>88</sup> Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 111-112.

<sup>89</sup> István Hargittai, “Unaccounted for: Scientist Martyrs of Hungary in the Horthy Era and the Holocaust,” in *Az emberi sors és a történelem kereszteződésében – Tanulmánykötet Frank Tibor 70. születésnapjára. At the Crossroads of Human Fate and History – Studies in Honour of Tibor Frank on His 70th Birthday*, edited by János Kenyeres, Miklós Lojkó, Tamás Magyarics, Éva Eszter Szabó (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, School of English and American Studies, 2018), 151-189.

<sup>90</sup> *Holtak országa* [Country of the Dead], 2010. Directed by Róbert Kollár.

After defending my Master thesis in 2014 I spent five years with researching and writing about numerus clausus exiles in four countries. In the meantime, my interest in education as a means of social mobility and rebellion deepened. Students are leaving Hungary in great numbers nowadays as well, albeit now not because of racial quotas, but rather for the ease to study within the European Union and the difficulty of living in Hungary for critically thinking intellectuals. My alma mater, the Central European University, in the meantime was prevented from continuous operation in Hungary and was thereby pressured to move the bulk of its activity abroad. In this way, this study on exiled students will be defended in a university in exile. This work is dedicated to every student, professor and university ever attacked in any country.

## II. Discourses about the numerus clausus related emigration\*

### II.1. Introduction

The numerus clausus has been unsuccessful for all these sixteen years. It did remove the Jewish youth from the universities, however, this youth graduated from universities abroad, learned three or four languages, came back with their foreign degrees, without naturalizing them, and yet with their better knowledge they found better jobs [than non-Jews who graduated in Hungary].<sup>91</sup>

Thus evaluated István Friedrich former prime minister (the first prime minister after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic) the numerus clausus one and a half decade after the law's introduction. Noteworthy that such an important politician of the Horthy-era implied that the law had been in force for sixteen years, thus, not even he took the alleged 1928 amendment seriously. More importantly, however, this statement means that according to his estimation the student emigration provoked by the numerus clausus was significant enough to jeopardize the aim of the Jewish quota.

Had this been the case, the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* was successful and Hungarian Jewry defeated the numerus clausus. The founder of this committee, Lajos Szabolcsi, evaluated their achievement in a similar vein, although as we will see later, the following quote reads as optimistic only when taken out from the context of his memoir written in 1942-43: "We saved a whole Jewish generation for life, work and culture".<sup>92</sup>

Were these two contemporary observers – the antisemitic politician Friedrich and the Jewish public intellectual Szabolcsi – right? The interconnection of the numerus clausus and peregrination (migration with the purpose of university education) goes beyond answering the question whether the numerus clausus as an antisemitic project – aiming at pushing out Jews from the intelligentsia – was successful or not. As we are approaching the centenary of the

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\* This chapter includes parts of my article "Peregrináció, emigráció, száműzetés. A két világháború közötti magyar diákvándorlás és a numerus clausus összefüggései [Peregrination, Emigration, Exile. The Interconnection between Interwar Hungarian Student Migration and the Numerus Clausus]," *Múltunk LXIII*, no. 4 (2018): 4-31.

<sup>91</sup> "Élénken folyik a Házban az ipari törvényjavaslat vitája [Lively Debate on the Industrial Law Proposal in Parliament]," *Pesti Hírlap*, March 4, 1936, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 327-28.

numerus clausus (2020), it is natural that for nowadays' public opinion the central question is the continuity between the numerus clausus and the first, second and third anti-Jewish laws of 1938 (1938:XV), 1939 (1939:IV) and 1941 (1941:XV).<sup>93</sup> During the nearly two decades when the numerus clausus existed without the following antisemitic laws and when it was not looked at from a post-Holocaust perspective, however, the emigration of students was the most conspicuous consequence of the Jewish quota. Both Jews and non-Jews regarded this peregrination of the “exiles”, “refugees”, “victims” of the numerus clausus or “wandering students” as a characteristic feature of their time.<sup>94</sup> This chapter presents the contemporary discourses on this phenomenon – peregrination, emigration or exile? – through the analysis of its treatment in Hungarian press.

To reconstruct the journalistic discourses of the numerus clausus related emigration, I examine its treatment on the columns of the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség*,<sup>95</sup> and four general (thus, not Jewish) newspapers of four different orientations: *Pesti Hírlap*, a daily that supported the Horthy-regime; the conservative *Budapesti Hírlap*; the liberal *Pesti Napló* and the Social-Democratic *Népszava*.

Through the lenses of the contemporary press, this chapter will also present the main features of émigré student life: what students lived on, what material and moral support they received, how (if) they could achieve the recognition (“*nostrification*”) of their foreign degrees in Hungary, how student emigration created a community of fate, but also how it caused

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<sup>93</sup> On the related historiographic debate on such continuity see Chapter I.

<sup>94</sup> Victor Karády, “Funktionswandel der österreichischen Hochschulen in der Ausbildung der ungarischen Fachintelligenz vor und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg [The Changing Function of Austrian Colleges and Universities in the Training of Hungarian Specialized Intelligentsia Before and After WWI],” in *Bildungswesen und Sozialstruktur in Mitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Education and social structure in Central Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*, edited by Victor Karády and Wolfgang Mitter (Köln-Wien: Böhlau, 1990), 177-207 (195).

<sup>95</sup> With regard to the numerus clausus in general, Judith Szapor surveyed the volumes of *Egyenlőség* and other Jewish responses between 1920 and 1928 (thus, until the amendment of the numerus clausus). Judith Szapor, “Between Self-Defense and Loyalty Jewish Responses to the Numerus Clausus Law in Hungary, 1920–1928,” *S.I.M.O.N.: Shoah, Intervention, Methods, Documentation* 6, no. 1 (2019): 21-34.

personal tragedies. A brief outlook on a curious antisemitic narrative of emigration and the cadaver affair and a retrospective view from the time of the Shoah is also included.

Contemporary Hungarian journalists – rightly – saw a close connection between student emigration and the Jewish quota at Hungarian universities. Even though enabling talented students to study abroad was part of the educational policy of Kuno Klebelsberg, minister of religion and public education between 1922 and 1931. He aimed at alleviating Hungary’s diplomatic isolation by improving its cultural connections with foreign countries. His strategy to demonstrate an alleged Hungarian cultural superiority over the neighboring states (which greatly benefitted from territorial gains at Hungary’s expense in 1920) served the long-term irredentist aim of convincing the Western great powers to revise the Treaty of Trianon which had dismembered former Greater Hungary.

And yet it was obvious for the press that those who studied abroad due to the support of the “Christian Course” were but a tiny minority of the Hungarian migrant students whose number was approximately fifteen hundred in an average interwar academic year. Furthermore, those in this tiny minority tended to be students of humanities who spent a few months or at most two years abroad to polish their linguistic skills in preparation for a career as high school language teachers in Hungary.<sup>96</sup> Thus, their situation was quite different from the majority of Hungarian students abroad who enrolled in medical faculties and technical colleges.

When politicians were interviewed about Hungarian students abroad, they preferred to conceal the fact that most Hungarians who studied abroad did so out of necessity because they were not admitted to Hungarian universities (thus they were Jewish according to the numerus clausus law). For example, minister Klebelsberg was asked by *Pesti Hírlap* in 1925 whether or not the government would give up the numerus clausus which allegedly harmed the image of

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<sup>96</sup> Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 152.

Hungary abroad. However, the reporter allowed the minister to evade the question by claiming that it was not an appropriate time to discuss it, since the League of Nations was examining the law. Thereby he refused to answer the single most important question of this interview made in Geneva where he travelled exactly because of the League of Nation's numerus clausus related investigation.<sup>97</sup> The same *Pesti Hírlap* – known for its proximity to the government – allowed Pál Teleki, the prime minister at the time of the introduction of the numerus clausus, to elaborate on how wonderful it was for Hungary's diplomatic ties to have many Hungarian students abroad without acknowledging that their presence had to do with the Jewish quota in Hungarian universities.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, even in *Pesti Hírlap*, thirty-three out of forty-one articles published between 1920 and 1938 on Hungarian students abroad outlined a connection between student emigration and numerus clausus. In the conservative *Budapesti Hírlap* this proportion was twelve out of sixteen, in the liberal *Pesti Napló* sixty-five out of sixty-seven and in the social democratic *Népszava* all the thirty-seven relevant articles did so. Most of these articles used the topic of students' emigration to express a criticism against the numerus clausus law.

Such arguments – often supported with personal stories of wandering students – can be divided into five groups. Firstly, the Jewish quota led to counterselection, since Jews went to study to better Western universities while the Christian students stayed behind in Hungary and were left without healthy intellectual competition.<sup>99</sup> The most comprehensive recent monograph on antisemitic policies during the Horthy-era by Krisztián Ungváry also highlights this counterselection as the most important feature of the “intellectual devastation” caused by

<sup>97</sup> Jenő Benda, “Gróf Klebelsberg Kunó kultuszminiszter kultúrpolitikájáról nyilatkozik [Count Kuno Klebelsberg Minister of Religion Speaks about His Cultural Politics],” *Pesti Hírlap*, December 15, 1925, 8.

<sup>98</sup> “Gróf Teleki Pál a magyar diák-diplomácia vezére [Count Pál Teleki -Leader of Hungarian Student-Diplomacy],” *Pesti Hírlap*, December 25, 1925, 41.

<sup>99</sup> For instance: “Nem tanulnak a gyerekek [The Kids Do Not Study],” *Pesti Napló*, November 28, 1925, 4.

the numerus clausus. Thus, we can say that the “counterselection” narrative lives on in the historiography of our days.<sup>100</sup>

The second argument was that the fact that students needed to move abroad to study, harmed Hungary’s image abroad.<sup>101</sup> This argument of shame was mostly emphasized by (Jewish as well as non-Jewish) liberal and left-wing opponents of the law. Various politicians and intellectuals elaborated on it in the *Almanach of Hungarian Jewry*, among others Miksa Fenyő writer wrote a contribution titled “They put the country on shame in front of the world.”<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, a(n anonymous) reader’s letter raised the same complain in the journal *Debreczen*, highlighting the contrast between Hungary which expelled Jews with the numerus clausus with Czechoslovakia where the same Jews went to study because they knew they would not be hurt there. The letter’s author was not unambiguously empathetic with the Jewish students, their point was that the Czechoslovak press exploited the Hungarian numerus clausus and antisemitic violence on Hungarian campuses for anti-Hungarian agitation. They quoted a Czech article from their brother’s letter: “What can we expect from such Barbarians as the Hungarians? And yet they complain that we oppress the nationalities, whereas they cannot suffer the Jews.”<sup>103</sup>

Another often cited harm of the Jewish quota was that a lot of money this emigrating youth would have spent in Hungary, had they not been forced to emigrate for the sake of studies, was now brought out of the country.<sup>104</sup> The same was true for the funds that was raised

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<sup>100</sup> Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer és antiszemitizmusának mérlege. Diszkrimináció és társadalompolitika Magyarországon, 1919-1944*, 115, 142.

<sup>101</sup> For instance “A numerus clausus [The Numerus Clausus],” *Pesti Hírlap*, April 4, 1924, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Miksa Fenyő, “Mészégyenítették az országot a világ előtt [They Shamed the Country in Front of the World],” in *A magyar zsidóság almanachja. Numerus clausus* [The Almanach of Hungarian Jewry. Numerus Clausus], edited by Pál Bethlen (Budapest: A magyar zsidóság almanachja könyvkiadó vállalata, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1940), 28-29.

<sup>103</sup> “A cseh sajtó az egyetemi verekedések hírével a magyar revíziós mozgalom ellen agítál [The Czech Press Agitates Against the Hungarian Revisionist Movement with the News about University Violence],” *Debreczen*, October 24, 1928. Referred to in Kerepeszki, “A numerus clausus 1928. évi módosításának hatása Debreczenben,” 62-63.

<sup>104</sup> For instance “A Wolff-párt és a fajvédők összeütközése a kormánypárttal a numerus clausus miatt [The Clash between the Wolff-Party and the Government over the Numerus Clausus],” *Pesti Napló*, January 30, 1925, 4.

by Jewish individuals and communities to support the emigrating students. As *Egyenlőség* highlighted in 1928, the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* had spent as much money on the support of the emigrating students in the previous eight years, as the establishment of a brand new university would have costed.<sup>105</sup> *Egyenlőség* came up with this calculation in order to argue that the numerus clausus should not only be amended (as the Parliament was preparing), but should be abolished. At the same time, this economy-based argument against the numerus clausus spread in other media as well in the following few years due to the great economic world crisis (1929-1933) when the Hungarian National Bank banned money transfer abroad several times.

Brain-drain was the fourth argument.<sup>106</sup> Similarly to the counterselection-argument, the brain-drain narrative lives on in 21<sup>st</sup> century historiography. Géza Komoróczy, the author of the most recent general history of Jews in Hungary, evaluates the numerus clausus as something that caused harm to Hungary rather than to Jewish youth who emigrated and ended up studying in internationally acclaimed universities.<sup>107</sup> While in the case of the Viennese medical school and the medical faculty of the German University of Prague it is true that numerus clausus exiles ended up with a more prestigious degree than their peers in Hungary, it is not true in the case of numerous small and unknown colleges where they also studied abroad.

Finally, the fifth was a less pragmatic and more sentimental argument: it was cruel to push youth out of the country. Unsurprisingly, it was *Egyenlőség* to argue in this way the most often, however, general dailies published such opinions as well.<sup>108</sup> *Egyenlőség*'s reports

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<sup>105</sup> "A numerus clausus mérlege [The Numerus Clausus on the Scale]," *Egyenlőség*, January 29, 1928, 2.

<sup>106</sup> "Új hősök [New Heroes]," *Népszava*, July 17, 1931, 7. This article referred to the career of Jakab Fürth in America. He achieved pioneering results in research on leukemia. Since 1924 he worked in America, before that he studied in Prague and Vienna. In Hungary not even his medical degree was recognized. Alexander Emed, *Zsidó származású magyar orvosok* [Hungarian Doctors of Jewish Origin], (Budapest: Fapadoskönyv.hu, 2011), 118-123.

<sup>107</sup> Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon*, II. kötet: *1849-től a jelenkorig* [History of the Jews in Hungary. 2<sup>nd</sup> volume: From 1849 to the Present] (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2012), 426.

<sup>108</sup> "A Bécsbe sodort magyar diákok karácsonya [Christmas of Hungarian Students Thrown to Vienna]," *Népszava*, December 30, 1922, 5.

usually highlighted the poverty students suffered in their emigration, resulting in malnutrition and the spreading of tuberculosis among them. Nevertheless, they achieved excellent results in their studies, as these reports always added.<sup>109</sup> Except for those students who fell into severe depression in their exile and eventually took their lives. Two such cases will be detailed later in this chapter. Considering the repetition of the above described arguments in the Hungarian (Jewish as well as non-Jewish) press, such resonance of conclusions made at the expense of the numerus clausus, a central legal measure of the Horthy-regime, by different media organs is worthy of attention due to the limited freedom of press in interwar Hungary.

As it is to be expected, the Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* dedicated much more (over two hundred) articles to the numerus clausus émigrés than the four above presented newspapers in the same period (1920-1938). All the more so, since its editor-in-chief, Lajos Szabolcsi, was the organizer of the 1920 “campaign for the students” in which he used the popularity of his magazine for a large fundraising campaign to support the Hungarian Jewish students who fled from the Hungarian Jewish quota.<sup>110</sup> The historian Miklós Konrád describes *Egyenlőség* as the voice of the assimilated Jewish petit- and mid-bourgeoisie in Hungary. It was also close to the Neolog community leadership and financially connected to the Pest Israelite Community. Nevertheless, it was practically independent from it and it was significantly more influential than *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* which was is more to be considered as the carrier of the official opinions of the Neolog community establishment.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For instance, Simon Hevesi, “A zsidó vallásos eszme ünnepe Bécsben [The Celebration of the Jewish Religious Ideal in Vienna],” *Egyenlőség*, June 2, 1923, 10.

<sup>110</sup> According to Szabolcsi in 1921 *Egyenlőség* was sold in 40000 copies every week. Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 342. The historian Miklós Konrád estimates its readership at 15000 in 1915. It is possible that the due to the dramatic rise of antisemitic politics and violence after WWI Jews’ interest in reading Jewish press grew significantly and hence the readership of *Egyenlőség* too. Miklós Konrád, “A neológ zsidóság útkeresése a századfordulón [Neolog Jewry’s Soul-Searching at the Turn of the Century],” *Századok* 139, no. 6 (2005): 1335-1369 (1365).

<sup>111</sup> Konrád, “A neológ zsidóság útkeresése a századfordulón,” 1345.

It is important to add that other Jewish publications, *Zsidó Szemle* and *Múlt és Jövő* (a Zionist magazine) wrote about the wandering students less often than *Egyenlőség*, however, they also published appeals for donations for their sake.

## II.2. The support mechanism of *numerus clausus* exiles

The originally spontaneous exodus needed to be expanded and consciously organized in order to help a considerable part of the Jewish generation hit by the *numerus clausus* to graduate from university against all odds. Otherwise this escape route would have remained the privilege of those whose families could afford supporting them abroad in times of the post-WWI hyperinflation with paying high fees imposed on foreign students in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Lajos Szabolcsi found a new vocation for his life in the project of saving Jewish youth from the *numerus clausus*. As he put it two decades later:

The youth took the wandering staff. The biggest task of my life stood ahead of me [...]: to use the huge publicity of the magazine [of *Egyenlőség* which he edited] so that I can save the young Hungarian Jewry from the catastrophe of the *numerus clausus*. I envisioned a previously unseen mass movement, so that we can support the Jewish youth who wished to study and we can send them abroad from donations to foreign friendly universities.<sup>112</sup>

Szabolcsi's weekly beyond fundraising collected and published useful information about foreign universities – for this aim Szabolcsi visited numerous German university towns in 1921 – and connected the “wandering students” living abroad with prospective wandering students still in Hungary. By 1922 this coordinating activity outgrew the framework of an editorial board. Hence the support was institutionalized in the form of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* set up by the *Pest Israelite Community*. Importantly, this committee was called *central* because there were a number of local student aid committees in the countryside. The central committee included such emblematic Jewish leaders as Vilmos Vázsonyi former minister of justice (1917), Hungary's very first member of government of the Jewish faith.<sup>113</sup> The central

<sup>112</sup> Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 327.

<sup>113</sup> The very first Hungarian minister of Jewish origin (minister of defense 1910-1917), Samu Hazai, was a convert.

committee worked in the framework of the presidential department of the *Pest Israelite Community*, thus it was directly controlled by the president of the country's largest and most affluent Jewish community.<sup>114</sup>

In the beginning the *Committee* functioned merely as a charitable organization with the mission of supporting as many Jewish students abroad as possible while the numerus clausus would be in effect in Hungary – which was hoped to be a temporary condition. They simply distributed as much money as they managed to raise in a given academic year among all the students who applied for support, without applying meritocratic or social criteria. By 1923 the *Committee* had supported 2440 students in sixty-eight towns in eight different countries.<sup>115</sup>

Students could request financial support through the representatives of the *Committee* in major foreign university towns: Vienna, Brno, Prague, Berlin, Leipzig, Padua, Bologna, Paris. The possibility of providing stipends for tuition fees, exam fees and costs for living from such ad hoc donations was augmented by a large sum donated by the *Association of Savings banks and banks* – a result of lobbying by Béla Alapi, director of a savings bank in downtown Budapest, who was also a member of the *Jewish Student Aid Committee's* presidency.<sup>116</sup> Besides publishing heartbreaking reports on the students' misery abroad, the *Committee* organized charitable cultural events – concerts, theatre performances and tea parties – which were regularly advertised in the non-Jewish press as well.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> According to the census of 1920, in post-Trianon Hungary 46% of Jews (215,512 out of 473,310) lived in the capital and the majority of these were affiliated with the Pest side's community. Ujvári, *Zsidó lexikon*, 554.

<sup>115</sup> Gyula Gábor, "Küzdelmeink a numerus clausus ellen [Our Struggles Against the Numerus Clausus]," *Zsidó Évkönyv* (1927/1928), 150-159. Referred to in Miller, "From White Terror to Red Vienna."

<sup>116</sup> "Tizenötmillió a külföldön tanuló diákoknak [Fifteen Millions for the Students Abroad]," *Egyenlőség*, January 10, 1925, 14. According to an estimation by Tibor Hajdú, these fifteen million Hungarian crowns in 1922 equaled to the living costs of twenty students for a year in Prague when yearly over one thousand Hungarian Jews studied there. Bethlen (Ed.), *A magyar zsidóság almanachja*, 142. This demonstrates that each student received much less financial support than their expenses. Other financial sources students relied on will be detailed later in the present chapter.

<sup>117</sup> See for instance "Hangverseny a külföldön nyomorgó zsidó diákok megsegítésére [Concert to Support the Miserable Jewish Students Abroad]," *Pesti Napló*, November 19, 1924, 12; "Hangverseny diáksegítésre [Concert to Support Students]," *Budapesti Hírlap*, February 7, 1925, 8; "Négy új, sokat ígérő tehetség [Four Young, Promising Talented Artists]," *Pesti Hírlap*, February 17, 1925, 13; "Beküldött hírek [Advertisements]," *Pesti Napló*, November 18, 1924, 13; "Színházak, kabarék és hangversenyek hírei (News about theatres, cabarets and concerts)," *Pesti Napló*, December 14, 1932, 10.

The *Committee*'s leaders entrusted the distribution of the funds to students because they depended on their funding and hence were easy to control. Bernát Balla and János Schlesinger explained this in a letter to the *Pest Israelite Community* in relation to a conflict with the *Association of Friends of Hungarian Students*. The latter group included all Hungarians who studied in France, thus non-Jews as well, in addition to Hungarian diplomats in Paris. In 1934 one of these diplomats tried to convince the *Pest Israelite Community* to distribute its stipends through a person he recommended. The *Jewish Student Aid Committee* protested because they suspected the diplomat intended to use the money donated by Jews for Jewish students to support non-Jewish Hungarian students in France. Therefore, they advised the *Pest Israelite Community* to reject this suggestion.<sup>118</sup>

Due to increasing demands for financial help by students, from 1925 all Neolog *kehillot* (Jewish communities) were supposed to pay regular contributions to the budget of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* (as the *Pest Israelite Community* could not impose its decisions on Orthodox communities).<sup>119</sup> However, in practice the communities did not contribute to the budget proportionately to their financial capabilities or to the number of migrant students from their territory. The resulting tension led to the debate of decentralization in 1927.

The question whether there was at all a need for a *central* student aid committee arose. It was suggested that each community should cope with funding its own members who emigrated to study. While acknowledging the justifiable irritation of communities who

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<sup>118</sup> Külföldi ügyek [Issues Abroad], Hungaricana/ Zsidó Gyűjtemények Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár/ A Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Irodájának iratai/Iktatószámmal rendelkező, iktatókönyvben megtalálható iratok (1880, 1925, 1931-1943)/Iratok iktatószámok szerint/60200-65000/61718 - 1934.2.9. Külföldi ügyek - benyújtás napja: 1934.2.13., módja: dobai Székely Andornak, a Párizsi Magy. Szövetség elnökének Paris [Hungaricana digital collection/Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive/ National Office of Hungarian Israelites/Documents with registration numbers (1880, 1925, 1931-1943)/Documents according to registration number/60200-65000/61718 – February 9, 1934. Issues abroad - issued to Andor Dobai Székely, president of the Hungarian Association of Paris)

[https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi\\_iktatott\\_iratok\\_iktatoszammal\\_es\\_iktakonyvben\\_60200-65000/?pg=160&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi_iktatott_iratok_iktatoszammal_es_iktakonyvben_60200-65000/?pg=160&layout=s) (Downloaded: February 5, 2019) .

<sup>119</sup> Nonetheless it is possible that Orthodox communities also donated money to the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*.

invested more in the committee than what their members benefitted from it, medical student László Roboz argued for the need for a central committee, because otherwise the student aid movement would cease to be a communal cause of Hungarian Jewry. In addition, if local communities would cope with the task in an isolated manner, then affluent communities (like Pest) would give double of the stipend to their students than poor ones and this could divide Hungarian Jewish students abroad who were in reality “martyrs of the same fate”.<sup>120</sup> In the end decentralization did not take place, the coordination of the migrant network of numerus clausus exiles remained centralized.

At the same time, the *Central Committee’s* fundraising activity was not limited to Hungary. They drew the attention of international Jewish aid societies to the numerus clausus exiles. Consequently, the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* supported Hungarian Jewish students with 100 000 francs a month and with providing for a student canteen in Paris.<sup>121</sup> The *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* and the *Jüdische Fürsorge-Zentrale in der Tschechoslowakei* also stepped in. In Vienna students could turn to *Judäa*, an organization that assisted impoverished and malnourished Jewish students. Since *Judäa* was supported besides Jewish aid societies by the ecumenical Christian *European Student Relief*, indirectly numerus clausus exiles were supported by ecumenical Christians as well.<sup>122</sup> Another Christian organization, the *Young Men’s Christian Association* helped numerus clausus exiles in Germany.<sup>123</sup>

In addition, individual philanthropists, some of them also living in emigration, also committed themselves to help the émigré students, such as the banker Alfred Manovill in

<sup>120</sup> László Roboz, “Kell-e a Központi Zsidó Diákbizottság – A diákság kérelme a magyar zsidósághoz [Do We Need the Central Jewish Student Aid Committee? – The Request of the Students to Hungarian Jewry],” *Egyenlőség*, July 23, 1927, 4.

<sup>121</sup> “A magyar zsidók országos gyűlése [The National Assembly of Hungarian Jewry],” *Pesti Hírlap*, March 14, 1929, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Miller, “From White Terror to Red Vienna,” 319-320.

<sup>123</sup> Miller, “Numerus Clausus Exiles: Hungarian Jewish Students in Inter-War Berlin,” in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary*, edited by Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy, 206–18 (210).

Berlin,<sup>124</sup> Elena Jaffe, Hungarian Jewish wife of an Italian professor in Padua<sup>125</sup> and Aladár Kaszab from Budapest. Kaszab was a wealthy factory owner, well known as a philanthropist for founding a hospital in Budapest. In 1928 he was even elected as the president of the Jewish community of Pest. When he died in 1929, the public opinion excitedly expected news about his testament which was reported about by several media. He left 10% of one of his company's revenues to the "university students of the Israelite faith who are forced to study abroad" and added that when there will no longer be a numerus clausus in Hungary, those revenues should cover stipends for any Hungarian student abroad with no regard to their religion.<sup>126</sup> We do not know whether Kaszab was implying that soon there would be no numerus clausus in Hungarian universities, or, on the contrary that it was a utopia for the far future. It is for sure, however, that this was a customary scheme of donations by assimilated Jews who wished to demonstrate that they were not sectarian.

The *Central Student Aid Committee* evaluated the 1928 amendment as a proof that academic antisemitism was a *sine qua non* of the Christian Course and emigration and fundraising would need to continue. While the amendment was being prepared, both governor Miklós Horthy and prime minister István Bethlen made it obvious that they work towards it only due to the international pressure and will only change the form but not the content of anti-Jewish discrimination.<sup>127</sup> It merely changed the method of singling out Jews: instead of a "racial group", the new proxy was the father's profession.<sup>128</sup> This new criteria was impossible to perfectly operationalize, opening hence the road to utterly arbitrary definitions of those liable

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<sup>124</sup> Manovill's biography by Michael L. Miller is forthcoming.

<sup>125</sup> "Elena Jaffe, olasz bujdosók megmentője [Elena Jaffe, Savior of the Wandering Students in Italy]", *Egyenlőség*, December 1, 1923, 2.

<sup>126</sup> "Kaszab Aladár végrendelete [The Last Will of Aladár Kaszab]," *Budapesti Hírlap*, March 20, 1929, 9. And see two articles under the same title on the same day in *Népszava* (p.4.) and in *Pesti Hírlap* (p.6.)

<sup>127</sup> M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 196-197.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 200-202.

to be excluded from the ‘closed number’ (i.e. *numerus clausus*) of students admitted to universities.

On the whole, in the new quota system those applicants were supported to get in the closed number whose fathers had professions in which – due to historical reasons – hardly any Jews worked. Thus, the principle of discrimination was not revoked by the amendment. Gyula Gömbös, a radical right wing politician and future prime minister (1932-1936), was not too greatly exaggerating when he claimed that “the Jews will wish we get back to the old form of the *numerus clausus*”.<sup>129</sup> This statement had something to it, since although the Jewish quota was less strict between 1928 and 1932 than between 1920 and 1928,<sup>130</sup> the new and hypocritical discrimination was clearly not to be abolished (whereas until 1928 there was space for hope that the Jewish quota at universities would be temporary), while the superficial alleviation instigated antisemitic violence on campuses.

Róbert Kerepeszki demonstrated these dynamics using the case study of the antisemitic student riots in Debrecen. The most intense period in this regard was the second semester of the academic year 1927-28 when the amendment of the *numerus clausus* was being debated in the Parliament.<sup>131</sup> The riots continued in the next academic year as well, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1928 a group of 150 “race defender” (“*fajvédő*”) – i.e. antisemitic – students beat up every Jewish (or so perceived) student they came across on the campus. The police was notified, but did not intervene.<sup>132</sup> The Debrecen riots were similarly organized as the Budapest riots, law students went to beat up Jewish students in the medical faculty and medical students in the legal faculty, so that the attacked Jews would not identify their attackers (or with a lower chance). In addition, the rioters did not wear the symbols of their student fraternities so that

<sup>129</sup> MTI Hírkiadás (Hungarian Telegraphic Office’s news), November 18, 1927, 13. Cited by M. Kovács *Törvénytől sújtva*, 196.

<sup>130</sup> M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 205.

<sup>131</sup> Kerepeszki, “A *numerus clausus* módosításának hatása Debrecenben,” 49.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

these organizations would not be regarded as responsible for instigating violence.<sup>133</sup> In the end 121 students of the University of Debrecen (which equaled to 11,8% of the non-Jewish students) faced disciplinary processes.<sup>134</sup> In those days antisemitic students demonstrated in Szeged and Pécs for a stricter numerus clausus as well, but violence did not escalate to the extent it did in Budapest and Debrecen. It is noteworthy that the Calvinist bishop of the ecclesiastical district where Debrecen belonged, Dezső Baltazár, declared that there should be no numerus clausus and that this measure was the original cause of campus violence: “The numerus clausus is the source of all the troubles. It has to be uprooted. If we terminate the cause, the problem will go away.”<sup>135</sup>

Thus, the bishop did not buy the fraternities’ argument that they protested because the numerus clausus was not taken seriously enough and because the Parliament was mitigating it. He argued that the Parliament should not approve a Jewish quota because it makes troublemaker students feel that their demand for discrimination is legitimate and this encourages them to demand for even more discrimination.

A study on campus violence in interwar Hungary by Zsolt Horváth K. is more in line with bishop Baltazár (thus with the argument that the very existence of the numerus clausus perpetuated antisemitic campus violence) than with the historian Róbert Kerepeszki (who argues that it was the mitigation of the numerus clausus that provoked Jew-beating). Horváth K. emphasizes that even before the amendment of the numerus clausus was considered, on certain days rumors spread that “race defenders” would beat up Jews who would dare to enter the campus and thus Jews either did not attend their classes or in fact were abused. This is how

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 59.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 66.

the later well-known psychoanalyst István Székács-Schönberger went through a humiliating and memorably traumatic atrocity as a student in Budapest in 1927.<sup>136</sup>

Liberal and left-wing politicians' demand for the abolishment of the numerus clausus and demands for a stricter Jewish quota by antisemitic student fraternities and the "race defender" party notwithstanding, in 1928 the numerus clausus was amended in a way that enabled somewhat more Jews to enroll in universities than the previous racial quota. Nevertheless, most Jewish applicants were still turned down and thus the exile continued. Hence the mechanism of peregrination and financial aid needed to be maintained in order to train a substantial number of Jewish students at foreign universities, so that the numerus clausus would not achieve its goal to exclude Jews from Hungarian intelligentsia. Hence, the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* needed to turn from a temporary charitable organization into a permanent institution, as the then president of the *Committee*, Ernő Ballagi, argued.<sup>137</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the great economic crisis (1929-1933) hit Hungary, therefore fundraising became more difficult than ever. The *Committee* renewed its fundraising methods. Throughout the 1920s the most common form of fundraising was the organization of public charitable events, usually concerts or exhibitions and afternoon tea parties (with entrance fee) hosted by Jewish public figures' wives and a yearly large tea party in the prestigious Bristol Hotel in Budapest. In the 1930s, however, they tried to expand the circle of donors emphasizing that no contribution was too small to the great cause. In addition, less high-profile ladies were also called upon to host private tea parties and to donate the entrance fees to the *Student Aid Committee*.

<sup>136</sup> Horváth K., "Egyetemi erőszak és a *Bildung* eszménye," 140.

<sup>137</sup> Ernő Ballagi, "Harc a numerus clausus ellen [Fighting the Numerus Clausus]," *Egyenlőség*, November 26, 1927, 15.

Women were from the beginning regarded as more eager to take care of pauper students than men, while the students were almost always referred to as “our sons”. Women were indeed a small minority (10%) of the numerus clausus émigrés.<sup>138</sup> At the same time a “Ladies’ Committee” was founded within the *Central Committee* by the wives of the latter’s leaders in 1926. Rabbi Simon Hevesi complained about decreasing donations already in the founding meeting of the *Ladies’ Committee* and expressed his hope that the ladies would find better ways to rekindle solidarity and donations than the male members.<sup>139</sup> The presidency of the central committee, however, remained in the hands of men.

Before the great economic world crisis, the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* supported up to seven hundred students abroad, in 1929 they helped five hundred students.<sup>140</sup> Between 1920 and 1937, at an average, one thousand three hundred and ten Hungarians studied abroad, whose four fifths, thus one thousand and forty-eight, were Jewish.<sup>141</sup> This shows that a considerable part of the numerus clausus émigrés were supported by the *Committee*, however, approximately three hundred and fifty students per year studied abroad without it. Some left-wing opponents of the numerus clausus claimed that the numerus clausus made little sense since wealthy Jews evaded it anyway by studying abroad, as the prominent social democratic politician Anna Kéthly argued in the parliamentary debate of the 1928 numerus clausus amendment.<sup>142</sup> Another prominent Social Democrat, Károly Peyser, four years later said that

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<sup>138</sup> The data regarding Hungarian student population abroad are based on my sample collected in archival research in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna. The next chapter of this dissertation elaborates on the details of students’ data that I collected.

<sup>139</sup> “Az Országos Diáksegítő Hölgybizottság első alakul ülése [The First Founding Meeting of the Countrywide Student Aid Committee of Ladies],” *Egyenlőség*, February 20, 1926, 12.

<sup>140</sup> “Báró Kohner Willy felel a Névtelen Diák levelére [Count Willy Kohner Responds to the Letter by the Anonymous Student],” *Egyenlőség*, September 21, 1929, 2.

<sup>141</sup> For the number of Hungarian students abroad in different academic years see: A. Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon,” 897. and the volumes of the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* [Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek] between 1920 and 1938. Although these calculations by state authorities are probably imprecise, since they had to rely on data received from foreign universities over which they had no control.

<sup>142</sup> “A numerus clausus revíziós vitája [The Debate on the Revision of the Numerus Clausus],” *Népszava*, February 11, 1928, 5.

the numerus clausus was a discrimination targeting poor Jews and repeated Kéthly's point about rich Jews easily circumventing discrimination. The argument that the poorer one is, the harder it is to move abroad is sensible, however, these politicians were not interested in actual information on the wandering students' socio-economic background. Peyer, in addition, continued his remarks in the Parliament with stating that the rich Jews even deserved antisemitism because of "their collusion with the government against the poor workers".<sup>143</sup>

The press, however, usually emphasized the poverty of the migrant students, the so called "student misery" ("diáknyomor"). *Népszava* published a letter by a numerus clausus refugee described by the editor as a Socialist, in which the student claimed that only 10-15% of the migrant students were well-off, while their great majority struggled "with the greatest misery".<sup>144</sup> Unfortunately the author of this letter did not substantiate his estimation with any reference besides his own intuition. But we do know that students took up a wide range of jobs to carve out a material basis for their life abroad while studying. In addition, the columns of *Egyenlőség* detailed the availability of student jobs in different foreign towns as much as information on study opportunities abroad.<sup>145</sup>

In the Weimar Republic Hungarian Jewish students worked as waiters in cafés, as *masgiach* in cow barns,<sup>146</sup> as street vendors of pastry, as carriers of luggage in train stations, temporary postmen in the Christmas period, as violinists in cinemas,<sup>147</sup> saxophone players in

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<sup>143</sup> *Képviselőházi napló* [House of representatives records], Session 119 (October 12, 1932), 96; *Képviselőházi napló* [House of representatives records], Session 123 (November 8, 1932), 205. Referred to by Klein, "Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the Inter-War Period," 93.

<sup>144</sup> "A „mi fiaink” és a mi fiaink [“Our Sons” and Our Sons],” *Népszava*, February 15, 1928, 5.

<sup>145</sup> As an example see Miklós Langer, "A magyar zsidóság Golusz-regénye: Nápoly [The Galut-Saga of Hungarian Jewry: Naples]", *Egyenlőség*, July 18, 1925, 7-8. "Gólusz" is the Yiddish version (spelled in a Hungarian way) of the Hebrew word "galut" which is a homonym meaning exile and diaspora at the same time.

<sup>146</sup> Masgiach (Hebrew) is a supervisor of *Kashrut*, the religious Jewish dietary regulation.

<sup>147</sup> Mute films' screenings were accompanied with live music.

bars, also worked in gas stations<sup>148</sup> and as extras in cinema production.<sup>149</sup> In Czechoslovakia and Austria we know about students earning money by preparing fellow students for difficult exams.<sup>150</sup> Whereas Italy was notorious for the lack of jobs compatible with studies.<sup>151</sup>

The economic crisis did not only bring financial difficulties, but a legal one as well. In 1931 and 1932 the Hungarian National Bank several times banned the transfer of foreign currency. The *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* tried to capitalize on this and assume a new function as a lobbying body to pressure the National Bank, as now even well-to-do parents who funded the studies of their children abroad by themselves, turned to the *Committee* for legal help. In the end, however, it was the president of the *Pest Israelite Community*, Samu Stern, and not the *Student Aid Committee*, who achieved the lift of this ban in November 1932. The *Committee's* presidency nevertheless used this occasion to scold those wealthy parents who in the previous twelve years had ignored the *Committee* and had not contributed to the effort of enabling poor Jewish youth to study abroad but only took care of their own children. Emigration was not a problem to solve on the individual and family level, but it was a common cause of Hungarian Jewry as a whole, the *Committee* claimed.<sup>152</sup>

The *Committee* was mostly ignored by politicians (except for Jewish ones) hence it was not an efficient lobbying body, but it was indeed not merely a charitable organization. They gathered information on universities abroad, living circumstances in different countries and connected prospective migrant students with those already abroad. As Michael L. Miller noted, “for many of the Hungarian Jewish students in Vienna, moral support from their native land

<sup>148</sup> “Magyar zsidó fiúk Berlin üvöltő káoszában [Hungarian Jewish Youngsters in Chaotic Berlin],” *Egyenlőség*, March 12, 1932, 5-6.

<sup>149</sup> For example, for *Fridericus Rex* (1922), the Hungarian producer Arzén Cserépy hired many of them. Miller, “Numerus clausus exiles”, 211.

<sup>150</sup> Arthur Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal. Ifjúságom Magyarországon* [Fighting the Third Death. My Youth in Hungary] (Budapest: Magvető, 1990), 350.; László Farádi, *Diagnózis az életemről* [A Diagnosis of My Life], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), 67-68.

<sup>151</sup> Langer, “A magyar zsidóság Golusz-regénye: Nápoly”.

<sup>152</sup> “Bujdosó fiaink [Our Wandering Sons],” *Egyenlőség*, November 19, 1932, 3.

was almost as important as financial support”<sup>153</sup> which was true for their fellow Hungarian Jewish students everywhere. The *Central Committee* connected the numerous Hungarian Jewish student colonies of Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, France, Switzerland and Belgium and even successfully framed the students’ emigration as a community of fate under the terms “wandering students” and “*numerus clausus exiles*”.

### II.3. How to work in Hungary with foreign degrees

Albeit often under hard economic circumstances, thousands of Hungarian Jews graduated from universities abroad in the first decade of the *numerus clausus*.<sup>154</sup> Thus, they were ultimately not excluded from *higher education* and from the *liberal professions*. Nevertheless, it was still possible to exclude them from the *Hungarian* labor market of the intellectual professions by not accepting their foreign degrees. As medical student Arthur Links put it, “in Germany my degree was not accepted because I was a foreigner, and in Hungary it was not accepted because the degree was foreign.”<sup>155</sup>

Understandably, the Jewish press dedicated attention to the issue of the foreign degrees’ recognition only inasmuch it was connected to *numerus clausus émigrés* who tried to use their degrees in Hungary. Noteworthy that already before the *numerus clausus*, foreign degrees in Hungary were only recognized if a Hungarian university “*nostrified*” (in Hungarian “*nosztrifikálta*” or “*honosította*”) them. Nostrification is a very rare term in English, defined as the action or process of recognizing foreign degrees. It goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin

<sup>153</sup> Miller “From White Terror to Red Vienna,” 318.

<sup>154</sup> “Százkét magyar zsidó diplomáját nosztrifikálták tizenkét év alatt [During Twelve Years One Hundred and Two Jews Had Their Degrees Nostrified]”, *Egyenlőség*, July 29, 1933, 15. The article points out that three thousand students supported by the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* graduated abroad between 1920 and 1932 and as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, each year approximately three hundred and fifty Jews studied abroad without the *Committee*’s stipend.

<sup>155</sup> Links, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 379.

term “*nostrificatio*” constructed from the pronoun *noster* (“ours”) and the verb *facere* (to make).<sup>156</sup>

Interestingly, the process of foreign degrees’ recognition remained in the hands of universities to be judged on a case-by-case basis even after the introduction of the *numerus clausus*. This is counterintuitive, since the *numerus clausus* made universities more subordinated to the Ministry for Religion and Public Education than they had been before, since now the Minister defined the number of admissible students and the law imposed a Jewish quota on the universities. Although opposition to this was not negligible in Hungarian academia, but still, the *numerus clausus* law among other things harmed university autonomy. And yet, with regard to the connected issue of which foreign degrees to accept, universities remained free.

The main reason for this was that the beginning of the *numerus clausus* era and of post-Trianon Hungary coincided in time (1920) and were interconnected, as it was argued in the first chapter. Due to the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost two thirds of its territory thus in fact most of former Hungary from now counted as “abroad”. As a consequence, the Hungarian population of the lost territories became citizens of Romania, Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The intellectuals among them needed the new states to recognize their university degrees earned at formerly Hungarian universities and the Hungarian state had to help them in order to decrease the intellectuals’ immigration to post-Trianon Hungary’s shrunk labor market. Since achieving the neighboring states’ benevolence in this regard was Hungary’s interest, the Hungarian state could not refuse recognizing those states’ degrees.

This, however, became an intricate issue, mostly with regard to Czechoslovakia. During the 1920s this country’s universities turned out to be incomparably more welcoming vis-à-vis

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<sup>156</sup> Oxford Living Dictionaries <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nostrificatio> (Last accessed: February 8, 2019).

Jewish (native as well as foreign) students than the institutions of any other country in Eastern Europe and Central Europe. This was very well known in Hungary as well, and hundreds of numerous *clausus exiles* studied in Prague as well as Brno each year.<sup>157</sup> Thus, recognizing Czechoslovak degrees so that Czechoslovakia would recognize the Hungarian degrees of its Hungarian minority, would have enabled thousands of Hungarian Jews to have their degrees recognized in Hungary. This would have defeated the purpose of the Jewish quota in Hungarian higher education. Consequently, it was ultimately easier to leave the issue of nostrification for the universities to judge. In addition, none of the neighboring countries showed willingness for a mutual recognition of university degrees.

Such complexities notwithstanding, the editorial board of *Egyenlőség* was keen on presenting the difficulties of the foreign degrees' nostrification in the sole framework of antisemitic discrimination. This narrative bias had to do with the agenda of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* which was most lucidly expressed by Willy Kohner when he became its president: "we are not only faithful Jews, but at the same time – and first of all – faithful citizens of the homeland who truly feel Hungarian".<sup>158</sup> As a consequence, their ideal stipendee was a Hungarian patriot who would return to the home country upon graduating abroad and be a good professional and a good citizen, thereby proving that the *numerus clausus* was a mistake, a measure that Hungarian Jewry did not deserve. And indeed, many émigré students regarded their emigration as temporary and attempted to find a job in Hungary. Many of them regularly displayed Hungarian patriotism even while studying abroad. For instance, the *Federation of Hungarian Jewish Students Living in Italy (Olaszországban Élő Magyar Zsidó Egyetemi Hallgatók Szövetsége)* published the following memorandum in 1923:

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<sup>157</sup> Bethlen, *A magyar zsidóság almanachja*, 142.

<sup>158</sup> "Mi nemcsak hithű zsidók, de egyúttal – és elsősorban – a hazának hű polgárai és igaz érzésű magyarok vagyunk." "Új harc a *numerus clausus* ellen [New Struggle Against the *Numerus Clausus*]," *Egyenlőség*, May 25, 1929, 1.

We are proud to be Hungarian and Jewish. We promise to you that we work and will keep on working towards proving with our sincere thoughts that we are indeed Hungarian, Hungarian patriots who lay all the science, experience and noble traits and feelings gained in the Western countries on the altar of the homeland.<sup>159</sup>

However, it was not until the middle of the 1920s that the “wandering” students’ willingness to return to Hungary would be tested. This was the time when the first cohort of *numerus clausus* émigrés graduated abroad. *Egyenlőség* claimed that in 1926 masses of émigré students returned and submitted requests to the Ministry for Religion and Public Education to have their foreign degrees recognized.<sup>160</sup> However, an overview of the documents of the Ministry does not show a great number of documents related to foreign degree nostrification.<sup>161</sup>

The nostrification of medical degrees attracted the most attention for two main reasons. Medicine was a more strictly regulated profession than engineering, arts and humanities. It was also one of the fields where Jews were present in the highest proportion (besides among lawyers).<sup>162</sup> And finally, most migrant students studied medicine abroad. The nostrification of medical degrees was already regulated five decades earlier by “Law 1876:XIV on public health”. The 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of its first part stated that only such doctors were entitled to medical practice in Hungary who held a medical degree granted by a university in the territory of the country. The next paragraph allowed holders of medical degrees from abroad to work as doctors in Hungary only through the nostrification of their degrees – if there were no

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<sup>159</sup> “Büszkék vagyunk arra, hogy magyarok vagyunk, hogy zsidók vagyunk. Ígérjük nektek, hogy mi igyekszünk és igyekezni fogunk, őszinte gondolkodásunkkal bebizonyítani majd, hogy mi magyarok vagyunk, magyar hazafiak, akik a nyugati országokban elsajátított tudományt, tapasztalatot, minden nemes tulajdonságot és érzést a magyar haza oltárára ajánljuk és szenteljük.” “Elena Jaffe, olasz bujdosók megmentője”.

<sup>160</sup> “A kormány a numerus clausus enyhítésére készül [The Government Is Preparing the Mitigation of the Numerus Clausus],” *Pesti Napló*, July 2, 1926, 1.

<sup>161</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Hungarian National Archives (from now on abbreviated as MNL) / Vallás és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium – Ministry for Religion and Public Education (From now on abbreviated as VKM)/ K 636 Egyetemek, főiskolák, tudományos intézetek 1919-1944 [Universities, Colleges, Scientific Institutions, 1919-1944]/ Több egyetemet érintő oklevélhonosítási ügyek [Issues of Degree Nostrification Concerning More Universities]/ 941-942.

<sup>162</sup> Klein, “Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the Inter-War Period,” 81.

international contracts regulating the matter otherwise.<sup>163</sup> Endorsement of this fifty years old practice was not smooth in the 1920s. In practice, holders of foreign degrees needed to turn to medical faculties in Hungary which defined separately for each individual case under what conditions they would recognize the degree as equivalent to their own degrees – taking exams in certain subjects for instance (which involved paying exam fees). The process was the same in other study fields as well. According to Victor Karády’s estimation, only every fourth Jewish student who graduated in engineering abroad, had their degree nostrified by the Technical University of Budapest.<sup>164</sup> It is to be noted, however, that engineering was less strictly controlled by the state than the medical profession.

However enthusiastic a repatriating wandering student may have been to work in Hungary, it was not easy for them to have their foreign degrees recognized. Had it been easy to nostrify foreign degrees, what sense would have made the Jewish quota in Hungarian academia? Some politicians, including József Pakots, a parliamentary representative of the National Democratic Party,<sup>165</sup> believed that Hungary could not afford not recognizing foreign degrees, since this would have damaged diplomatic relations which Klebelsberg’s cultural politics sought to improve.<sup>166</sup> However, Klebelsberg’s reasoning was not that one-dimensional. He was more concerned with the anger of antisemitic youth within Hungary – who protested against the recognition of foreign degrees since those usually belonged to Jews – than with foreign universities’ irritation. The issue of foreign degrees’ naturalization remained one of the

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<sup>163</sup> 1876:XIV.tc. a közegészségügy rendezéséről I. rész/ VI. fej. Az orvosi gyakorlat [Law 1876: XIV on Public Health Part I/Chapter VI. Medical Practice] <http://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=87600014.TV>. (Last accessed: July 31, 2018).

<sup>164</sup> Victor Karády, “Egyetemi antiszemizmus és értelmiségi kényszerpályák,” 26.

<sup>165</sup> Unlike the Polish party with the same name (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne-Narodowe) founded by the famously antisemitic Polish nationalist Roman Dmowski (and in 1919 transformed into the Popular National Union), the Hungarian National Democratic Party was on the left wing of liberalism.

<sup>166</sup> “A numerus clausust az élet már nullifikálta [The Numerus Clausus Has Been Nullified by Reality],” *Pesti Napló*, February 17, 1928, 6.

central concerns of student fraternities throughout the Horthy-era together with the strict application of the numerus clausus.<sup>167</sup>

As a consequence, in 1928 the Ministry for Religion and Public Education ordered the universities to apply a unified practice of nostrification in an explicitly antisemitic manner by declaring that “those who enrolled in foreign universities with the aim of evading the numerus clausus, have to enroll in a Hungarian university for four semesters”.<sup>168</sup> Since applicants for nostrification had to submit besides their foreign university degrees their birth certificates and secondary school degrees as well, it was easy to establish the religion of the candidate. This new rule was discriminatory in itself. At the same time, there was a possibility for universities to build more or less anti-Jewish bias in their process depending on the administrators’ intentions, since the Ministry did not explicitly order them to impose the 6% Jewish quota on applicants who wanted to enroll only for four semesters because they already had a university degree from abroad, while it was obligatory to impose this quota on first year applicants. Within the Ministry there was a recommendation to explicitly rule that “the population proportions” should be projected on the foreign degrees as well, thus only 6% of nostrified foreign degree holders should be Jewish. However, taking this into account in the end was not made compulsory.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, the new 1928 regulation did not put an end to arbitrariness involved in nostrification. The new precondition of enrollment in a Hungarian university for four semesters was harmful for Jewish students, since it prolonged their study period, delayed their potential employment and came with the obligation of paying enrollment and exam fees for two years.

*Egyenlőség* reported in 1933 that between 1920 and 1932 three thousand Jews graduated

<sup>167</sup> Klein, “Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the Inter-War Period,” 85.

<sup>168</sup> MNL/VKM/K636/568. Referred by Zsuzsanna Orosz, “A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között,” 229.

<sup>169</sup> MNL/VKM/K636/568.

abroad with the support of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* and yet only one hundred and two of them had their degrees nostrified in Hungary.<sup>170</sup> A statistics on university students in Hungary claims that one hundred and two Jews got their degrees nostrified between 1920 and 1930 and thus half of the degrees nostrified in that decade belonged to Jews.<sup>171</sup>

The historian Zsuzsanna Orosz in her study referred to earlier concludes from the fact that half of nostrified foreign degree holders were Jews as opposed to the 6% of university students in Hungary (theoretically) that “in this realm the discriminatory intention did not materialize”.<sup>172</sup> Since four out of five Hungarian students abroad were Jews, one in two among those who managed to nostrify their degrees in Hungary does not mean that there was no antisemitic bias at play. To be sure, it was not the only factor involved.

The regulation of nostrification caused headache for clerks in the Ministry for Religion and Public Education and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs throughout the interwar period, since Trianon and the *numerus clausus* launched opposite dynamics that worked simultaneously. Professionals who were ethnic Hungarians and now citizens of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia could only work in liberal professions if the new states recognized the university degrees they had earned at Hungarian universities.<sup>173</sup> Since nostrification of degrees worked on a case-by-case basis, there was space for ethnic-based discrimination against them. Therefore, it was Hungary’s interest to push for contracts of mutual automatic recognition of degrees with these countries. It was all the more important for Hungary to achieve that ethnic Hungarian intellectuals living in the neighboring countries could practice their profession there, because those unemployed tended to immigrate to

<sup>170</sup> “Százkét magyar zsidó diplomáját nosztrifikálták tizenkét év alatt.”

<sup>171</sup> Gyula Janik, *A magyar főiskolai hallgatók statisztikája az 1931/32. tanévben* [The Statistics of Hungarian University Students in 1931/32], (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal [Hungarian Royal Central Statistical Office], 1933), 42.

<sup>172</sup> Orosz, “A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között,” 232.

<sup>173</sup> We must keep in mind that the universities of Pécs and Szeged operated in Bratislava and in Cluj respectively before 1920. (Albeit in Bratislava only the faculty of law and it granted a small number of degrees before 1919.)

Hungary and thereby increase competition over scarce resources (intellectual jobs) on the Hungarian labor market. Hungary thus initiated negotiations towards mutual recognition of university degrees in 1924, but none of the neighboring countries reacted positively.

At the same time Hungary's interests were also ambiguous, since such contracts would have forced Hungary to recognize the Czechoslovak degrees earned by *numerus clausus* exiles. Was it worth it to recognize the Prague and Brno degrees of Hungarian Jews in exchange for Hungarians being able to use their Hungarian degrees in Czechoslovakia and Romania?<sup>174</sup> This was the dilemma that fueled a great number of Hungarian investigations about how nostrification worked in theory and in practice in the neighboring countries which are helpful for the historian but did not lead to a solution the Ministry clerks wished for.<sup>175</sup>

The 1928 regulation of nostrification in Hungary helped to hinder *numerus clausus* émigrés in “sneaking into” Hungary's labor market, but there was still no solution for the ethnic Hungarians' problem in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. Ministry clerks called for a unified regulation of nostrification even in 1935, referring to Hungarian universities' requests in this direction.<sup>176</sup> To be sure, the main hindrance to an overarching and transparent regulation of the matter was the neighbor states' steady refusal of mutual recognition of degrees. Romania in fact used the plight of Hungarian Jewish *numerus clausus* exiles as a justification of its refusal.<sup>177</sup> If Hungary discriminates against its own citizens based on their religion in the process of nostrification, then why should Romania automatically recognize Hungarian

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<sup>174</sup> On the complex relationship of the Hungarian minorities of Romania and Czechoslovakia with the Hungarian state see Gábor Egry, *Etnicitás, identitás, politika - Magyar kisebbségek nacionalizmus és regionalizmus között Romániában és Csehszlovákiában 1918-1944* [Ethnicity, Identity, Politics - Hungarian Minorities Between Nationalism and Regionalism in Romania and Czechoslovakia, 1918-1944] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2015).

<sup>175</sup> MNL/VKM/K636/IV./20-69/ Átirat a külügyminiszterhez a külföldi államok nosztrifikálási eljárása ügyében [Memorandum to the Minister of Foreign Affairs with Regard to Foreign Countries' Regulation of Nostrification] – September 29, 1932.

<sup>176</sup> MNL/VKM/K636/IV/20-69/Külföldi oklevelek honosításánál követendő egységes eljárás szabályozása [Regulation of Unified Process of Naturalizing Foreign Degrees] – February 5, 1935.

<sup>177</sup> MNL/VKM/K636/IV/20-69/ Elvi állásfoglalás az utódállamok oklevél-nosztrifikálása ügyben [Resolution Regarding the Successor States' Nostrification Issue]. By “successor states” the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia) were meant.

universities' degrees? Besides being a bad argument, as Romania also discriminated against its *own* citizens based on their (Hungarian) ethnicity, this was also a cynical one since thousands of Romanian Jews were studying abroad in this period for the same reason as Hungarian Jews: they were not allowed to enroll in universities in their home country due to antisemitic discrimination manifested in (unofficial) restrictive quotas.<sup>178</sup>

Concluding the matter of nostrification, it is safe to say that *Egyenlőség* reported on it one-dimensionally and without even alluding to the larger and more complicated context of it. More surprisingly, *Egyenlőség* did not write about Polish and Romanian Jewish students either who studied in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Western Europe for the same reason as Hungarian Jewish youth. During the nearly two decades when the plight of Hungarian numerus clausus exiles was a central topic on the columns of *Egyenlőség*, the Polish equivalent of the *Jewish Student Aid Committee*, the *Auxiliarium Judaicum*, was not mentioned.

Most of the Hungarian numerus clausus émigrés – probably due to the hassles involved in foreign degrees' nostrification – a symptom of the antisemitic atmosphere of academia in Hungary, settled abroad. Even the *Jewish Student Aid Committee* admitted this fact that contradicted their agenda and the general press reported on it as well.<sup>179</sup> This was especially the case before Hitler's rise to power when antisemitism and xenophobia were not institutionalized in Western and Central Europe to the extent to disable Jews from working and settling where they graduated even if they were foreigners there.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Even though unlike Hungary, Romania did not have a law about the Jewish quota, Jews suffered severe discrimination in the application process and faced a lot of violence in university campuses. Lucian Nastasă, "Anti-Semitism at Universities in Romania (1919-1939)," in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary*, edited by Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy, 219–43; Felicia Waldman, "A numerus clausus rögeszméje a 20. századi Romániában és az ezzel kapcsolatos törvényhozás [The Obsession with Numerus Clausus in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Romania and the Connected Legislation]," in *Jogfosztás – 90 éve*, edited by Judit Molnár, 327–44.

<sup>179</sup> "A magyar zsidók országos gyűlése".

<sup>180</sup> Although there were impediments to establish medical practice for foreign citizens in Germany even at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 379.

#### II.4. Negotiating Jewish solidarity and Hungarian patriotism

Besides the already detailed questions of what “wandering students” lived on and how they could nostrify their degrees in Hungary, their Hungarian and Jewish identities were also among topics frequently discussed in interwar Hungarian press. *Pesti Hírlap* reported on the assembly of Hungarian Jewish communities in 1929 where Lajos Szabolcsi pointed out that a Hungarian Jew, Elek Nyitrai, became a lawyer in Paris with a dissertation on the injustice of the Peace Treaty of Trianon.<sup>181</sup> *Pesti Napló* dedicated a whole article to Elek Nyitrai, pointing out how much he suffered from poverty during his studies, while he carved out an existence by working as a tinsmith, a baker, a bar pianist, a waiter and in several other jobs.<sup>182</sup>

On this note, a contemporary treatment of the subject of Hungarian numerus clausus exiles fighting Trianon by the great Romanian author Mihail Sebastian is worth to cite. His autobiographically inspired novel “*For two thousand years*” tells an episode with the same story as that of Elek Nyitrai, from a Romanian Jewish perspective. The protagonist and narrator of the novel, a Romanian Jew, listens to a legal seminar in Paris where Pierre Dogany, a Hungarian Jewish student, argues for the injustice of the Peace Treaty of Trianon and the Romanian Jewish student, Saul Berger, praises it for doing justice to Romania. Dogany is presented earlier in the novel as a numerus clausus refugee. He is a Transylvanian Hungarian Jew who wanted to live and study in Hungary at all cost, but after his difficult enrolment and having been physically abused and humiliated in the University of Budapest, went to study in Paris. About Saul Berger we do not know precisely if he is an exile of Romanian academic antisemitism, but we are made to suppose so. And yet these two Jews when meeting in Paris

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<sup>181</sup> “A magyar zsidók országos gyűlése.”

<sup>182</sup> “Párizsi ügyvéd lett egy numerus claususos magyar diák [A Numerus Clausus Student Became a Lawyer in Paris],” *Pesti Napló*, February 10, 1929, 11.

do not identify with each other, but with their nation states and argue against each other. The protagonist finds this sadly ridiculous.<sup>183</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Zionist *Zsidó Szemle* (“*Jewish Review*”) focused on the Jewish nationalist rather than Hungarian patriotic merits of Hungarian Jewish students abroad. For example, it praised students in Italy for taking an active role in the Italian chapters of various Zionist organizations: *Libanonia*, *Hebronia* and *Makkabi*. Moreover, the “awakening” of Jewish national consciousness was interpreted as a positive consequence of the numerous *clausus* and the exile caused by it. László Mózes (head of the Padua chapter of *Libanonia*) and László Roboz in a meeting of several Zionist organizations in Italy

established with bitter joy that the numerous *clausus* had to happen to make Hungarian Jewish youth trapped in the marsh of assimilation finally find itself and find self-consciousness.<sup>184</sup>

László Roboz, here featured in *Zsidó Szemle* as a Zionist rhetor, is identical to the student who would a few months later intervene in the decentralization debate of the *Student Aid Committee* in the emphatically assimilationist *Egyenlőség*, as we have seen earlier in this chapter. The curious fact of someone who called assimilation a “marsh” in March 1927 and then published an article to an assimilationist magazine in July of the same year is a warning to the historian that the assimilationist and the Zionist “camps” were not hermetically secluded, but there were overlaps. In addition, students pragmatically kept in contact with the *Student Aid Committee* of Neolog Jewry even if they did not necessarily think their emigration was a tragedy as the *Committee* claimed.

The exile in Italy could be seen by Zionists as a possibility for Jewish national awakening due to the presence of Polish and Romanian Jewish students. Each academic year hundreds of them enrolled in Italian universities due to Fascist Italian academia’s effort to draw

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<sup>183</sup> Mihail Sebastian, *For Two Thousand Years* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2016) Translated by Philip Ó Ceallaigh. The original novel (*De două mii de ani*) was published in 1934.

<sup>184</sup> “Olaszországi levél [Letter from Italy]”, *Zsidó Szemle*, March 1, 1927, 11.

in international students and the lack of antisemitic discrimination there (until 1938).<sup>185</sup> In the narrative of *Zsidó Szemle*, these fellow Jews from Poland and Romania led the Hungarian peers back to their Jewish roots and thereby liberated them from the false consciousness of assimilation in which they grew up in Hungary. This interpretation – also familiar from Arthur Koestler’s autobiographies<sup>186</sup> – has a touch of exoticization of the “Ostjuden” (Eastern Jews) as authentic and pure Jews versus assimilated and thus “corrupted” Hungarian Jews. This outlook was characteristic of Zionism elsewhere as well.<sup>187</sup>

Such a Zionist narrative functioned as a counter-narrative to the “lachrymose” exile-narrative of *Egyenlőség* and the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*. The term “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” coined by Salo Wittmayer Baron means a disposition to “view the destinies of the Jews in the Diaspora as a sheer succession of miseries and persecutions”.<sup>188</sup> Baron pointed out that it was a shared feature of anti-nationalist Reform Jews and Zionists to view pre-emancipation Jewish history so negatively, with the difference that according to Reform Jews emancipation put a happy end to the dark age of the ghettos, while according to Zionists, Jews were still living in a dark age because they were still in the diaspora and not on their own soil.

Yet, when we focus on Hungary, we must notice that assimilated Jews – who in denominational terms belonged to the special local variant of Reform Judaism, Neology – looked at their own present starting with the disastrous end of the Great War as a dark age of

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<sup>185</sup> Poles were the largest group, followed by Romanians and then Hungarians within the larger group of East Central European students in Italian universities. For example, in 1931-32 altogether 786 Polish, Romanian and Hungarian students were enrolled in Italy. This equaled to the student population of a small Italian university at the time. Signori, “Una ‘peregrinatio academica’ in età contemporanea. Gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre,” 144.

<sup>186</sup> Arthur Koestler’s similar experience in Vienna will be detailed in Chapter IV which is based on ego documents.

<sup>187</sup> The German Zionist scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem described this phenomenon in his memoir as “a cult of Eastern Jews among the Zionists”. Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012), 44.

<sup>188</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), Vol. 2, 31.

de-emancipation<sup>189</sup> that followed a glorious age of emancipation, while Zionists tended to see a reconfirmation of their own views in everything that pointed to the failure of assimilation. Thus, in our context, Baron's term fits the assimilated Jewish intellectuals' discourse on the numerous *clausus* and its consequences including student emigration, while it does not fit Hungarian Zionist discourse on the same topics.

Both assimilationist and Zionist Hungarian Jewish narratives called the experience of the migrant students an exile, albeit an exile from different homelands. In the interpretation of assimilated Jews, the homeland of Hungarian Jews was Hungary, from a Zionist perspective the homeland of all Jews was the Land of Israel. At least according to the stream promoted by *Zsidó Szemle*. Another Zionist journal, *Múlt és Jövő*, represented a different stance towards Hungary. Namely that for assimilated Hungarian Jews, Hungary was the home country, the Jewish home in Palestine was needed by "Ostjuden" rather than by Hungarian Jews.

In the discourse put forward by *Zsidó Szemle*, however, all the diaspora – the Hebrew term "galut" is a homonym meaning both diaspora and exile – was regarded as exile from the homeland. Yet, in the case of wandering students, being exiled from one exile (Hungary) to another (abroad within the Diaspora) brought Jewish youth somewhat closer to where they belonged, in a spiritual sense through the national awakening resulting from an encounter with East European Jews.

One of the Zionist Hungarian students, Ernő Feldmár, in the abovementioned Zionist student gathering in Italy indeed called for a physical return to the Palestinian homeland to study at the newly established (1925) Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Although in the first years it only functioned as a research university and teaching had not started yet, he argued that it would be the only real alma mater ("nurturing mother") for the thousands of European Jews

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<sup>189</sup> Miron, *Waning of Emancipation*, 157. As Miron points out, there was a cyclical version of this narrative which included an expectation for the return of emancipation. Ibid. 168.

who are excluded from universities in their supposed home countries.<sup>190</sup> Noteworthy that Hungarian Jewish scientists, including numerous *clausus* exiles, indeed played an important role in the history of the Hebrew University which will be elaborated in the fifth chapter which will focus on career and life trajectories after their studies.

### II.5. Personal tragedies in the communal exile

As we have seen, the students often wrote in Hungarian journals on behalf of a community (“martyrs of the same fate” with the words of László Roboz) and journalists also treated them as members of a special generational community of fate. Yet, for the sake of instigating empathy for this community, it was important to tell individual stories. Poverty and distance from home took its toll on some students’ physical and mental health. Their physical health sometimes deteriorated to the point of mortal diseases and their mental health sometimes suffered so much that it led to suicide.

Sándor Engel’s ulcer leading to his lethal operation in Strasbourg was attributed by his friends to the misery they lived in. In their necrology they emphasized Engel’s excellence in his studies, in the French language and in Hungarian patriotism.<sup>191</sup> A similar case happened in Italy as well. As Sándor Diener reported to the *Central Student Aid Committee*, his fellow student Endre Bokor tragically died in Bologna as a consequence of an illness he had got in the world war as a prisoner of war in Russia which deteriorated due to the poverty and suffering imposed on him by the numerous *clausus* and poverty abroad.<sup>192</sup> Less explicitly than Engel’s friend, however, in this way Diener also highlighted his peer’s patriotism with referring to his participation and suffering in the Great War.

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<sup>190</sup> “Olaszországi levél.”

<sup>191</sup> “Engel Sándor halála – Három levélben [The Death of Sándor Engel – In Three Letters],” *Egyenlőség*, June 20, 1925, 3.

<sup>192</sup> “Bokor Endre halála [The Death of Endre Bokor],” *Egyenlőség*, September 2, 1933, 10.

In Paris one of the wandering students took his life at the grave of Heinrich Heine.<sup>193</sup> The choice of the place indeed suggests that his suicide had to do with the wandering lifestyle imposed on him by the *numerus clausus*, since the following line is engraved on the tombstone of Heine, the poet who was born Jewish (later converted) and was exiled from his homeland: “Wo wird einst des Wanderns Müden Letzte Ruhestätte sein”?

Another student, Hugó Politzer, jumped out of a window in Budapest. He was regarded as a victim of the *numerus clausus* both by *Népszava* and *Pesti Napló*.<sup>194</sup> According to *Népszava*, Politzer’s father had to mobilize all the financial resources of the family to enable Hugó to study in Prague. This moral pressure caused the student a severe depression. His parents persuaded him to go home to Budapest to recover. He took his life during this visit.<sup>195</sup>

Among general media, *Pesti Napló*’s editorial board showed the most solidarity with *numerus clausus* exiles. This was not only demonstrated by the tone of their related articles, but also by sending free copies of the newspaper to student colonies abroad for which “Giulio” (Gyula) Lichtner thanked them on behalf of the “*numerus clausus* victims in Rome”.<sup>196</sup> This attitude had to do with the liberal political orientation of the editorial board. They used the stories of *numerus clausus* exiles to argue against the *numerus clausus* which they criticized as an infringement of academic freedom. Outside of the Jewish press only *Pesti Napló* published long reports on the student colonies.<sup>197</sup> At the same time it needs to be added that *Pesti Napló* was seen in as a “Jewish” newspaper because it was written and read by Jews mostly. Hence the editors could rely on their readers’ interest for the life of the “wandering students” abroad.

<sup>193</sup> “Hírek (News),” *Egyenlőség*, February 28, 1925, 11.

<sup>194</sup> “Öngyilkosságot követett el egy külföldre kényszerített egyetemi hallgató [Suicide of an Exiled Student],” *Népszava*, July 19, 1930, 6.; “A harmadik emeletről az utcára vetette magát egy egyetemi hallgató [University Student Throws Himself from the Third Floor],” *Pesti Napló*, July 19, 8.

<sup>195</sup> “Öngyilkosságot követett el egy külföldre kényszerített egyetemi hallgató.”

<sup>196</sup> Giulio Lichtner, “A Pesti Napló jubileumi üdvözlése [Greetings for Pesti Napló on Its Jubileum],” *Pesti Napló*, May 7, 1930, 9.

<sup>197</sup> For instance: Ignác Balla, “Padova tárt karokkal várja kedves magyar diákjait [Padua Warmly Welcomes Hungarian Students],” *Pesti Napló*, May 23, 1925, 7.

## II.6. An outlook on the antisemitic press: The cadaver affair and Jewish student migration

Antisemitic press rarely dealt with Jewish youth's responses to the numerus clausus. When they did, they – similarly to the Zionist press – regarded the emigration of Jewish students as something positive. *Szózat* presented Jewish student migration as a consequence of the Szeged “cadaver affair”.

The cadaver affair was an especially macabre manifestation of antisemitism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where modern racial antisemitism intersected with traditional religious anti-Judaism.<sup>198</sup> Where and where there were no Jewish quotas, a way to still exclude Jews from medical training was to ban them from anatomy seminars unless the local Jewish community provided a sufficient number of cadavers of Jews for all the Jewish medical students. This demand was usually not met, because Judaism in principle does not allow the dissection of bodies. The root of the accusation was thus an ambition to segregate the bodies of Christians and Jews even beyond death. This was, however, disguised as a demand on behalf of modern science and reason, to require Jews to leave behind the irrational ancient laws of their religion. At the same time, in this way it was mostly secular and acculturated or assimilated Jews (who went to study medicine) who were punished for a tenet of the Jewish religion.

The cadaver affair was usually bound with demands for introducing a Jewish quota and it was most wide-spread in Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian universities, however, it occasionally emerged in Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia as well.<sup>199</sup> Interestingly, in Hungary, although antisemitic students often demonstrated for the maintenance of the numerus

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<sup>198</sup> A comprehensive monograph on the subject by Natalia Aleksiu is forthcoming.

<sup>199</sup> Natalia Aleksiu, “The Cadaver Affair in the Second Polish Republic. A Case Study of Practical Antisemitism?,” in *Alma mater antisemitica*, edited by Regina Fritz, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe and Jana Starek, 203-220.

clausus, they rarely connected it to the cadaver affair. One of such rare occasions was the cadaver affair of Szeged.

In 1924 the University of Szeged prohibited Jewish students from dissecting cadavers of Christians in anatomy classes and in lack of a satisfactory number of Jewish cadavers, they could not take the anatomy comprehensive exam.<sup>200</sup> However, according to the journalist of *Szózat*, it was not such discriminatory measures that pushed Jews to emigrate to study even if they made it into the Jewish quota in a Hungarian university, but their purposeful preference to study dissection with Christian rather than Jewish bodies so as to hurt Christians:

In the moment when there lies a Jewish corpse on the dissection table, the Jewish race and soul speaks and the cultural Jew who calls the piety required for Christian cadavers sentimentalism, suddenly turns sentimental and emigrates abroad where they can still practice dissection on Christian cadavers rather than to insult the ghetto and the tribal laws by piercing his knife in a Jewish corpse. The Jewish university students decided to go abroad. We will not weep for them and we will not hold them back, let them go in greater numbers [...]<sup>201</sup>

The term “cultural Jew” refers to Jews who did not practice the Jewish religion, but identified with their Jewishness as a cultural heritage. Thus, the author claimed that cultural Jews were slaves of a combination of religious and tribal Jewish bonds even if they claimed otherwise.

In the end, this particular manifestation of the cadaver affair was solved by the Jewish community of Szeged showing willingness to seek compromise despite the religious problem involved. They provided Jewish cadavers for the medical faculty and the university withdrew its decree that had banned Jewish students from anatomy seminars.<sup>202</sup> In the long run, however,

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<sup>200</sup> “Zsidó orvosnövendékek nem boncolhatnak keresztény hullát [Jewish Medical Students Cannot Dissect Christian Corpses],” *Szózat*, October 22, 1924, 3.

<sup>201</sup> “Abban a pillanatban, amikor zsidó holttest fekszik a boncolóasztalon, elkezdi beszélni a zsidó vérség, megszólal a zsidó lelkiség s a kulturzsidó, aki szentimentalizmusnak nevezte a keresztény holttestekkel szemben követelt kegyeletet, most egyszerre szentimentális lett és inkább külföldre vándorol, ahol még keresztény holttesteken tanulnak, semhogy megsértse a gettó[t] és a törzsi törvényeket, hogy a saját kését zsidó holttestbe döfje. A zsidó egyetemi hallgatók elhatározták, hogy elmennek külföldre. Nem siratjuk és nem tartjuk vissza őket, menjenek minél többen[...]” “Zsidó orvosnövendékek nem boncolhatnak keresztény hullát [Jewish Medical Students Cannot Dissect Christian Corpses],” *Szózat*, October 22, 1924, 3.

<sup>202</sup> “Békésen intéződik el a szegedi egyetem hullá-botránya [The Cadaver Scandal of Szeged University Ends Peacefully],” *Az Újság*, October 23, 1924, 7.

seeking compromise by Jewish communities did not help the situation of Jewish students in interwar Hungary in particular and in Europe in general.

## II.7. Conclusion

Returning to the opening quotes of this chapter by Friedrich and Szabolcsi on the connection of *numerus clausus* and peregrination, we must point out that both of them were wrong in their assumption that the emigration counterbalanced the effect of the *numerus clausus*. At the same time, both of them had a kernel of truth. The Jewish quota did not diminish the number of Jewish university graduates to the extent the legislators wished for. Yet even if calculating with the Jewish intellectuals who studied abroad and never returned, we know that after the *numerus clausus* less than half (45%) of Jewish secondary school graduates went into higher education, whereas before WWI 85% of them did so.<sup>203</sup> Thus, far from all Jews hit by the *numerus clausus* succeeded to escape it abroad.<sup>204</sup>

Yet, as this chapter has shown, enough students emigrated for the Hungarian public to notice that peregrination was tied to the *numerus clausus*. Different Jewish and general media wrote about Hungarian peregrination as a phenomenon almost exclusively characteristic of Jews who were pushed out by the *numerus clausus*. The contemporary discourse was dominated by the negative version of the exile narrative, but the Zionist press promoted a positive version of it in which the exile gave an opportunity to escape the false consciousness of assimilation. Since the experience of forced peregrination was a generational experience of Hungarian Jewish intellectual youth, it created a new community of fate. Importantly, within this community of *numerus clausus* exiles some displayed Hungarian patriotism, others Jewish national consciousness while we do not know about the majority how they felt. At the same

<sup>203</sup> Viktor Karády, *Iskolarendszer és felekezeti egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon, 1867-1945* [Educational System and Denominational Inequalities in Hungary, 1867-1945] (Budapest: Replika Kör, 1997), 251.

<sup>204</sup> While presumably approximately 3500 Jews wished to enrol in a university each year (this was the number of enrolled Jews in the last pre-WWI peace years), in a period of twelve years (1920-1932) only three thousand Hungarian Jews graduated abroad. "Százket magyar zsidó diplomáját nosztrifikálták tizenkét év alatt."

time, since the next chapter is based on university documents of over a thousand students, we will see the patterns of Hungarian and Jewish identification among numerous clausus exiles.

### III. Identifying the *numerus clausus* exiles: A sample from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Italy

#### III.1. Introduction

Subconsciously something in the Jew seeks to escape the morally dubious, the distasteful, the petty, the unspiritual, which is attached to all trade, and all that is purely business, and to lift himself up to the moneyless sphere of the intellectual, as if – in the Wagnerian sense – he wished to redeem himself and his entire race, from the curse of money.<sup>205</sup>

Such phenomenon of Jewish upward social mobility often driven by a (potentially subconscious) desire for assimilation described by Stefan Zweig in his famous memoir, was characteristic of the Hungarian *numerus clausus* exiles, as this chapter is going to show.

The previous chapter elaborated on contemporary discourses about the *numerus clausus* provoked student emigration and related subtopics: the support mechanism for the migrant students' sake, their chances to work in Hungary, their Jewish and Hungarian identities, the construction of a community of *numerus clausus* exiles and even the 'cadaver affair'. Such discourses reflected on the causes and consequences of Hungarian Jewish students' presence abroad as seen by outsiders.

The present chapter turns to the question who these Hungarian Jewish students were? Since the essence of the *numerus clausus* was to reverse Jewish upward social mobility and middleclass integration through limiting their educational mobility, identification of the *numerus clausus* exiles is here to be understood in terms of their social background. In addition, family background (represented in documents by the parents' occupations) and geographical background (represented by the place of birth, residence and schooling in addition to the father's residence) are data that we find in university enrollment documents and are also

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<sup>205</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 11-12.

variables used in social history concerned with the reasons of inequalities brought about by modernity.

The *numerus clausus* and Jewish responses to it are very much tied to the problems of inequalities. The Jewish quota was an antisemitic response to Jewish overschooling, as such a legislatively introduced measure of inequality as kind of a revenge for social inequality caused by modernity. During the liberal Dualist period Jews could freely invest in their children's secondary and tertiary education and invested more in it than other Hungarians in the respective socio-economic layers. This was connected to the value Jewish tradition attached to education and to the hope that social advancement would increase their acceptance in the majority society. This worked to some extent, however, with the intensification of antisemitism during WWI, a hostile interpretation of such phenomenon proliferated: namely that Jews advanced at the expense of others, thus their advancement had to be reversed.

There was inequality between Jews as well to respond to the *numerus clausus*. For an exhaustive overview of how the *numerus clausus* changed Jewish families' strategies of educational mobility, historians need to measure the extent of the decrease in Jewish pupils' enrollment in secondary schools without the natural demographic decrease (the decreasing number of children in Jewish families from one generation to another) during the interwar period. After the introduction of the *numerus clausus* a secondary school degree no longer entitled one to enroll in a university, as was the case until 1920 (at least for men, for women only in certain fields of study). At the same time, a high school degree was still sufficient as an entry ticket into respectable, *salonfähig* society and meant entitlement for various middleclass jobs such as "private administrators" in industrial and commercial firms.<sup>206</sup> Thus, the *numerus clausus* did not make secondary schooling superfluous. As the conclusion of the previous

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<sup>206</sup> In Hungarian *magánhivatalnok*, in German *Privatbeamter*.

chapter pointed out, over half of Jewish secondary school graduates (55%) simply did not continue studying as opposed to 15% of Jewish secondary school graduates before the numerus clausus. This dissertation is concerned with those whose response was peregrination. This particular chapter answers the question Jews of what social background were able to peregrinate in the age of the numerus clausus? The contemporary and historical assumption that peregrination was the escape route for the wealthy Jewish youth will be challenged by empirically examining the *'idealtipe'* of the numerus clausus exile.

To a lesser extent, the chapter is also concerned with the potential difference in the social background of Jewish youth who made it into the 6% Jewish quota and thus studied in Hungarian higher education. Therefore, the social background of Hungarian Jewish students of foreign and Hungarian universities will be compared.

It is possible to hypothesize that Jewish families who possessed economic and social capital were able to mobilize their influence for the sake of getting their children in the Jewish quota in a Hungarian university. Biographies and autobiographies also reveal the importance of nepotism in getting into the Jewish quota independently from the grades in the secondary school diplomas.<sup>207</sup> Possibly, the *émigrés* were those who lacked such means. According to an earlier interpretation, the statistical data on the families of Jewish students enrolled in Hungarian higher education in 1932-33 suggest that Jewish students who studied in Hungary

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<sup>207</sup> For instance, Miklós Szabolcsi (the son of Lajos Szabolcsi who is so often mentioned in this dissertation as the initiator of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*) was admitted to the faculty of humanities in Budapest in 1938 despite of his merely “good” secondary school diploma (theoretically only Jews with “excellent” diploma had a chance to get in the quota) because his father asked the historian Gyula Szekfű to help, referring to their old professional cooperation one and a half decade earlier. Another example is László Farádi’s admission in the medical faculty in Pécs in 1930 because he was on a list of “Jewish students to be admitted”. Yet another example is Miklós Kun’s being admitted in medicine in Szeged in 1932 because his uncle had good acquaintances among medical professors. Miklós Szabolcsi, “Apámról és emlékiratairól [About My Father and His Memoirs] [Preface to the Memoirs of Lajos Szabolcsi],” in Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 7-19 (15); Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 123; Miklós Kun, *Kedves Hilda. Egy elmeorvos az elmebeteg huszadik században* [Dear Hilda. A Psychiatrist in the Insane Twentieth Century] (Budapest: Medicina, 2004), 32.

came from rather well-to-do families.<sup>208</sup> In my understanding the key was social capital, not necessarily or not exclusively wealth. From occupational statistics we only see the category of the father's occupation, not how much they earned and especially not how much inherited wealth a family possessed. Therefore, I find it risky to draw conclusions on wealth from occupational statistics. In addition, my main interests are more subtle forms of capital: knowledge capital and social capital.

A smaller scale research on Hungarian *numerus clausus* refugees at the University of Bologna hinted at the possibility that Jewish migrant students who studied in Italy were not predestined for higher education. Their high school diplomas revealed that they were not among the best qualified graduates of Hungarian secondary education, and their birth certificates and residence certificates showed that their majority did not come from urban middleclass intellectual families. On the contrary, they characteristically hailed from the provincial lower middleclass and tended to represent the first generation in their family to study at a university.<sup>209</sup>

The hypothesis of the present chapter is grounded in an extrapolation of this small study. A significant part of the *numerus clausus* exiles pursued university studies in spite of and not because of their social background, and not as a means of maintaining a social status already achieved by their family but as a means of moving upward. Thus, besides the hypothesis that most Hungarian migrant students were Jewish (according to the definition implied in the executive ordinance of the *numerus clausus* law<sup>210</sup>); I assume that Jewish

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<sup>208</sup> Out of those 1,965 Jewish students, 781 came from families that worked in commerce and banking, 347 from families involved in mines and industry and 628 in intellectual professions. Klein, "Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the Inter-War Period," 84.

<sup>209</sup> Agnes Katalin Kelemen, "The Exiles of the *Numerus Clausus* in Italy," *Judaica Olomucensia* 2, no. 1-2 (2014): 56-103 (84-86).

<sup>210</sup> Nr. 123.033/1920 decree of the Minister of Religion and Public Education regulated the execution of Law 1920/XXV. (known as the *numerus clausus*) and quoted the statistics of citizens of the Israelite religion as the number of citizens of a distinct nationality ("*nemzetiség*"). Thereby it implicitly converted Jews from a religious to a national group, even though in the Hungarian legal system Jews only existed as members of a denomination.

students' emigration in the age of the *numerus clausus* helped Jewish upward social mobility which was meant to be reversed by the law. If this is so, the majority should have come from small towns and villages rather than from urban centers, and from less educated rather than high school or university graduate fathers (the available sources only identify the fathers' occupations, mothers are only mentioned if widows).

In addition, due to misogynist besides antisemitic discrimination in interwar Hungarian academia, not only the proportion of Jews but also the proportion of women among students abroad needs to be examined. Not only Jewish women and men had good reasons to leave Hungary if they wished to study, but non-Jewish women as well.

### III.2. A sample of Hungarian students abroad

In order to test the hypotheses, I constructed a sample of Hungarian students enrolled in every fifth academic year after 1921/22 in medicine and engineering in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna.<sup>211</sup> The reasons for such selection of faculties and cities were detailed in the first chapter.<sup>212</sup> The sample includes every Hungarian student, not only Jews, so as to test the hypothesis of a Jewish majority among them.

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A. m. kir. vallás- és közoktatásügyi miniszter 1920. évi 123.033. számú rendelete, Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára (Collection of Decrees of Hungary)/1920: 1517-1522.

<sup>211</sup> The *numerus clausus* law was promulgated in 1920 and thus 1921/22 was the first academic year when the quota had a full impact on university itineraries. Then every fifth year of the period was used to gain snapshots of the history of Hungarian student presence in the cities concerned, since a research including all Hungarians of all academic years was not feasible in the time allotted for this survey.

<sup>212</sup> Austria, Germany and Italy were the three most popular target countries of Hungarian peregrination in the interwar period, but in the very beginning of the 1920s Czechoslovakia belonged to their most targeted countries as well. With regard to study fields, medicine and engineering were the study fields most often chosen by migrant students.

Gegenwärtig im I. Semester.

**Nationale**  
für ordentliche Hörer der medizinischen Fakultät.

Namen und Name des Studierenden:	Ladislau Reichenfeld
Staatsbürgerschaft:	ungarisch
Verweilort und Land:	Kaab, Ungarn
Wohnort und Land:	Kaab, Ungarn
Muttersprache, Alter, Volkszugehörigkeit:	ungarisch, 18 Jahre, ungarisch
Religion, welchen Ritus oder Konfession:	nr.
Wohnungsadresse des Studierenden:	X. Mühlengasse 22. T. 6
Name, Stand und Wohnort seines Vaters:	Sermann, Beamter, Kaab
Name, Stand und Wohnort seines Vormunders:	
Bezeichnung der Lehranstalt, an welcher der Studierende das letzte Semester zugebracht:	Kaaber Realschule
Kostet ein	Stipendium (Stiftung) im Betrage von _____ S _____ 78
erhalten von	unter dem 192 __, 3.
Bezeichnung der Grundlage, auf welcher der Studierende die Immatrikulation oder Zulassung erwidert:	Maturitätsprüfung
Legende Unterschrift:	Ladislau Reichenfeld

Druck der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei in Wien. (21.) 5643 25

Image III.2.a.1926 enrollment form of László Reichenfeld (later: László Farádi), Archives of the University of Vienna.

At the same time some limitations of the sample – owing to the survival and accessibility of sources – must be pointed out. The sources are the enrollment forms and students' documents preserved in the archives of the University of Vienna, of the Technical

University (former Technical College) of Vienna, of Charles University in Prague (which inherited the documents of the German University of Prague closed down in 1945), of the Czech Technical University (which preserves the archive of the German Technical College of Prague closed down in 1945), of the Humboldt University (former Friedrich-Wilhelm University) in Berlin, of the Technical University (former Technical College) of Berlin and of the University of Bologna.

These sources do not give an insight into the financial background of students' families – except for a few special cases when students submitted certificates of poverty to achieve the reduction of their tuition fee.<sup>213</sup> However, in the case of Vienna, Prague and Berlin, the enrollment forms almost always include the father's occupation and in Bologna it is revealed by the birth certificates. Hence, I focus on educational mobility, thus whether the students – who by virtue of being university students were necessarily high school graduates – stemmed from fathers with a lower level of education.

Some further limitations are to be noted as well. The regulation of the archive of the Technical University of Vienna does not allow the overview of whole “*Matrikelbücher*” (enrollment books) of the 1920s and 1930s. At the Friedrich-Wilhelm University, the religion of students was not registered and enrollments were not systemized according to faculty, so it was not possible to extract data comparable with the data on medical students in Vienna, Prague and Bologna. Therefore, the Viennese engineering students and the medical students enrolled in Berlin are not incorporated in my sample.

The enrollment books of the Technical University of Berlin posed an additional difficulty: the enrollment books for the years between 1930 and 1935 perished during the

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<sup>213</sup> For example, Fascicolo degli studenti, Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia (from now on Med. E chir.) 6625 Fischer Julie. Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna (from now on referred to as ASUB); Fascicolo degli studenti, Med&chir 11856 Borgida Veronika. ASUB.

WWII bombings of Berlin. In addition, the other records were not grouped according to academic year and after 1935 they did not register religion. Still, for the years between 1920 and 1930 the data was so rich that it begged inclusion in the sample.

In the end the database that actually came into being, contains information on over one thousand (precisely one thousand and thirty-one) Hungarian students enrolled in the medical faculties of the University of Vienna, of the German University of Prague and of the University of Bologna and of the German Technical College of Prague, of the Technical College of Berlin and of the engineering faculty of the University of Bologna.

We know the place of birth, the gender and the study field of all of them, but about the majority we know more: religion, date of birth, place of residence, father's name and father's occupation. In some faculties in some academic years even more data was required to be filled in the enrollment form, namely citizenship, mother tongue, nationality, previous place of study, and the father's residence. Citizenship was not a standard question, hence it is not evident at first glance whom to regard as potentially affected by post-1920 Hungarian legislation, thus as a potential *numerus clausus* refugee, since a large number of Hungarians hailed from territories lost to Hungary in the Treaty of Trianon.

As a matter of fact, even if we knew the citizenship of everyone, it would not be of great help since citizenship in the years immediately following 1920 was fluid. In the very early 1920s the possibility to choose Hungarian citizenship over Romanian or Czechoslovak was still open – through a legal process called “*opting*” (“*optálás*”) – and people moved across the new state borders also because of considerations influenced by the states' different policies. Jews among the Hungarians who either found themselves in Romania or Czechoslovakia or hailed from such territories, thus had an option not to become Hungarian citizens. The introduction of the *numerus clausus* potentially influenced such choices. However, Romania was notorious for its antisemitism. Not even Jews living within the “pre-unification” borders

of the country (i.e. borders before the increase of the territory as a result of WWI) were emancipated before WWI. Acquiring citizenship was even harder for the Jews of Transylvania who had been mostly assimilated to the Hungarian culture and nation.<sup>214</sup>

Czechoslovakia was a more logical preference over Hungary than Romania due to the new republic's democratic outlook (especially when compared to its neighbors).<sup>215</sup> Naturally, however, lives and individual decisions are more complex than that. In addition, contemporaries when they had to opt for a citizenship did not necessarily possess all the information on comparative state policies vis-à-vis Jews that we do now.

Hence, citizenship is not only an unavailable data for most students in the sample, it would also be of little help. As a consequence, “Hungarianness” in my context does not equal Hungarian citizenship. Instead I used a broad definition when I selected which students to include in my database. I chose to include everybody who was born in the territory of post-Trianon Hungary, was resident there or had studied there before enrolling in a university abroad. They were more probably influenced by the numerus clausus introduced in 1920 when making a decision about their studies than Hungarians who had spent all their life in former “Upper Hungary” or Transcarpathia, that in the aftermath of WWI became parts of Czechoslovakia or in Transylvania or the Banat which now belonged to Romania or in Vojvodina which now belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

### III. 3. The questions of being Jewish and being numerus clausus exiles

As elaborated in the first chapter, in this study by ‘numerus clausus exiles’ Jewish students are meant who studied abroad in the age of the numerus clausus (1920-1945). In this

<sup>214</sup> Attila Gidó, *Két évtized: A kolozsvári zsidóság a két világháború között* [Two Decades: The Jewry of Cluj between the Two World Wars] (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2016).

<sup>215</sup> Éva Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció: A kassai zsidóság a két világháború között (1918-1938)* [Ambivalent Assimilation: The Jewry of Košice Between the Two World Wars, 1918-1938] (Dunajská Streda: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2004); Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015).

context by “Jewish students” those people are meant who usually counted as Jewish in Hungary when universities applied the *numerus clausus*. Thus, they were born Jewish, even if they converted or officially left the Jewish religious community without joining another one (the latter being a rare case). Jewish religious affiliation is the best proxy for identifying *numerus clausus* exiles, yet since there were converts among them, I separated the issue of religion and being *numerus clausus* exiles by handling them as two different variables in my dataset.

When analyzing the data of Hungarian students found in university documents abroad, I regard everyone who claimed Jewish religion or nationality as a *numerus clausus* exile.<sup>216</sup> Those who claimed Jewish nationality, also claimed to be Jewish by religion, while most of those Jewish by religion self-identified as Hungarians by nationality. A little inequality emerges between the students of the German speaking universities and of the University of Bologna, since in the latter no religious or national identification was asked. Thus, there was no self-reported information on religion, only on the religion included in their high school diplomas submitted for admission in the university and if this was Jewish denomination, I regarded the person as a *numerus clausus émigré*.

A moral dilemma is posed by the cases where students claimed another religion than Jewish, but they are known from their biographies to be of Jewish origin. On the one hand, historians have to respect the self-identification of their subjects, on the other hand, it is only possible to examine the consequences of antisemitism if we take into account that certain people were regarded as Jewish by antisemites even if this was against their will. And this

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<sup>216</sup> I cannot possibly know if no one else among the non-Jewish (by religion) individuals in my dataset were converts. However, they are less than one fifth of the examined group and it seems realistic that there were that many non-Jews among Hungarian students. Especially if considering the fact that Czechoslovakia had a sizable Hungarian minority for whom it was worth to study in Prague, a few members of this minority became parts of my sample because of being born in post-Trianon Hungarian territory.

external identification had important consequences on the lives of such “non-Jewish Jews” to borrow Isaac Deutscher’s term.<sup>217</sup>

Since conversion was one of the strategies to evade the numerus clausus and also a possible reaction to the 1919-1920 white terrorist pogroms in Hungary, Jews who converted and enrolled in a foreign university as Christians, are not to be regarded as Jewish, but they are *par excellence* numerus clausus exiles. It is noteworthy that the large majority of students of self-reported Jewish religion in my dataset suggests that the numerus clausus exiles typically held their Jewish religious affiliation and were not eager to hide it.

About a few (less than a dozen) students who did not fill the row for religion in their enrollment form abroad, I found out that they were Jewish from the database of university students of interwar Hungary, since they also enrolled in Hungary at some point after their emigration. Knowing that, I regard them as numerus clausus exiles. Similarly, I regard Leo Szilard and Bela Silard as numerus clausus exiles. Their religion was Calvinist by the time they enrolled in the Technical College of Berlin. However, it is well known from their biographies that they were originally Jewish and converted shortly before they left for Berlin as a consequence of antisemitic attacks at the Technical University of Budapest.<sup>218</sup>

Thus, Jewish religion is not a perfect proxy to identify numerus clausus refugees among Hungarian migrant students, but the best we have. In addition, Jews are such a majority in the sample even without those who did not self-identify as Jews, that it confirms the hypothesis that an overwhelming majority of Hungarian students abroad were Jewish in the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>217</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Ed. by Tamara Deutscher.) New York – London: Verso Books, 2017).

<sup>218</sup> For the details see: William Lanouette and Bela Silard, *Genius in the Shadows. A Biography of Leo Szilard – The Man Behind the Bomb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 48-49.

After emigration, a student's religion did not have the same relevance everywhere. In Vienna it was just as relevant as in Budapest. The Technical College of Vienna implemented an antisemitic *numerus clausus* policy similar to the Hungarian law, except that it specifically targeted foreign Jews, unlike the Hungarian *numerus clausus* law. Hungarian Jews who tried to enroll in the Technical College of Vienna because they had not been admitted in the Technical University of Budapest, were in Vienna targeted by this quota as foreigners *and* Jews. Their presence in Vienna was exploited in antisemitic discourse. But the presence of Galician Jews was even more instrumentalized by antisemites in Austria. This institutional *numerus clausus* (disapproved by the state and Vienna's municipal leadership) addressed all Jews who came from former Habsburg territories that after WWI counted as "abroad". Despite the disapproval of the Ministry of Education, between 1923 and 1933 the Technical College implemented a ten percent quota on foreign applicants of Jewish "*Volksbürgerschaft*" (ethnic citizenship).<sup>219</sup>

At the University of Vienna, however, where the famous Viennese medical school belonged, the situation was different. Antisemitism was similarly intense, however, Jews were segregated rather than excluded. In each subject there was a course taught by an "Aryan" professor, in case the German nationalist students boycotted another because of being Jewish or liberal or left-wing. For instance, the internationally well-known anatomy professor, Julius Tandler, led the '1<sup>st</sup> Anatomy Institute'. He was both a Jew and a Social-Democrat, a city counsellor of Red Vienna – plenty of reasons to be a target of antisemitic attacks which he documented in his *Chronology of terror*, ignored by all interwar rectors of the University of

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<sup>219</sup> In 1933 admission of all foreigners to all Austrian universities was restricted.

Vienna.<sup>220</sup> The ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Anatomy Institute’ was led by the right-wing Ferdinand Hochstetter to offer an alternative to Tandler’s institute.

Unlike the Viennese and Prague institutions of higher education and the Technical College of Berlin, the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin and the University of Bologna did not ask students about their religion at all. Concerning the German University of Prague, Jiří Pešek emphasizes that although religion was asked in the enrollment forms, the administrators never checked the veracity of the self-reported data on religion and nationality.<sup>221</sup> Hence the frequency of Jewish religious self-identification and the rareness of leaving the relevant row blank even in Prague is worthy of attention. It may mean that students saw no reason to hide their Jewishness because Czechoslovakia had fame for not being antisemitic, and they knew that authorities were more interested in the veracity of claims about residence since students with a permanent address abroad paid more for tuition.

Due to respect for religious self-identification, I took into consideration the exact terms with which Jewish students described their religious affiliation. In German university documents they had three choices to do so: “mosaisch” (of Mosaic faith), “israelitisch” (Israelite), “jüdisch” (Jewish). In Hungary “izraelita” (Israelite) was the dominantly used version in the official context, “mózeshitű” (Mosaic) had been a term of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thus was old-fashioned, while “zsidó” (Jewish) potentially had a Zionist connotation as a reclaim of a word systematically used in a pejorative sense in Hungarian public discourse which at the same time made “izraelita” sound like an euphemism.

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<sup>220</sup> Werner Hanak-Lettner, “Exclusion, Terror and Pogroms. News, Reports, and Recollections 1918-1938,” in *Die Universität. Eine Kampfzone* [The University. A Battleground], edited by Werner Janak-Lettner (Wien: Picus, 2015), 123-157 (154).

<sup>221</sup> Jiří Pešek, “Jüdische Studenten an den Prager Universitäten 1882-1939 [Jewish Students at Prague Universities 1882-1939],” in *Jeho Praha: Vybor Statí Jiřího Peška K Džianám Prahy: Vydáno K Životnímu Jubileu Autora. Ausgewählte Studien von Jiří Pešek zur Geschichte Prags. Herausgegeben zum 60. Lebensjubiläum des Autors.* (Praha: Scriptorium: Archiv hlavního místa, 2014), 423-440 (424).

In the beginning of my archival research I assumed it had a significance whether a Jew described themselves as of Israelite, Mosaic or of Jewish religion. Along the way, however, I discovered that students enrolling in more academic years or in more universities used these three expressions interchangeably. Therefore, it is not sensible to analyze the different frequency of each term across the cohorts and the universities. We can only establish that in the German-speaking context most of the Jewish students usually described themselves as “mosaisch”.

All this being said about whom to consider Jewish, it must be emphasized that where religion was asked (Vienna, Prague, Technical College of Berlin), there was a possibility to leave the row blank or to write “none” or “dissident”. Thirty-five students left the row blank and in fourteen cases it was unreadable, thus the faith of forty-nine students is unknown. Extremely few (six) people declared to have no religion. Interestingly, even the students that we know from their own autobiographies (detailed in the fourth chapter) to be Communists and hence distancing themselves from the Jewish and from any religious community, declared themselves to belong to the Jewish denomination when they enrolled in a university abroad instead of disidentifying.

After taking into account all the above considerations, I found that 919 out of the 1131 students, thus 81% of my sample were Jewish by religion. (See Table III.3.a.) When counting the *numerus clausus* exiles in the sample, I needed to take into consideration external information besides the university documents. However, in the end the number of *numerus clausus* exiles (921) is almost identical to the number of those who were Jewish by religion. Thus, the above detailed theoretically important distinctions did not make a difference in practical terms.

Such proportion strikingly reaffirms the estimation of Alajos Kovács, who assumed that after 1920 eighty percent of Hungarian students abroad (not counting the 5-7 percent who went

to study abroad with a stipend provided by the state) were Jewish.<sup>222</sup> Kovács was a notoriously antisemitic statistician of interwar Hungary, who in 1938 gave an evaluation of the impact of the numerus clausus on peregrination apropos of the expulsion of foreign Jewish students from Italian academia.<sup>223</sup>

Concerning the 157 students (14 %) who claimed another religion than Jewish, nearly three quarters (113 students) were Roman Catholic and the remaining 44 students were divided among numerous denominations: Calvinists, Lutherans, Unitarians, Greek Catholics, and Orthodox Christians. In addition, two students used the umbrella term “Protestant”.

*Table III.3.a. Students by religion*

Religion	Number of students
Jewish	919
Roman Catholic	113
Calvinist	15
Lutheran	20
Unitarian	2
Unspecified Protestant	2
Greek Catholic	2
Orthodox Christian	3
Religious dissidents	6
Total	1131
Number	1082
Missing data	49

However, numerus clausus exiles did not constitute the same majority in all the examined faculties. An initial hypothesis was that the proportion of students who were affected by the numerus clausus, would be lower among emigrating students enrolling in Vienna and Berlin because these cities were traditionally more attractive for Hungarian peregrination than Prague and Bologna. Thus, Vienna and Berlin could attract even students who were not pushed out by the numerus clausus but peregrinated merely because of the attraction of those cities.

<sup>222</sup> A. Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon,” 898.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

The proportion of *numerus clausus* exiles among Hungarians was indeed highest in Bologna (95%) and lowest in Berlin (70%). (See Table III.3.b.) However, this contrast is exaggerated by the fact that in Bologna the information on religion comes from official documents while in Berlin it was self-reported. Examining all the four cities, the study field made more difference than the study location. (See Table III.3.c.) Less than three quarters (72%) of engineering students, while more than four fifths (85%) of medical students were *numerus clausus* exiles.

*Table III.3.b. Students by study location*

Study location	Berlin	Bologna	Prague	Vienna
Numerus clausus exiles	82 (70%)	73 (95%)	445 (87%)	321 (85%)
Whole sample	137	86	530	378
Total	137	86	530	378
Number	117 (100%)	77 (100%)	509 (100%)	376 (100%)
Missing Data	20	9	21	2

*Table III.3.c. Students by study field*

Study field	Engineering	Medicine
Numerus clausus exiles	246 (72%)	675 (85%)
Whole sample	341	790
Total	341	790
Number	316 (100%)	763 (100%)
Missing Data	25	27

#### III.4. Social mobility

After elaborating on how I constructed my sample of *émigré* students in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna and the moral and practical methodological questions of identifying *numerus clausus* exiles, the present section represents the core of the chapter. Namely, the investigation of the social background of the students, with particular regard to *numerus clausus* exiles among them (their majority) and their social mobility. Both will be compared to the social background and mobility of Jewish students who in the age of the *numerus clausus* were studying in Hungarian universities, thus were admitted in the framework of the restrictive Jewish quota. The latter group's data were extracted with the help of Victor Karády, Péter Tibor

Nagy and Csaba Bendzsák from the historical sociological survey on university students in Hungary, conducted in the research project “*Culturally Composite Elites, Regime Changes and Social Crises in Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Confessional Eastern Europe*”.<sup>224</sup>

The most important information available in university documents about the social background of students is the father’s occupation. I used one of the categorizations applied by Victor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy in the abovementioned research where occupations were divided in thirteen categories.<sup>225</sup> In this system one takes into consideration both educational level and social class, hence for example secondary school teachers and elementary school teachers are separated. This enabled me to look at the émigré students’ social mobility. My special interest was to what extent these students with so much intellectual ambition as to emigrate and thus pursue studies despite of the numerus clausus, came from intellectual families. It is noteworthy that for being high school graduates (a pre-requirement for university enrollment) they could already regard themselves as intellectuals according to the social norms of the period. However, they intended to work in the prestigious liberal professions.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to the fathers’ occupations, enrollment forms provide a lot of geographical information that help to investigate social mobility: the student’s place of birth, place of residence and their father’s place of residence. Such spatial coordinates provide information on geographical mobility, an important aspect of social mobility. The place of residence of a family greatly influences study possibilities. It is quite self-explanatory that the proximity of secondary schools raised the chance of getting secondary schooling since not having to move out from the family home at an early age decreased the financial and psychological costs of studies. It is noteworthy that children went to secondary school at the

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<sup>224</sup> Victor Karady and Peter Tibor Nagy, *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)* <http://elites08.uni.hu/> (Last accessed: April 11, 2019).

age of ten. As it will be detailed later, the place of residence of migrant students was not such a dry, neutral piece of data as it may seem at first glance.

Regrettably, the father's occupation is only known in about two thirds of the cases (66%), since every third student left the row blank. The two thirds we know, however, confirm the hypothesis that the typical *numerus clausus émigré* was not of intellectual and privileged origin. The proportion of retailer and shopkeeper families, thus the lower class of merchants is especially striking (42%). (See Tables III.4.a., III.4.b and III.4.c) Since four in five (921 out of 1131) students are *numerus clausus* exiles, their characteristics are to a large extent the features of the whole group. Yet, having a retailer father is remarkably more frequent among them (42%) than the whole sample (37%). The only other category where there is a visible difference between the whole sample and the *numerus clausus* exiles is the proportion of fathers of unknown profession, where only 33% of Jewish students, while 38% of all students did not provide information. This means that students of unknown religion usually provided very few information about anything in enrollment forms. Thus, Jewishness was not something migrant students were especially eager to hide.

*Table III.4.a. Fathers' occupations among migrant students*

Father's occupation	The whole sample	Numerus clausus exiles	Class background
farmer (földműves)	13 (2%)	11 (2%)	lower than middleclass
unskilled and skilled worker (munkás, szakmunkás)	27 (4%)	26 (4%)	
artisan (kisiparos)	49 (7%)	40 (7%)	
retailer (kiskereskedő)	264 (37%)	257 (42%)	lower middleclass
private clerk (magánhivatalnok)	58 (8%)	49 (8%)	
public clerk (közhivatalnok)	97 (14%)	78 (13%)	
specialized public employee (szakosított közalkalmazott)	11 (2%)	6 (1%)	middleclass proper
clergy, teacher, employed intellectual in humanities (pap, tanár, alkalmazott humánértelmiségi)	23 (3%)	20 (2%)	
elementary school teacher and director (tanító, elemi iskolai igazgató)	6 (1%)	5 (1%)	

doctor, medicine related intellectual (orvos, egészségügyi értelmiségi)	44 (4%)	33 (5%)	
other professional intellectual (más szakértelmiségi)	48 (7%)	37 (4%)	
high bourgeois, entrepreneur (nagypolgár, önálló vállalkozó)	38 (5%)	28 (5%)	upper middleclass
living from revenues, retired (magánzó, nyugdíjas)	27 (4%)	23 (4%)	
Total	1131	921	
Number	705 (100%)	613 (100%)	
Missing data	426	308	

A short overview of the connection between education, the professions and social status when the fathers of the students concerned grew up (the Dualist period) is necessary. In Dualist Hungary the two main types of secondary schools were the gymnasium (“*gimnázium*”) and the “*reáliskola*”. Both of them lasted eight years, united the function of middle school and high school, and opened the way to university enrollment. However, the gymnasium provided a curriculum of humanities and classical languages, while in the *reáliskola* a more general curriculum was taught. Importantly, at that time most pupils enrolled in a *gymnasium* or a *reáliskola* did not finish it, only the first four grades.<sup>226</sup> This was so because finishing four years of secondary schooling was regarded as the minimum criterium of the *bourgeois* (“*polgár*”), following an 1883 law making many civil service jobs conditional on secondary education.

Although one could make a career in commerce without being a bourgeois, by 1910 over one fifth (21,7%) of independent (male) merchants and 12,5% of men employed in shops had finished the first four years of secondary school.<sup>227</sup> In Budapest the proportions were

<sup>226</sup> In the 1880s and 1890s only one in five *gimnázium* or *reáliskola* pupil finished all the eight grades of the secondary school. János Mazsu, *The Social History of the Hungarian Intelligentsia, 1825-1914*. Translated by Mario D. Fenyő. (Highland Lakes: Atlantic Research and Publications Inc., 1997), 92.

<sup>227</sup> Viktor Karády, “Iskolázottság, rétegződés és értelmiség. Adalékok a kulturális tőke megoszlásának regionális dimenzióihoz Magyarországon a kései dualizmus korában [Level of Education, Stratification and the Intelligentsia. Data on the Regional Dimensions of the Distribution of Cultural Capital in Late-Dualist Hungary],” *Educatio* XXII, no. 4 (2013): 469-492.

higher, with 42,2% of independent (male) merchants and 15,7% of men employed in commerce having finished the first four grades of secondary school.<sup>228</sup> Due to the large proportion of Budapest-born students in my sample (See Table III.4.d.), thus, we need to think of the merchant fathers as a not highly educated layer, but in possession of a certain knowledge capital and sensitivity for the values of knowledge and education.

As Table III.4.a. shows, more than four in ten *clausus exiles* (42%) in the sample hailed from retailer families and almost all the fathers in this occupation belonged to Jewish students. A few sentences are due to the other occupational categories as well. The significance of having finished four years of secondary education also lied in the fact that it entitled to positions labelled as “*úri*” (middleclass, gentlemanly). The lowest layer within this broader layer were (private and public) clerks and elementary school teachers, who on the social ladder were one step above physical laborers. Higher up in the middleclass were those who were not employed by others but pursued their (not necessarily intellectual) profession independently in an individual praxis or even employed others. Even higher was the status of intellectuals who had graduated from secondary schooling, especially if it was a gymnasium.

Considering that medical and engineering students are under examination, thus, youth who aimed to enter classical liberal professions, we can speak of keeping an already achieved social status by the family if the father is to be found among the “specialized public employees”, the “clergy, teachers and employed intellectuals in humanities”, “doctors and medicine-related intellectuals” and “other professional intellectuals”. In the interwar period people employed in these fields were high school graduates and normally also pursued some kind of professional training after the secondary school leaving exam/“*matura*” (“*érettségi*” in Hungarian), although it was not necessarily a university education.

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid. 469-470.

In terms of social stratification generally, out of the thirteen professional categories applied in this study, the first three (farmers, workers and artisans) can be considered as *lower than middleclass*; the next four (retailers, private clerks, public clerks, specialized public employees) as *lower middleclass* or *petty bourgeoisie*; the next four as *middleclass proper* (clergy and teachers and employed intelligentsia in the humanities, elementary school teachers and directors, doctors and medicine-related intellectuals, other professional intellectuals) and entrepreneurs as upper middleclass or high *bourgeoisie*. (Living from revenues is left out from the stratification because “*magánzó*” basically functioned as a category to account for the unidentifiable professions.) In this sense 13% of *numerus clausus* exiles came from a lower than middleclass background, 64% from the lower middleclass, 12% from the middleclass proper and 5% from the upper middleclass. Thus, for over three quarters of them participating in higher education meant upward social mobility, a means to achieve a middleclass status their family did not possess, since they came from a lower than middle class or lower middle class origin. (See Table III.4.a.)

This conclusion becomes especially important when compared to the background of Jewish students in Hungarian higher education in the age of the *numerus clausus*. It must be noted that the data on Hungarian universities are more exhaustive than my dataset, since they were collected and analyzed by a research team in the framework of the abovementioned large-scale project on East Central European elites in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This dataset includes all students of all faculties in Hungary in most academic years in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, filtering cases according to the year and university of enrollment enables one to make comparisons with my sample of *numerus clausus* exiles.<sup>229</sup> Importantly,

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<sup>229</sup> I compared the following datasets with mine: Karady-Nagy, *Culturally Composite Elites* <http://elites08.uni.hu/> (Last accessed: April 11, 2019)/ Processed prosopographical databases (sets of statistical tables for multivariate data analyses) related to students and educated elites in Hungarian institutions of higher education (cc. 1867-1949)/ II. Medical doctors, pharmacists, veterinaries/ i. Graduates of Medicine at the Medical Faculty of the University of Budapest (1770-1950); Karady-Nagy, *Culturally composite elites*, <http://elites08.uni.hu/> (Last accessed: April 11, 2019)/ Processed prosopographical databases (sets of statistical tables for multivariate data

the following comparisons are made between medical students only, because – regrettably – in the case of engineering students abroad, we lack information on the father’s occupation in almost half of the cases (49%).

Such comparison leads to the striking result that the proportion of middleclass Jews was, as expected, higher among those who studied in Hungary than among those who emigrated. However, Jewish students under the numerus clausus in Hungary also tended to come from the lower middleclass, even if to a less extent than the émigrés (See Table III.4.b. and III.4.c.) When examining all the Hungarian medical faculties together, the social recruitment of Jewish medical students abroad and in Hungary seems to be very similar. However, when separating the medical faculty of Budapest where the Jewish quota was more severely implemented than in the provincial institutions,<sup>230</sup> we see that the share of middleclass Jews was especially high there (See Table III.4.d.). Such examination reveals two other important details. On the one hand, the share of medical students whose father worked in medicine as well, was significantly lower among the émigrés (6%) than among those enrolled in Budapest (21%) or one of the provincial Hungarian universities (10%). (See Table III.4.b.) This is a confirmation that offspring of medical dynasties had a higher chance to be admitted in the Jewish quota than others. Among the émigrés, on the other hand, the proportion of public clerks is noticeably higher. The reason thereof is probably the deteriorating situation of Jewish public clerks during the Horthy-era (especially in the 1930s) which motivated their offspring to emigrate.

Yet another noteworthy circumstance to take into account is that some numerus clausus exiles succeeded in continuing their studies in Hungary. Thus, there are overlaps between Jewish (in terms of the numerus clausus) students abroad and in Hungary during the 1920s and

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analyses) related to students and educated elites in Hungarian institutions of higher education (cc. 1867-1949)/ VIII. Students of technological training.

<sup>230</sup> M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*.

1930s which makes the difference in the social recruitment of the two groups all the more remarkable and reinforces the hypothesis that social capital had an important role in getting in the Jewish quota within Hungary.

Even if someone started studying abroad, it was a good strategy to look for professional connections within Hungary for the sake of getting into a Hungarian university later. For example, László Farádi enrolled in the Viennese medical school in 1926, while he continued to apply to the universities of Pécs and Budapest each year up until 1930 when he succeeded to enroll in Pécs thanks to a fortunate encounter with Sándor Gorka, a biology professor in Pécs.<sup>231</sup>

*Table III.4.b. Fathers' occupations among Jewish medical students abroad and in Hungary*

Father's occupation	Abroad (Vienna, Prague, Bologna, Berlin, 1921, 1926, 1931, 1936)	In Hungary (first year enrollments, 1919-1938)		Class background
		Budapest	Pécs, Szeged and Debrecen	
farmer	7 (1%)	13 (2%)	32 (2%)	lower than middleclass
unskilled and skilled worker	24 (5%)	22 (4%)	59 (4%)	
artisan	35 (7%)	27 (5%)	132 (8%)	
retailer	210 (43%)	102 (19%)	550 (35%)	lower middleclass
private clerk	33 (7%)	83 (15%)	172 (11%)	
public clerk	55 (11%)	40 (7%)	67 (4%)	
specialized public employee	4 (1%)	24 (4%)	25 (2%)	
clergy, teacher, employed intellectual in humanities	17 (3%)	25 (5%)	47 (3%)	middleclass proper
elementary school teacher and director	5 (1%)	12 (2%)	26 (2%)	
doctor, medicine related intellectual	31 (6%)	114 (21%)	161 (10%)	
other professional intellectual	24 (5%)	35 (6%)	78 (5%)	
high bourgeois, entrepreneur	24 (5%)	28 (5%)	121 (8%)	upper middleclass
living from revenues, retired	19 (4%)	14 (3%)	95 (6%)	
Number	488 (100%)	539 (100%)	1565 (100%)	
Missing data	187	none	none	
Total	675	539	1565	

<sup>231</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 119-122.

Table III.4.c. Class background of Jewish medical students abroad and in Hungary

Vienna, Prague, Bologna, Berlin (1921, 1926, 1931, 1936)	In Hungary (1919-1938)	Class background
14%	14%	lower than middleclass
62%	51%	lower middleclass
16%	24%	middleclass proper
5%	7%	upper middleclass
4%	5%	living from revenues, retired
675	2104	Total
675 (100%)	2104 (100%)	Number
187	none	Missing data

Table III.4.d. Class background of Jewish medical students abroad, in Budapest and in the provinces

Vienna, Prague, Bologna, Berlin (1921, 1926, 1931, 1936)	In Hungary (1919-1938)		Class background
	Budapest	Pécs, Szeged and Debrecen	
14%	11%	14%	lower than middleclass
62%	45%	52%	lower middleclass
16%	34%	20%	middleclass proper
5%	5%	8%	upper middleclass
4%	3%	6%	living from revenues, retired
675 (100%)	539 (100%)	1565 (100%)	Number
187	none	none	Missing data
675	539	1565	Total
	2104		

The share of Jews with Hungarian last names was also examined, because the ‘Hungarianization’ of Jewish family names was historically an important marker of assimilation. Unsurprisingly, Jews who emigrated were significantly more likely to have a non-Hungarian last name than those who studied in Hungary. (See Table III.4.e.) Thus, Jews of less assimilated background may have more easily chosen emigration. In addition, they were presumably more familiar with non-Hungarian parts of the former Habsburg Monarchy (with

Vienna and Prague) and may have had a better knowledge of German (to the point of bilingualism) than their more assimilated peers, possibly thanks to less exclusively Hungarian language use in their families.

A case in point is Arthur Linksz, the bilingual son of a Hungarian Modern Orthodox rabbi and a German native-speaker Moravian mother, who went to study medicine in Prague. Last names hinting at “Eastern Jewish” (i.e. Galician, for instance several versions of Abramowitz and Moskowitz) family roots similarly to German last names suggest a less assimilated background than Hungarian last names, but also imply lesser endowment with social capital. Students of such background experienced less pull factors for Vienna, Prague and Berlin than their peers with German last names, but more push factors in Hungary than their peers with Hungarian last names.

*Table III.4.e. The share of Hungarian family names among Jewish medical students abroad and in Hungary*

University location	Study field	Time period	Hungarian family names
Vienna	medicine	1921, 1926, 1931, 1936	27,3%
Prague	medicine	1921, 1926, 1931, 1936	32,6%
Prague	medicine and engineering	1921, 1926, 1931, 1936	33,5%
Budapest	medicine	1920-29	42,9%
Szeged	medicine	1919-1946	42,7%
Pécs	medicine	1918-1951	37,3%
Debrecen	medicine	1919-1953	39,4%

Concerning my own dataset on émigré students, it is more exhaustive regarding geographical information than regarding fathers' professions. (See Tables III.4.f. and III.4.g.) Regarding the whole sample, more than every third student (35%) was born in Budapest. Noteworthy, that interwar Budapest was significantly smaller than the city we know now, since such large districts as Újpest, Rákospalota, Csepel, Kispest, and Pesterzsébet were incorporated only in 1950. Thus, practically even more than 35% of the students lived in the proximity of

the capital, even having the opportunity to get their secondary education there. Therefore, with regard to categorizing regional selection, I used “Budapest and its suburbs” as a region, as was customary before WWII.

*Table III.4.f. Types of birth place among migrant students*

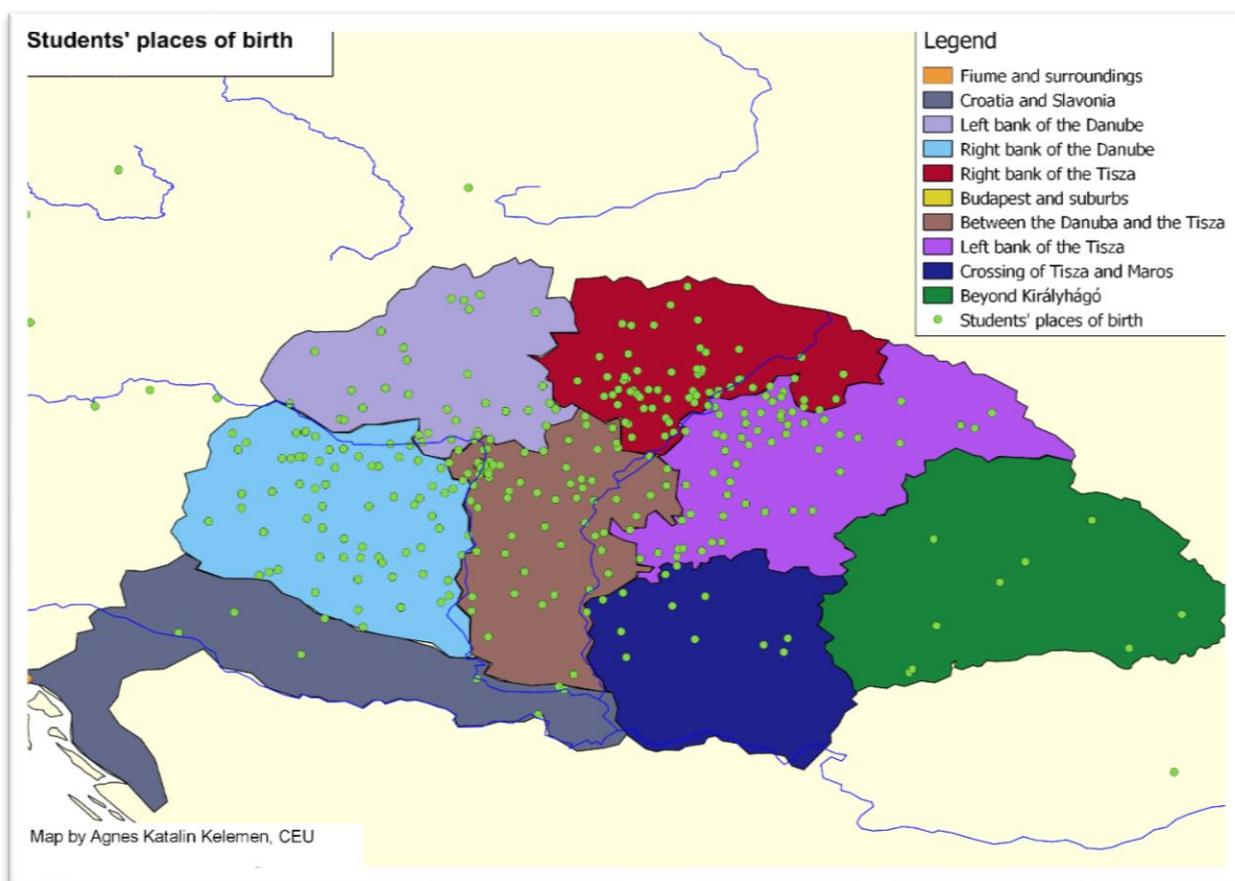
Type of place of birth	The whole sample	Numerus clausus exiles
Budapest	393 (35%)	311 (34%)
Towns with county rights	160 (14%)	129 (14%)
Towns with settled councils	189 (17%)	175 (19%)
Other localities (villages and small towns)	350 (31%)	288 (32%)
Abroad (outside of pre-WWI Hungary)	22 (2%)	7 (1%)
Total	1131	921
Number	1114 (100%)	910 (100%)
Missing data	17	11

*Table III.4.g. Regional selection of migrant students*

Region of birth	The whole sample	Numerus Clausus exiles
Budapest and suburbs	433 (39%)	346 (38%)
Left bank of the Danube	43 (4%)	34 (4%)
Right bank of the Danube (Transdanubia)	154 (14%)	122 (13%)
Between the Danube and the Tisza	150 (13%)	132 (15%)
Fiume and surroundings	2	2
Croatia and Slavonia	4	3
Transylvania	15 (1%)	11 (1%)
Left bank of the Tisza	123 (11%)	107 (12%)
Right bank of the Tisza	159 (14%)	141 (15%)
Crossing of Tisza and Maros	9 (1%)	5 (1%)
Abroad (outside of pre-WWI Hungary)	22 (2%)	7 (1%)
Total	1131	921
Number	1114 (100%)	910 (100%)
Missing data	17	11

When looking at the provenance of numerus clausus exiles within the sample, we see that they were basically as likely to be born in Budapest as anyone. (See Table III.4.f.) More than a third of them (39%) hailed from Budapest and less than a third of them (32%) from small

towns and villages. They similarly determined the whole sample's characteristics in terms of regional selection as well. (See Table III.4.g.) After Budapest and its surroundings the Western and central (Transdanubia and the region between the Danube and the Tisza rivers) and the Northeastern part of pre-Trianon Hungary (the right bank of the Tisza river in regional terms which is now the Eastern part of Slovakia) sent the most students, however, significantly smaller groups stemmed from here than from the capital's surroundings. The following map demonstrates such regional concentrations. (See Image III.4.a.)



*Image III.4.a. The birth places of migrant students*

To sum up, since over four fifths of the sample are *numerus clausus* exiles, their characteristics more or less describe the whole sample. Upward social mobility was an important feature of the group, as half of them came from the lower middleclass or a lower social layer. The hypothesis that emigration functioned as an escape route for the less socially privileged Jewish youth, is confirmed, since Jewish students in Hungary were over twice as

likely to stem from the middleclass proper and above than their peers abroad. Middleclass Jews had an especially high share among those admitted in the Jewish quota in Budapest. At the same time, around half of Jewish students in all the examined medical faculties hailed from the lower middleclass. Thus, higher education remained an important tool of Jewish social mobility in the age of the *numerus clausus*, it was still not merely a function of the Jewish elite's reproduction.

The hypothesis of the prevalence of non-urban youth among *numerus clausus* refugees, on the contrary, was rejected, since over a third of them came from Budapest, in regional terms even more (38%) came from the capital and its surroundings and less than a third from small towns and villages. And yet this was an underrepresentation of Budapest born Jews among *numerus clausus émigrés*, since in Hungary 46% of Jews lived in Budapest.<sup>232</sup> This fact suggests that although the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* functioned within the Pest Israelite Community, there was significant support for the provincial Jewish youth to escape the *numerus clausus* abroad.

### III.5. Exiles of misogyny

As established in the first chapter, “the *Numerus Clausus* was the symbolic moment when anti-Semitism and sexism met”.<sup>233</sup> Not only Jewish, but female and politically undesirable students were also discriminated against in Hungarian higher education in the interwar period. While the lack of “loyalty to the nation”, the term with which the *numerus clausus* excluded revolutionaries of 1918-1919 from the universities, lost from its significance in the admission process, antisemitic and misogynist discrimination did not.

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<sup>232</sup> As noted earlier, according to the 1920 census, 215,512 out of the 473,310 Jews lived in Budapest. Ujvári, *Zsidó lexikon*, 554-555.

<sup>233</sup> Fenyves, “When Sexism Meets Racism,” 87.

Hence, academic misogyny's role in the emigration of Hungarian female students must be recognized throughout the interwar period, just like the role of the ongoing enforcement of the Jewish quota in the emigration of Jewish students even though the Jewish quota did theoretically not exist after the 1928 amendment of the higher educational law. The original idea of the *numerus clausus* was in fact sexist, the "racial quota" was added later and finally the exclusion of women was dropped.<sup>234</sup> However, the largest medical faculty of the country, the one in Budapest, applied a *numerus nullus vis-à-vis* women in the cohorts enrolled between 1920 and 1926.<sup>235</sup>

According to the most recent monograph on women intellectuals in the Horthy-era by Barbara Papp and Balázs Sipos, the subsequent governments of the period did not follow a consistent sexist policy in higher education, but rather restrictions and concessions followed each other.<sup>236</sup> On the whole, nevertheless, the share of female students in Hungarian higher education after peaking in 1916-17 with 16,1% (1187 female students) never reached 15% again until the WWII.<sup>237</sup>

Female and Jewish student emigration were intertwined not only because of the intertwining of sexism and racism, but also because Jewish women were more overschooled compared to other women than Jewish men compared to other men.<sup>238</sup> Jews were, so to say, "overrepresented" among female high school graduates, thus women who could apply to university in the first place. As a consequence, it was practical for antisemites to restrict female

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<sup>234</sup> Borgos, "... 'a mértéktelen beözönlésnek gátat vetni' A zsidó és a nő hallgatók létszámkorlátozásának retorikája a bölcsészkaron;" M. Kovács, *Liberalizmus, radikalizmus, antiszemitizmus*, 76.

<sup>235</sup> Borgos, "... 'a mértéktelen beözönlésnek gátat vetni'", 123.

<sup>236</sup> Papp and Sipos, *Modern, diplomás nő a Horthy-korban*.

<sup>237</sup> Fenyves, "When Sexism Meets Racism," 98.

<sup>238</sup> 38% of women who graduated from high school in 1910-11 in Hungary and 21,2% of men who did so in the same year were Jewish. In the ten years following the partial admission of women to universities, in the University of Budapest, nearly half of female students whereas only nearly one third of male students were Jewish. Viktor Karády, "Nők a modern iskolázás korai fázisában [Women in the Early Phase of Modern Schooling]," in Viktor Karády, *Felekezeti viszonyok és iskolázási egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon, 1867-1945* [Denominational Relations and Educational Inequalities in Hungary, 1867-1945] (Budapest: Replika Kör, 1997), 57-74 (59).

access to universities. On the other hand, Jewish women who managed to enroll, faced less physical campus violence than Jewish men which means that some Jewish women experienced less push factors than their male peers.

On the whole, women and Jewish women even more so had good reasons to feel rejected by Hungarian academia. At the same time, it is known from the biographies of pioneering female intellectuals that even intellectual fathers could be less supportive of the higher education of their daughters than of their sons. A curious case in point is when Otto Loewi, would-be Nobel Laureate in 1936, told his daughter, Anna, who wished to study medicine since age 15 that he disagreed, because women stopped working when they got married. Thus, in his opinion, it was a waste of energy for professors to teach women. The same Otto Loewi supported his son, who did not know what profession to choose, to study medicine.<sup>239</sup>

Having to study abroad, which was for many Hungarian Jews the only way to go to university in the age of the numerus clausus, meant an additional hindrance. According to the social norms of the period women were supposed to live with their families until their marriage. Thus, on the one hand, Jewish families were less happy to send their daughters than their sons abroad, on the other hand, the same families were more likely to support the same daughters' study ambitions if they could have done so in Hungary rather than abroad. Hungarian Jewish women who studied in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna were unmarried when they emigrated – similarly to East Central European Jewish female students in interwar Belgium.<sup>240</sup> Few individuals among them are identifiable as sisters of other (female and male) migrant

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<sup>239</sup> Anna Loewi also graduated in medicine eventually. Werner Hanak-Lettner, "Taunted, Ridiculed and Insulted, Mistreated, Beaten, and Injured. News, Reports, and Recollections, 1875-1938," in *Die Universität. Eine Kampfzone*, edited by Werner Hanak-Lettner, 77-122 (113).

<sup>240</sup> Falek, *A Precarious Life*, 92. It is noteworthy that Falek's study includes Hungarian Jewish women, but only 6 of the thousand female students she examined had come from Hungary, because Hungarians did not preferentially choose French speaking universities.

students. Nevertheless we know of women who studied in different foreign cities and study fields than their brothers and were equally supported by the families in their endeavors, such as the Bauhaus architect Esther Bánki, the younger sister of the medical student Ödön Bánki.<sup>241</sup>

As the sources analyzed in the second chapter show, many numerus clausus refugees worked while studying in order to make ends meet. Most potential student jobs were only open to men, such as being porters, waiters, and carrying furniture – as the poet Attila József, was discovered to do by the artist Anna Lesznai in Vienna.<sup>242</sup> In Weimar Berlin – which functioned as the capital of European cinema – a Hungarian film producer helped numerus clausus exiles to make money as extras.<sup>243</sup> But the typical student job viable for both sexes was tutoring youth or less capable fellow students.<sup>244</sup>

Hence, the questions I seek to answer with my sample is whether the proportion of women among Hungarian students abroad was higher or lower than among students in Hungary and whether Jews were more overrepresented among migrant female students than among migrant male students. In addition, were women more likely to stem from intellectual and middleclass families than men due to contemporary patriarchal society making social mobility less viable for women than for men? In the end, since the level of urbanization of the environment from where students stemmed is also an important part of describing social background and social mobility, whether women came from a more urban environment than their male peers, is also an important question.

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<sup>241</sup> Esther Bánki, “‘Denn Du denkst doch nicht etwa, dass eine Frau ein Haus bauen kann.’ Das Leben der Architektin Zsuzsanna Bánki 1912–1944,” in *Entfernt: Frauen des Bauhauses während der NS-Zeit – Verfolgung und Exil* [Removed: The Women of the Bauhaus during National Socialism – Persecution and Exile], edited by Inge Hansen-Schaberg, Wolfgang Thöner, Adriane Feustel (München: Edition Text + Kritik, 2012), 159-174.

<sup>242</sup> Anna Valachi, “‘A Nő számomra rejtély’ – József Attila asszonyai [‘The Woman Is a Riddle for Me’ – Women in the Life of Attila József] (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2013), 94. Attila József was not Jewish, but was practically excluded from the University of Szeged in 1925 for being politically unacceptable and therefore left for Vienna where his existence was as precarious as that of the numerus clausus exiles.

<sup>243</sup> Miller, “A <Numerus Clausus száműzöttjei>: A berlini felsőoktatási intézetekben 1920 és 1933 között.”

<sup>244</sup> Arthur Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*; Farádi, *Diagnózis*; Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*.

Regarding the whole sample, 124 students (11%) were women, thus a lower proportion than among students in Hungary.<sup>245</sup> However, in Hungary women had the largest share of the student body in faculties of humanities which are not represented in my sample.<sup>246</sup> Hence, we need to compare relevant faculties. Among the medical students in the sample women had a share of 15%, among the engineering students a share of 2%. Meanwhile in Hungary in 1931-32, around the middle of the period under examination here, 15,7% of medical and 0,3 % of engineering students were women.<sup>247</sup> Thus, in medicine the gender proportion was nearly the same among students who studied in Hungary and abroad. With regard to engineering, the share of women is significantly higher among emigrating students than among those who studied in Hungary where in the period concerned women could study at a technical university only in exceptional cases. 103 (83%) of the 124 women of my sample were *numerus clausus* exiles which is slightly higher than their share among men (81%).

Since in Hungary female university students were characteristically recruited from higher social layers than male students, it was expected that also among migrant students, women would be more likely to stem from the middleclass and the high bourgeoisie than their male peers.<sup>248</sup> Contrary to this hypothesis, the class background of female and male émigré students was very similar. 62% of women and 61% of men came from the lower middleclass, 21% of women and 17% of men from the middleclass proper (See Table III.5.a.). Thus, the sample does not prove what one intuitively assumes about women having lower chance for upward social mobility than their brothers.

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<sup>245</sup> In seven cases the sex of the student could not be decided due to the unreadability of the first name.

<sup>246</sup> Followed by pharmacy and medical schools. Papp and Sipos, *Modern, diplomás nő a Horthy-korban*, 118. Unfortunately, we do not know the number of Hungarian women in foreign universities, because the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* only contained the sum number of Hungarian female and male students abroad.

<sup>247</sup> Karády, "Nők a modern iskolázás korai fázisában", 59.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

*Table III.5.a. Social mobility of female and male migrant students: Fathers' occupations<sup>249</sup>*

Father's occupation	Women		Men		Class background
farmer	2 (2%)	12%	11 (2%)	13%	lower than middleclass
unskilled and skilled worker	3 (3%)		24 (4%)		
artisan	5 (6%)		44 (7%)		
retailer	30 (35%)	62%	234 (38%)	61%	lower middleclass
private clerk	9 (10%)		49 (8%)		
public clerk	13 (13%)		86 (14%)		
specialized public employee	3 (3%)		8 (1%)		
clergy, teacher, employed intellectual in humanities	3 (2%)	21%	20 (3%)	17%	middleclass proper
elementary school teacher and director	none		6 (1%)		
doctor, medicine related intellectual	9 (10%)		35 (6%)		
other professional intellectual	6 (7%)		42 (7%)		
high bourgeois, entrepreneur	3 (3%)	3%	35 (6%)	6%	upper middleclass
living from revenues, retired	2 (2%)		25 (4%)		
Total	124		1000		
Number	86 (100%)		619 (100%)		
Missing data	38		381		

The geographical selection of women and men was likewise similar. Both in terms of the type of birth place and birth region, as tables III.5.b. and III.5.c. demonstrate. Budapest and its suburbs sent the largest proportion of the migrant students to Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna. The three following regions –Transdanubia, the territory between the Danube and the Tisza, and the right bank of the Tisza river – sent a similar proportion of the group, but significantly less than the capital and its suburbs.

<sup>249</sup> In seven cases the first name was unreadable and hence the student's sex could not be identified.

*Table III.5.b. Types of birth place of female and male migrant students*

Type of place of birth	Women (124)	Men (1000)
Budapest	42 (34%)	347 (35%)
Towns with county rights	13 (10%)	146 (15%)
Towns with settled councils	26 (21%)	26 (16%)
Other localities (villages and small towns)	35 (28%)	315 (32%)
Abroad	5 (4%)	17 (2%)
Total	124	1000
Number	121 (100%)	988 (100%)
Missing data	3	12

*Table III.5.c. Regional selection of female and male migrant students*

Region of birth	Women (124)	Men (1000)
Budapest and suburbs	47 (39%)	382 (39%)
Left bank of the Danube	3 (3%)	40 (4%)
Right bank of the Danube (Transdanubia)	16 (13%)	138 (14%)
Between Danube and Tisza	16 (13%)	134 (14%)
Fiume and surroundings	none	1
Croatia and Slavonia	2 (2%)	2
Transylvania	none	15 (2%)
Left bank of the Tisza	16 (13%)	107 (11%)
Right bank of the Tisza	13 (11%)	146 (15%)
Crossing of Tisza and Maros	2 (2%)	7 (1%)
Abroad	5 (4%)	17 (2%)
Total	124	1000
Number	120 (100%)	989 (100%)
Missing data	4	11

To sum up, *numerus clausus exiles* basically constituted the same majority among female than among male migrant students in the sample. The hypothesis that female migrant students came from higher social layers than men and thus were less characterized by social mobility, was not confirmed. In addition, the hypothesis about their more urban provenance was proven wrong.

### III.6. The matrix of Hungarian and Jewish self-identification

University enrollment forms tell us what students wanted the administrators to think of them. In some contexts, it was not the complete truth, most notably with regard to the place of residence when enrolling in a Czechoslovak institution of higher education. Other questions

are not as much about truth or lies as about reflections on someone's temporary self-perception, such as nationality and religion.

The Czechoslovak authorities were enormously suspicious of Hungarian students' places of residence in Czechoslovakia, since it was assumed that they only claimed this residence in order to avoid paying the high tuition fees imposed on foreign students. Many Hungarian Jews indeed had relatives in the territory of current Slovakia, thus could easily claim residence there, especially if they or their parents had been born there. The same strategy did not work in Austria, even though motivation to use it certainly existed, since tuition fees for foreigners were very high there as well.<sup>250</sup> In contrast, in Italy foreign students enjoyed partial or full tuition waiver (depending on the university and on the academic year), hence they were interested in claiming their residence and citizenship in Hungary.<sup>251</sup>

Autobiographical evidence confirms that the Czechoslovak clerks' suspicions were grounded. It seems that indeed students in the precarious situation the *numerus clausus* put them in, attempted to seize every possibility to study abroad and to decrease the costs thereof. The country of birth and the country of residence was different in 57% of the cases in the Prague sample – counting on the basis of post-1920 state borders, thus involving moving of the person not only of the border. However, not only peregrination but the migration of families too was a normal fact of life, especially in pre-WWI Austro-Hungary. Hence, differing country

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<sup>250</sup> Foreigners paid a triple tuition fee. If they passed a colloquium successfully each semester, they could be “*gleichgestellt*” (equalized) with Austrian students, while Austrian students were exempted from tuition fees for the same achievement. Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 54.

<sup>251</sup> In 1923 the government instructed universities to exempt foreign students from tuition fees for two years and in 1926 to exempt them from half of the fees for the entire length of their studies. For entitlement to this discount the students needed to prove their foreign citizenship and residence in their home country. Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* [History of the Italian Jews under Fascism] (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 80. Francesca Pelini and Ilaria Pavan, *La doppia epurazione. L'Università di Pisa e le leggi razziali tra guerra e dopoguerra* [The Double Purge. The University of Pisa and the Racial Laws Between War and Post-War Period] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 43.

of citizenship and of residence cannot be simply attributed to false residence claims. Arthur Linksz's uneasiness to answer the question where he came from was quite typical:

what should I respond to the question where I come from? From Pest? I lived there some of the good years of my adulthood and I came here [in the United States] from there. From Galgóc? There I was merely born. From Devecser? I was a child there. Some say I am from Pápa, I indeed went to gymnasium there, some say I am from Kőszeg, because my father became the rabbi of Kőszeg later.<sup>252</sup>

Linksz indeed did not really belong to former Upper Hungary or Slovakia. From the point of view of Czechoslovak authorities, it was logical to see him as someone exploiting every contingent circumstance he could (that he happened to be born in Galgóc). At the same time it is understandable that he did everything in his power to study where it was the easiest for him which was Czechoslovakia where he had family ties.

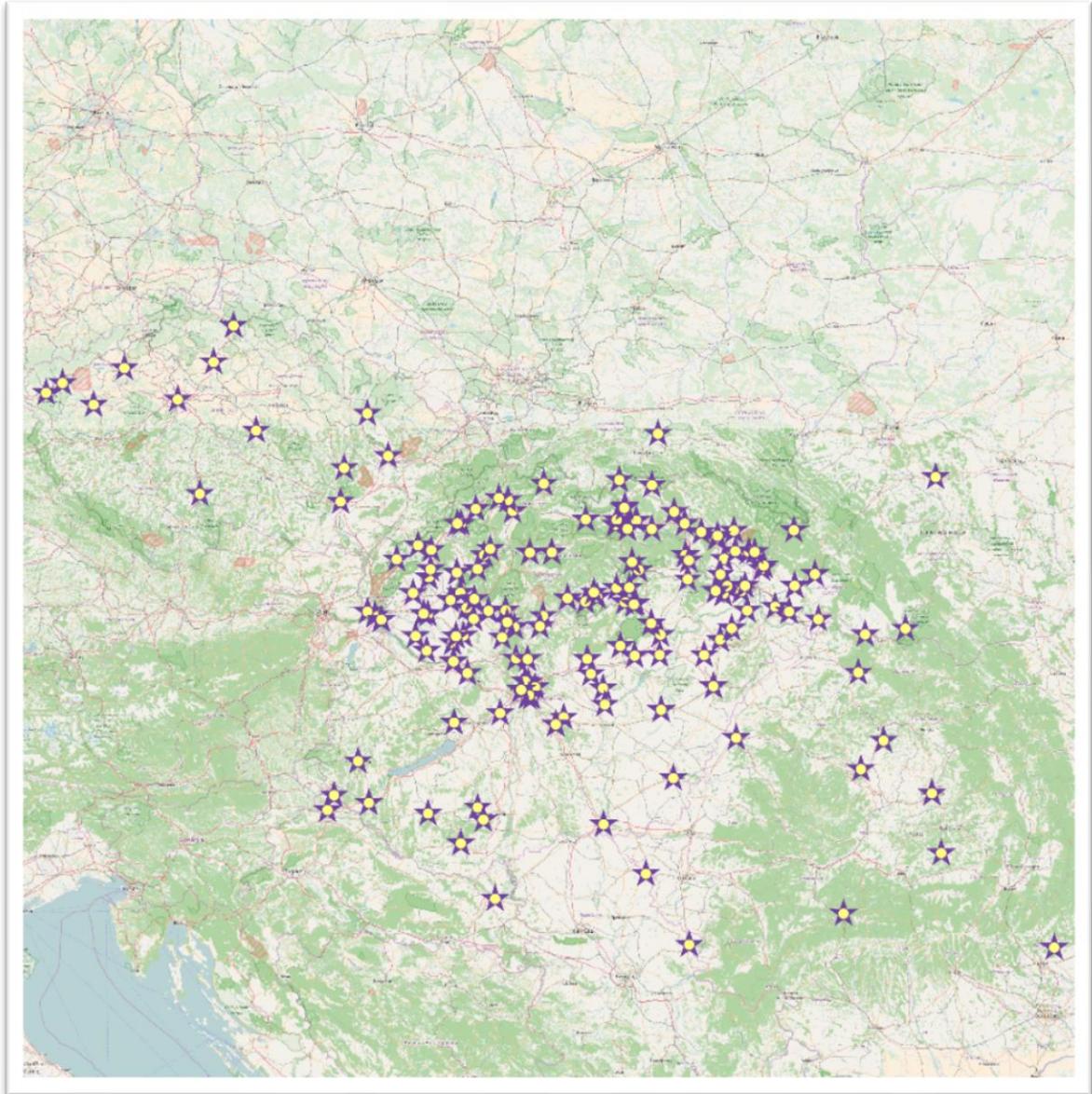
That being said, those who enrolled in Prague show a tendency to be resident in a different country than their country of birth and a different place of residence from that of their fathers (37%), unlike students enrolled in the three other examined cities, including Vienna where it was similarly disadvantageous to be a foreigner. In addition, Jewish families extended not only beyond the Hungarian-Czechoslovak, but also beyond the Hungarian-Austrian border, hence many Hungarian Jews had relatives in Austria.<sup>253</sup> Yet among the students enrolled in Vienna, 85% were resident in the same country where they were born and 84% of them claimed to be resident in the same place where their fathers.

Mapping the localities Hungarian medical students in Prague claimed as their permanent addresses and their fathers' residences visualize the discrepancy that made Czechoslovak clerks suspicious. The students seem to have permanent addresses in Czechoslovakia (See Image III.6.a.), while their fathers' residences have a visible

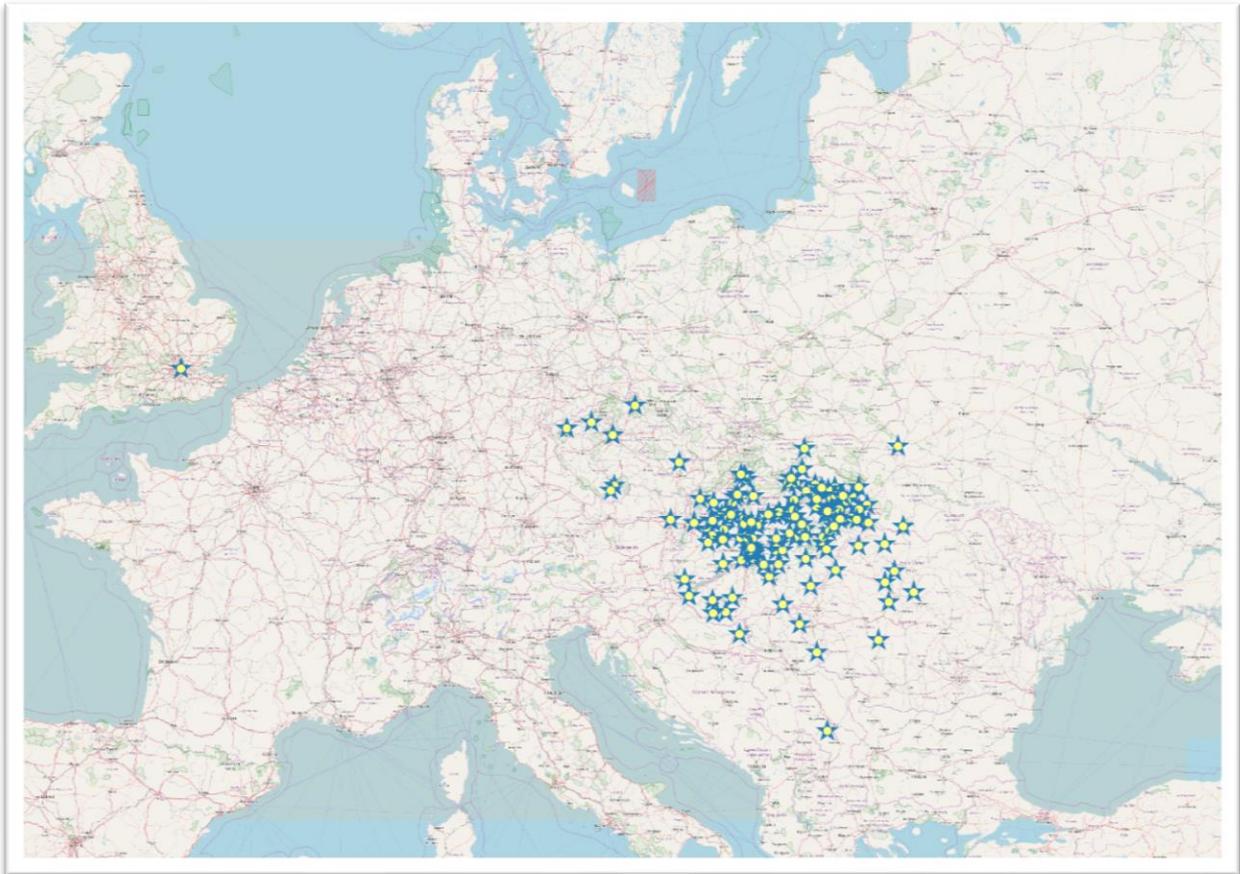
<sup>252</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 49.

<sup>253</sup> Famous examples are the Polanyi siblings and Arthur Koestler. Laura, Adolf and Karl Polanyi were born in Vienna and had relatives there, but by the time when their younger brother, Michael, was born, the family moved to Budapest. Arthur Koestler had an Austrian mother, was brought up in Budapest but ultimately graduated from secondary school in Vienna.

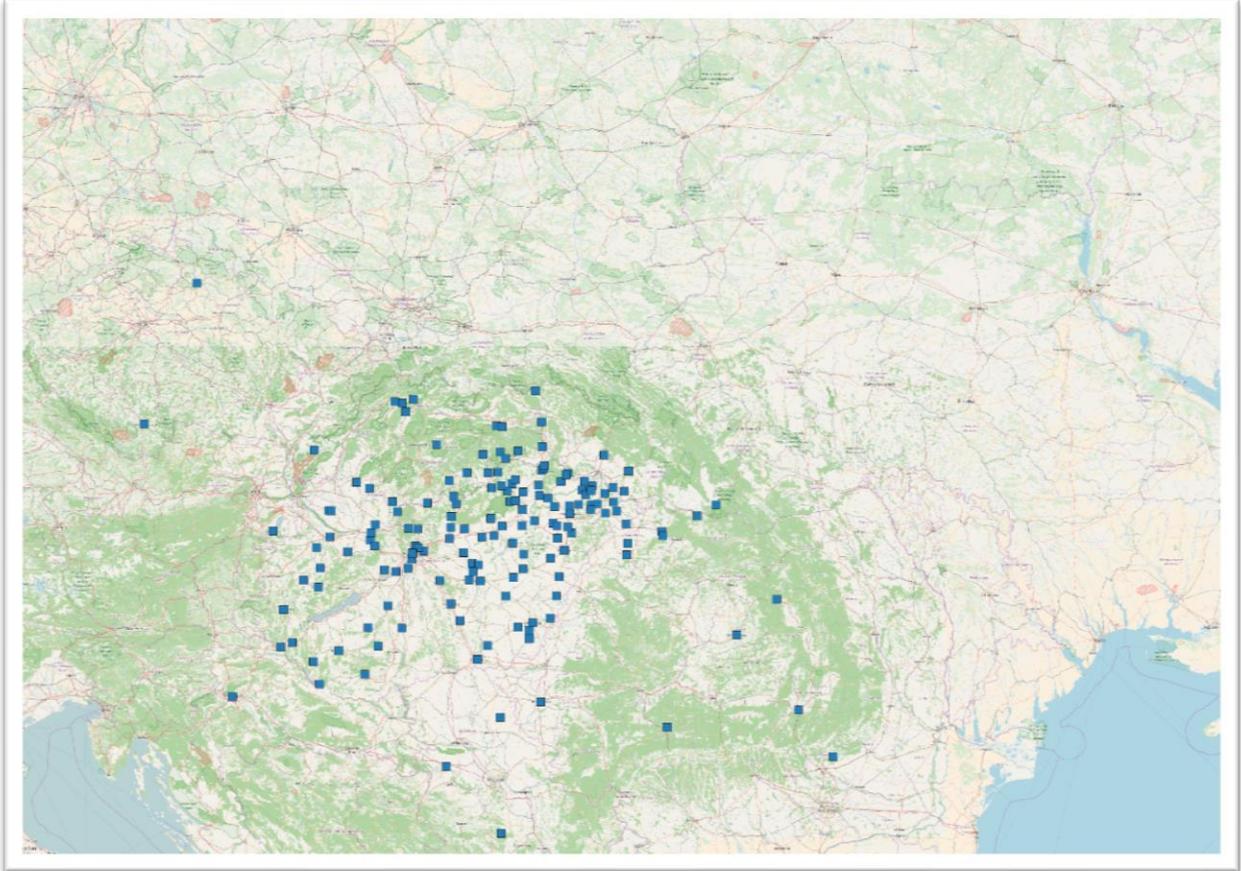
concentration in post-Trianon Hungarian territory (See Image III.6.b.). The contrast is especially interesting when mapping the same students' birth places whose concentration delineates a map of post-Trianon Hungary (See Image III.6.c.).



*Image III.6.a. Places of residence of Hungarian medical students enrolled in the German University of Prague*



*Image III.6.b. Residence places of fathers of Hungarian medical students enrolled in the German University of Prague*



*Image III.6.c. Places of birth of Hungarian medical students enrolled in the German University of Prague*

Moving beyond the geographical coordinates of one's provenance, the act of filling an enrollment form also provided an opportunity for students (and for the historian who studies them) to position themselves in a matrix of self-identification. Depending on the location of the university and the time of enrollment, they could be Hungarian in terms of mother tongue, nationality, or citizenship and Jewish in terms of religion or nationality.

In Vienna and Prague there was a possibility to self-identify as Jewish in terms of religion *and* nationality as well, although in Vienna the category was labelled with the more racial term "*Volkszugehörigkeit*" (ethnic belonging). In 1926, 1931 and 1936 the enrollment form contained a row for nation and the legal category of a Jewish nationality existed both in

Austria and in Czechoslovakia – unlike in Hungary where even the racist *numerus clausus* law was implemented on the basis of religious affiliation.

We know the self-reported nationality of 60% of the sample. Since the possibility of reporting one's national belonging when enrolling only existed in the two countries – Austria and Czechoslovakia – where Jews were perceived as members of a national as well as a religious group, it is significant that 102 students declared Jewish as their ethnicity or nationality. At the same time, it is important to note that students of Jewish nationality who turn up in more than one academic year I examined, often switched between Jewish and Hungarian nationality. Thus, their Jewish national self-identification was not necessarily an expression of Zionist commitment. Yet it means that they did not reject the idea that Jews were possibly a nation(ality), contrary to the mainstream Jewish public opinion in contemporary Hungary.

In the Hungarian legal system, the Jewish nationality did not exist. The *numerus clausus* was endorsed on the basis of religion. Jewish nationality, or more often Jewish *nép faj* (*Volksstamm*) was mostly evoked in an antisemitic context, in the executive ordinance of the *numerus clausus* law most notably. A positive claim to Jewish nationality was rare.<sup>254</sup> The Jewish communities' institutional structure – on whom fundraising activity for the sake of *numerus clausus* refugees relied – was dominated by assimilationists who thought of Jews as “Hungarians of the Israelite faith”, who were also conservative and had been terrified enough by Bolshevism in 1919 to be in several aspects supportive of the antisemitic new *Christian Course* for its anti-Communism.

In contrast, in Vienna and Prague Zionists were an important stream within the Jewish scene and these cities gave place to important Zionist congresses during the interwar period. In

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<sup>254</sup> Unlike among Hungarian Jews in Czechoslovakia and Transylvania after WWI. É. Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció*; Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia*; Gidó, *Két évtized*.

addition, in Vienna Zionism was also important in university life. Zionist was one of the three main categories of student fraternities (*Burschenschaften*), besides Pan-Germanists and Liberals. Importantly, the *Burschenschaft* scene was a central part of student life, as half of the students “wore colors”, thus belonged to a *Burschenschaft*.<sup>255</sup>

This visibly had an impact on the Hungarian wandering students, since almost every fifth (18%) Hungarian Jewish student declared to be ethnically Jewish and in Prague every tenth Hungarian Jew reported to be of Jewish nationality. However, we must remember that in Prague engineering students are also part of the sample, among whom the proportion of Jews was lower than among medical students.

Vienna offered a variety of student associations. Among others there were student clubs for Jewish students organized by study field, such as the “*Jüdisch-akademischer Techniker Verband*” (Jewish-Academic Engineer Association) and the “*Akademischer Verein Jüdischer Mediziner*”. The latter had 12 members who also belonged to the “*Bécsi Magyar nyelvű Főiskolai Hallgatók Egyesülete/Verein Ungarisch Sprechender Wiener Hochschüler*” (Association of Hungarian Speaking Viennese Students).<sup>256</sup>

In addition, among the 92 medical student members of the “*Bécsi Magyar nyelvű Főiskolai Hallgatók Egyesülete*”, 81 were Jewish, including the president and the first secretary.<sup>257</sup> Seven of the medical student members were not Hungarian citizens, and six of these seven were Jewish. Thus, this club also attracted Jews who came from territories lost to Hungary in 1920. This suggests that by calling the club an association of *Hungarian speakers*

<sup>255</sup> Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue. The First Volume of an Autobiography: 1905-1931* (London: Vintage, 2005), 107-09.

<sup>256</sup> “Mitgliederliste des akademischen Vereines jüdischer Mediziner aufgenommen am 5. November 1927 [List of Members of the Jewish Medical Students’ Association on November 5, 1927]”, S164.120, Archives of the University of Vienna; “Statuten des Vereines ungarisch sprechender Wiener Hochschüler 6.XII.1929 [Statutes of the Hungarian Speaking Viennese Students, December 6, 1929]”, S164.201, Archives of the University of Vienna.

<sup>257</sup> Looking at the whole membership, not only at medical students (who were the majority with 92 students out of 148), we find that 17 out of 20 students who were in the leading committee of the association, were Jewish.

rather than of *Hungarians* was a choice for the sake of inclusion. A concrete case in point is that one of the members was a Jew from Transylvania with a Hungarian name and Hungarian mother tongue, of Jewish religion and he identified as Romanian by nationality. It seems that those students who were interested in joining groups based on their origin at all, were enthusiastic both about their Jewish and Hungarian identities.

### III.7. Conclusion

The picture that unfolds from the sample of Hungarian migrant students in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna recalls the motto of this chapter by Stephan Zweig, who saw a massive drive in Jewish merchants' children to leave commerce behind and become intellectuals in general, and liberal professionals in particular. The hypothesis that the large majority of migrant students in the age of the *numerus clausus* were *numerus clausus* refugees was confirmed and even its extent (81%) matched the contemporary expectation (80%). Four out of five Hungarian students abroad were *numerus clausus* refugees, both among women and men.

The hypotheses connected to social mobility were not all confirmed. The empirical study proved that peregrination was an escape route to evade the *numerus clausus* for the less privileged Jewish youth. *Numerus clausus* refugees were less likely to stem from the middleclass or the *high bourgeoisie* than Jewish students who studied in Hungary. Thus, social capital was indeed an important factor in getting in the Jewish quota. At the same time, surprisingly, half of Jewish students within Hungary also hailed from the lower middleclass. Thus, the *numerus clausus* did not deprive higher education from its function of means of Jewish social mobility even though it gravely restricted the number of Jewish students in Hungarian universities.

The hypothesis about the geographical aspect of social mobility of *numerus clausus* exiles was, rejected. Over a third was born in Budapest and less than a third came from small

towns and villages. In terms of regional selection, after Budapest and its suburbs, the Western (Transdanubia) and central parts (between the Danube and the Tisza rivers) of current (2019) Hungary and the Eastern part of current Slovakia (right bank of the Tisza river) sent the most students. At the same time, in Hungary half of Jewry lived in the capital and around it, hence the fact that this was not the case among *numerus clausus émigrés*, demonstrates the social mobility of provincial Jewry despite of the *numerus clausus*.

With regard to the hypothesis about gender inequalities, it turned out that only one in ten students abroad and *numerus clausus* exiles were women (11%). Thus, the interwar period's social norms keeping women in their home towns with their families until marriage rather than sending them abroad to study greatly hindered aspiring university students to escape misogyny and the *numerus clausus* abroad. At the same time – contrary to expectations – female students who did peregrinate, were not characterized by a higher social and more urban provenance than their male peers.

On the whole, from the university documents the upwardly mobile son of a Jewish small-scale merchant from the capital, emerges as the '*idealtyp*e' of the *numerus clausus émigré*. Their positioning themselves in the matrix of religious, ethnic and national self-identification was visibly influenced by the realities experienced abroad. In Austria and Czechoslovakia, the category of Jewish nationality existed and almost one fifth of the sample identified with it in their university documents, even though in Hungary this legal category did not exist. In Hungary Jewish affiliation was seen as religious belonging, and the mainstream Jewish public opinion insisted on the concept of "Hungarians of the Israelite faith" as well. In Vienna we find *numerus clausus* exiles as active members of both Jewish and Hungarian student associations, thus even if many did not reject Zionism and the concept of a Jewish nation, many held on to their Hungarian national identity.

## IV. Students' narratives of their emigration\*

### IV.1. Introduction

I still have my registration book from the German medical faculty of Prague: a balding hollow-cheeked smileless young man's photo looks at me who wears a black cutaway coat and a simple shirt. This is how it started.<sup>258</sup>

Thus contemplated the elderly American ophthalmologist Arthur Linksz about his youth in one of many ego documents analyzed in the present chapter. The dissertation has focused so far on the external discourses on the migration of numerous *clausus* exiles: how it was seen by journalists, by Jewish intellectuals who supported the young émigrés in the framework of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*, by Hungarian diplomats abroad, and how the historian can characterize these students in sociological terms. The aim of this chapter is to finally give the floor to the subjects, the numerous *clausus* exiles themselves, by turning the attention to their own voice. Hence here the historical analysis is based on sources transmitting their own narratives: texts written, published and edited by students.

The sources of this chapter are letters, diaries, memoirs and autobiographies. In order to refer to these four different genres with one expression, I use the concept of the *ego document* that is writing where the author and the narrator coincide, in addition, they are continuously present in the text as the writing and describing subject – following the definition by Jacques Presser.<sup>259</sup> Most of this chapter's sources are published (thus, also edited for a target audience) *memoirs*. *Memoirs* focus on a certain delineated period in one's life – as opposed to an

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\* This chapter includes parts of my contribution to the Festschrift volume honoring Tibor Frank: Ágnes Katalin Kelemen, "Migration and Exile: Hungarian Medical Students in Vienna and Prague, 1920-1938", in *Az emberi sors és a történelem kereszteződésében – Tanulmánykötet Frank Tibor 70. születésnapjára/At the crossroads of human fate and history – Studies in honour of Tibor Frank on his 70th birthday*, edited by János Kenyeres, Miklós Lojkó, Tamás Magyarics, Éva Eszter Szabó (Budapest, Eötvös Loránd University, School of English and American Studies, 2018), 222-241.

<sup>258</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 377.

<sup>259</sup> Jacques Presser, *Memoires als geschiedbron* [Memoirs as Historical Sources] (Winkler Prins Encyclopedie, VIII, Amsterdam and Brussels, 1958), 208–10. Referred to by Kaspar von Greyerz, "Ego-Documents: The Last Word?" *German History* 28, no. 3 (2010): 273-282 (277).

autobiography which is simply the story of one's whole life written by themselves.<sup>260</sup> A smaller part of the sources are autobiographies, published and unpublished letters and a published diary. I also completed the information found therein with interviews with descendants of the authors. Numerus clausus exiles themselves are not alive any longer, hence I could not interview them. Reference will be made to an interview made with Simone Teich Alasia, while the oral history interview made with Miklós Kun in 1988-1989, will not be used, because it would give overproportionate space to one subject and harm the intention to give floor to multiple personal perspectives.

On the basis of ego documents written by over a dozen of students it will be argued the students' interpretation of their peregrination matched the exile narrative of journalists. However, it was not simply due to the internalization of an external discourse, but it was an interconnection between students and their supporters. As Chapter II also argued, the émigré students appeared in the contemporary Hungarian (especially Jewish) press not only as a topic but as contributors as well.

After a theoretical reflection on the methodological challenges of using ego documents in historical research, the chapter will analyze students' narratives about their life abroad – including the specificities of women's peregrination –, about the countries where they studied and about the rise of antisemitism and Nazism.

#### IV.2. The challenges of using ego documents in historical research

Historians have traditionally been skeptical about using diaries, memoirs and autobiographies as potential sources for research, since they mostly transmit information whose correspondence to “hard facts” gained by studying and cross-checking documents of preferably three independent sources cannot be verified. Ego documents used to be treated as inferior

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<sup>260</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1.

sources providing curiosities of little importance about the past, to be taken less seriously than sources produced by institutions or chroniclers.

The impact of the linguistic turn and microhistory and the increasing attention towards the humanly lived experience, however, changed the relationship between historian, historical reality and documents. Now we accept the parallel existence of *realities* and value individuals' narratives about their realities as perceived by them. This makes the person writing about their own experience an authority about their reality.<sup>261</sup> For instance, György Ránki, a major Hungarian historian active in the 1960s, *confronted* memoirs by Hungarian WWII-time military leaders with reality, whereas the contemporary historian, Gábor Gyáni, uses diaries and memoirs for the sake of knowing the subjective reality of the authors and without the intention to make them accountable for corresponding to hard facts.<sup>262</sup> Such subjective realities do not need to correspond to the one overarching narrative historians construct of the past and used to treat as superior to recollections of people who witnessed those periods of the past.

In addition, interest in the experience of “common people” has grown and ego documents provide a better insight into “history from below” than the traditionally used sources produced by institutions and people in power. The writer, Virginia Woolf, captured this motivation with a belletristic expression when she argued for reading autobiographies to learn about “the lives of the obscure” as a source of information about certain sorts of people who would otherwise remain unknown.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Zsolt Horváth K., “Önarcképcsarnok. A személyes emlékezés mint történelmi probléma [A Gallery of Self-Portraits. Personal Memory as a Historical Problem],” in *A történész szerszámosládája. A jelenkori történelmi gondolkodás néhány aspektusa* [The Historian's Toolkit. Some Aspects of Contemporary Historical Thought], edited by András Szekeres (Budapest: L'Harmattan-Atelier, 2002): 81-102 (101).

<sup>262</sup> György Ránki, *Emlékiratok és valóság Magyarország második világháborús szerepéről* [Memoirs and Reality about Hungary's Role in WWII] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964); Gábor Gyáni, “A napló mint társadalomtörténelmi forrás – A közhivatalnok identitása [Diaries as Social Historical Sources – The Identity of the Public Clerk],” *Szabolcs-Szatmár-Beregi Levéltári Évkönyv* 12 (1997): 25-33.

<sup>263</sup> Gershon Bacon, “Introduction,” in *Autobiography and Memoir*, edited by Gershon Bacon. Special Issue of *Nashim – A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*. (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 1998), 7-10 (7).

The subjects of this dissertation would probably not remain entirely unknown, since – as the previous chapter has shown – university documents tell us a lot of information about enrolled students. In addition, the exiles of the *numerus clausus* died or lived through the Holocaust, hence many of them appear in databases of Shoah victims or documents about survivors, as the next chapter will show. Last but not least, many of them featured in documents connected to their professional careers, even as authors of scientific publications.

There would probably be less memoirs to access the perspectives of *numerus clausus* exiles if it was not for the Holocaust, since this is the trauma that triggered many, including non-famous people, to write their stories. Some survivors felt a moral obligation to tell their stories and in the early post-war years Hungarian survivors were at the forefront of documenting the genocide and encouraged each other to testify.<sup>264</sup> Several decades later, upon confronting the fact that after a while there would no longer be survivors to testify, more survivors wrote and published their recollections. The memoirs referred to in this chapter (with one exception) belong to this group. Since they were written decades after the narrated events, the authors' perception of the events was influenced by experiences and judgments they gained later in life. This is something the historian must keep in mind and something the authors themselves call attention to, especially those prone to self-reflection, like Arthur Linksz.

These memoirs are not only from decades later than the experience my research focuses on – peregrination in the age of the *numerus clausus* – but also after the Shoah, a traumatic breaking point both in the authors' lives and in the collective perception of history. The experience of the Holocaust overshadowed memories of the pre-war years, moreover it made the experience of having to study abroad seem less significant than it was in the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, the moment or period of experience bracketed in memoirs by *numerus*

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<sup>264</sup> Ferenc Laczó, "From European Fascism to the Fate of the Jews: Early Hungarian Jewish Monographs on the Holocaust," in *Catastrophe and Utopia: Jewish Intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s*, edited by Ferenc Laczó and Joachim von Puttkamer (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 175-204 (175).

clausus exiles (or any Shoah survivor) is usually the Holocaust and the period of studies tends to be merely part of a prelude. Yet, some intellectuals who were particularly committed to and successful in their careers wrote in detail about their university studies abroad and thus enable us to capture the voice of the subjects with regard to the numerous clausus related emigration.

Moreover, there is a memoir where the bracketed time is exactly the time spent studying abroad because of the numerous clausus. This memoir, “*Snapshots from the life of Hungarian students abroad*” by Lili Fenyő, published in 1929, makes a claim to be a testimony of a collective experience of students abroad.<sup>265</sup> This booklet also happens to be the only memoir written by a female numerous clausus émigré (to the best of my knowledge). Fortunately, numerous letters written by other women in the same situation survived. In order to represent female perspectives on the numerous clausus related emigration, reference will be made, to the diary of Dora Klein, a Polish Jewish student in Fascist Italy and to letters by Ida Somló, a Hungarian Jewish woman from Yugoslavia who studied in Germany and corresponded with a number of Hungarian Jewish fellow students.

The sources of this chapter pose challenges connected to their being ego documents. They may include imprecise or misremembered information. Most of them are memoirs written decades after the events recalled and therefore the authors’ memories were filtered through experiences they gained later. In addition, their memories about their studies abroad were overshadowed by their memories related to the Shoah. Also, the authors naturally present themselves in a light they find favorable. It is more in their interest to grasp the reader’s empathy than to inform the reader very precisely about the past if this would jeopardize empathy. These challenges, however, do not diminish the value of these sources for the social

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<sup>265</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*.

history of the numerus clausus exiles as ego documents are important for the author's voice rather than for the information contained.<sup>266</sup>

Memoirs were historically understood as *mémoire (les mémoires)*, recollections by the publicly prominent who chronicled their social accomplishments. These recollections often bracketed one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span.<sup>267</sup> However, witnesses of collective historical traumas, such as the Shoah, receive attention in their quality of survivors and thus their recollections can be regarded as memoirs even if they were not prominent people in terms of being well known.

As emphasized earlier, the story here told in this dissertation is the social history of the numerus clausus exiles as a group with a focus on students who aimed to become liberal professionals rather than a collective biography of famous scientists. That being said, it must be noted that many of the memoir authors among the numerus clausus exiles achieved success in their career and hence within their own professions their names are well-known.

Among the authors of my sources, Arthur Koestler is the best known, as he became a public intellectual and author. In a strict sense Koestler was not a numerus clausus exile, since he emigrated at age 15 with his parents, thus he did not move to Vienna for the sake of university studies. Nevertheless, he was a Hungarian and a Jew and a student of the Viennese *Technische Hochschule* in the age of the numerus clausus and hence his autobiography is a relevant source.

Austria also features in the autobiographies of Miklós Kun and László Farádi, both of whom studied medicine in Vienna. With regard to Czechoslovakia, we have ego documents in more genres and by students of different fields – the memoir of medical students Arthur Links and an autobiography by Miklós Kun (he first studied medicine in Prague then in Vienna) and

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<sup>266</sup> Tzvi Howard Adelman, "Self, Other and Community: Jewish Women's Autobiographies," in *Autobiography and Memoir*, edited by Gershon Bacon, 116-127 (118).

<sup>267</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 1.

the memoir of the engineer László Kozma, in addition to the letters of György Kis and Miklós Radnóti, who studied in a college specialized in textile engineering. Since Kun studied both in Czechoslovakia and Austria, he provides a comparison of the two countries in terms of hospitality towards foreign Jewish students.

Jacob Katz's autobiography telling about his studies in Germany is heavily influenced by the knowledge that the Nazi takeover of Germany was a prelude to the genocide of European Jewry. Interestingly, with the help of Bence Szabolcsi's letters we can read Katz's autobiography in parallel with a student's view on the birth of Weimar Germany. Two memoirs include experiences from Italy – Simon Teich's and Lili Fenyő's.

#### IV.3. Exile or not?

Individual perceptions of living and studying abroad naturally varied, yet most students started telling this episode of their lives with a description of feeling lost. Lili Fenyő, who went to Italy without previous knowledge of the Italian language and with little information on the specificities of different universities there, depicts her feeling of disorientation upon arrival as a communal experience:

One goes to Padua, because a famous medical professor lectures there. The other goes to Florence, because if being forced to go abroad, they prefer Florence, the city of arts. The third chooses Rome. Catania is the choice of the fourth, because it's cheaper there. The fifth rolls the dice on a map. Where does it fall? They will go there. After all, it does not matter. Nobody is expected by anyone, nobody has a destination. We can go anywhere, if there is a university, where it is possible to study. [...] We are not going anywhere. We are only coming from somewhere, where we are banned from studying.<sup>268</sup>

Feeling lost and homesick especially characterized those who had no routine in living abroad and far away from their families, as Miklós Kun remembered over seven decades later: "I was far away from home for the first time, I did not know anybody [in Prague], I was lonely". However, he soon began to feel at home in Prague when he joined a German speaking company in the central Wenceslas square and joined them for a concert of Judah Maccabi by the

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<sup>268</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 5.

Viennese *Gesangorchester*. This episode is a typical example of the complexity of identities told through a story of homesickness for Budapest in Prague overcome by joining a German company and listening to an opera with a Jewish subject performed by Austrian musicians.<sup>269</sup>

Kun, similarly to Fenyő's adventure in Italy, ended up in Prague as a result of random choices. After leaving Hungary for the sake of studying, he felt compelled to give up his attempt to study in Graz because he had found that antisemitism was rampant there. All landladies of potential rooms looked at asked his religion, and were not happy to rent a room to a Jew. Hence Kun returned to Budapest where he bumped into a former (Jewish) schoolmate who was preparing to move to Brno for his studies. Kun followed suit, however, he found out during the train ride that in Brno medicine was only taught in Czech. He thus accidentally realized that he had to change his destination as he was looking for a medical faculty with German as the language of instruction. A fellow traveller told him the closest German medical faculties were in Dresden and in Prague. Kun opted for Prague, since it was closer to Budapest.<sup>270</sup>

This narration must be taken with a grain of salt, since the German University of Prague had the second best medical school in Central Europe right after the prominent Viennese school which was the single most important medical school of the continent East of Paris.<sup>271</sup> It was thus a rather appealing destination for medical students. Nevertheless, the important information is that Kun, similarly to Fenyő, chose to fashion the story of his choice of destination as a result of coincidences.

It must be noted that Kun wrote his autobiography at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a “witness of historic times”, a leading psychiatrist of state Socialist Hungary with a readership interested in the history of medicine in mind. By this time collective memory treated the

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<sup>269</sup> Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 27.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>271</sup> Karády, “Funktionswandel der österreichischen Hochschulen in der Ausbildung der ungarischen Fachintelligenz vor und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg,” 179.

Socialist period and the Communist ideology as something to despise, hence the author felt compelled to write about his being a Communist as a thing of the past and something to be apologetic for. As a matter of fact, in the Stalinist period he had indeed been marginalized for a conflict with minister Anna Ratkó, since Kun argued for placing orphans in foster families while Ratkó's policy favored state institutions of child care for the assumed political unreliability of provincial foster parents. Hence, Kun strategically left his job in the ministry for a less visible position as a mine doctor in the countryside. Throughout the Kádár-period, however, he was in a position of power as it will be detailed later (See Chapter V.5).

Bence Szabolcsi, unlike Fenyő and Kun, did not claim to end up in his place of study coincidentally. It was admittedly a well informed and premeditated decision on his part to enroll in the University of Leipzig. He was an especially talented disciple of the composer Zoltán Kodály in Budapest. Although there was no musicology training in Hungary at that time, Bence Szabolcsi originally tried to enroll in the faculty of humanities in Budapest and continue his studies with Kodály. Thus, if it was not for the numerus clausus, he would not have chosen peregrination.

In addition, being the younger brother of Lajos Szabolcsi, the great protector of the numerus clausus exiles and the conceiver of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*, Bence Szabolcsi must have often heard the 'exile' interpretation of his sojourn in Leipzig. As mentioned in the third chapter, Lajos Szabolcsi travelled to Germany in 1921 to map the study possibilities and inform his Hungarian Jewish readership about them. In fact, he took his wife and his younger brother Bence with him and they visited Leipzig to see if it was viable for Bence to study there. Since there was a big age gap (ten years) between the brothers and both of their parents had died while Bence was a teenager, Lajos filled fatherly functions in Bence's

life, both emotionally and in terms of financing him while he studied.<sup>272</sup> The years in Leipzig were formative for Bence not only in terms of studies, but in terms of life experience and listening to concerts by acknowledged musicians. Yet he wrote to Kodály “my master, please do not entirely forget me in my exile”.<sup>273</sup>

László Farádi looked at his studies in Vienna through entirely different lenses. Using the academic prominence of his alma mater, the Viennese medical school, he tried to distance himself from his fellow Hungarian Jews and to keep himself out from the category of “*numerus clausus exiles*”. Over half a century later – in an autobiography published in 1983 thus during the Kádár-regime in which Farádi had been in a power position as a deputy health care minister – he claimed that “I was not pushed by the constraint of the *numerus clausus*, I was only pulled to Vienna by the fame of the Viennese medical school.”<sup>274</sup> This claim is due to his self-identification with the medical profession. He was proud to be a deputy health-care minister of Hungary and thus it was important for him to emphasize that he had studied in one of the best medical schools of the world of the 1920s.

At the same time, the reader of Farádi’s autobiography cannot help but notice the obvious contradiction of this claim with his own story. This claim could also be an attempt to downplay the significance of his Jewishness, however, he tells the prehistory of his peregrination which highlights the importance of being Jewish in the context of the 1920s and 1930s. As he himself writes earlier, originally he applied to the universities of Budapest and Pécs, both of which rejected him “because of the *numerus clausus*”.<sup>275</sup> However, he wanted to become a doctor at any cost, so he started daydreaming about studying in Paris until his father

<sup>272</sup> György Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence* (Budapest: Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Főiskola, 1994) Vol.1., 124.

<sup>273</sup> “Es Mesterem nagyon kérem, ne felejtsem el teljesen, itt a számkivetésben.” Bence Szabolcsi to Zoltán Kodály, November 4, 1921. in *Szabolcsi Bence lipcsei levelei Kodályhoz* [Bence Szabolcsi’s Letters to Kodály from Leipzig], edited by Ferenc Bónis (Kecskemét: Kodály Intézet, 1994), 255.

<sup>274</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 86.

<sup>275</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 50.

told him the only way for him to study was to go to Vienna where he could move in with an aunt. Thus, he studied in Vienna between 1926 and 1930. Enjoying his medical studies, the city's left-wing political subculture and rich cultural life notwithstanding, during these years he re-applied to the University of Pécs every year and three times to the University of Budapest and as soon as he succeeded to get in the Pécs medical faculty, he left Vienna for Pécs.<sup>276</sup>

Arthur Linksz, who was introduced in the third chapter as an example of students claiming residence in Czechoslovakia in order to evade foreigners' high tuition fees, was originally an exile, moreover a refugee of the *numerus clausus* in the term's political rather than ethnic sense. He had been a university student in Hungary already before the discriminatory law was introduced and such Jews could continue their studies (after a lot of controversy about the execution of the law). However, he joined the "Lenin boys" (red soldiers) during the Hungarian Soviet Republic and such students (Jews and non-Jews alike) were excluded from the universities. Linksz was implicated because he had been present when a group of "Lenin boys" shot a priest. Hence, Linksz fled Hungary in 1919 and did not even dare to set foot in the country until 1924.<sup>277</sup> Since in the end Linksz was not among the culprits in the trial of this murder, his memoir is the only source about his role in it, thus we will never know if his presence was really as coincidental as he writes.

In any case, this revolutionary son of a modern Orthodox rabbi ironically found refuge in the ultra-Orthodox yeshivah of Bratislava in 1919. Eventually he made it to the medical faculty of the German University of Prague, and to the University of Kiel. In Linksz's narrative, the constraint to leave Germany in the 1930s due to the rise of antisemitism appears to be a more painful detachment than having to live outside of Hungary during his studies in the 1920s. His peregrination is fashioned as a period of refuge from persecutions he would have faced in

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid.119-123.

<sup>277</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 328.

Hungary, rather than an exile. Importantly, the bracketed time of his memoir is his youth in Hungary. He wrote two versions of it, both of them were first published in New York, one in 1977 in Hungarian with the title *I am looking back...*<sup>278</sup> which he later published in 1986 in English as *Fighting the third death*.<sup>279</sup> In 1988 he agreed to the publication of this latter book in Hungary. Since he died shortly afterwards, the Hungarian version was edited by his widow, the psychologist Julia Fraknoi Linkszt. The differences between the content of the two Hungarian and the English book are scarce. By the time of writing them Linkszt was an elderly American ophthalmologist with a long and successful career behind him following his immigration to the United States in 1939.

#### IV.4. Student life

Surviving letters and memoirs by Hungarian Jewish students present their student years in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Italy as a pleasant and enjoyable period of their lives, the recurrent topic of student poverty notwithstanding. That memoirs present youthful experiences in such a positive light, it may have to do with the embellishing power of passing time. In any case, the contrast of this image with the media reports on students' mental health and miserable mood presented in Chapter II is conspicuous. Obviously, it has no news value when students enjoy life, but journalists also focused on the miserable students because their plight supported the message to convey: the *numerus clausus* was unjust and imposed suffering on thousands of migrant students.

The only ego document found where the focus is specifically the study time abroad, Lili Fenyő's memoir, nevertheless highlights how much she enjoyed studying in Italy. In her account, Italians adore students so much that they never scold them for anything. Whatever

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<sup>278</sup> Arthur Linkszt, *Visszanézek... Ifjúkorom Magyarországon* [I Am Looking Back... My Youth in Hungary] (New York: Twenty First Century Hungarian Publishing Corp., 1977).

<sup>279</sup> Arthur Linkszt, *Fighting the Third Death*. Translated from Hungarian by John J. Alpar. (New York, Published by the author, 1986).

they do, the only disciplinary measure is that the rector posts an admonition on the university's notice board "which no one reads". She describes the matriculation ceremonies as well which go hand in hand with a lot of alcohol consumption. However, the Italian students are generous enough to pay for the wine they force the new students to drink.<sup>280</sup>

The letters György Kis sent to his family from Liberec – by Hungarian Jewish students referred to with its German name Reichenberg – are full of enthusiasm both for his studies at the college for textile engineering<sup>281</sup> ("*Textilschule*") and for life in the friendly little Czech town. There were twenty-nine Hungarian students in his cohort,<sup>282</sup> six of them were close enough to Kis for him to mention them in his family correspondence. A certain Professor Mitter who was particularly popular with students, apparently regarded them as one of the best cohorts he taught. Kis kept emphasizing to his parents how hard his workload was and how much he studied.<sup>283</sup> Fortunately, there was some time left for dance parties where he and his fellow Hungarian students danced and flirted with local girls.<sup>284</sup>

The highlights of his Liberec experiences according to his letters were nevertheless the excursions with fellow Hungarian students, a goulash party, and a study field trip in various Czech textile factories in May 1926. The goulash party was hosted by his landlady, Mrs. Pfeiffer, where Kis and his friend (and presumably roommate) "Feri" Burger cooked Hungarian goulash soup and they invited the landlady's brother and two fellow Hungarian students, "Pista" Donát and "Bandi" Faragó. They were so satisfied with the result that "all of us felt as if we were back home in Hungary" – as Kis wrote to his family.<sup>285</sup> With regard to the study field trip, Kis summarized the significance of the visited towns for textile production and

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<sup>280</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 11.

<sup>281</sup> Now it is part of the Technical University of Liberec as its Faculty for Textile Engineering.

<sup>282</sup> Ádám Kis and Balázs Kis (Eds.), *Apám levelei. Legendák, emlékek. 1942, Oroszország – 1926, Csehszlovákia* [My Father's Letters. Legends, Memories. 1942, Russia – 1926, Czechoslovakia] (Bicske: SZAK Kiadó, 2015), 100.

<sup>283</sup> Letter of February 21, 1926. Kis, *Apám levelei*, 95-96.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.* 97.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

dedicated some additional remarks to a few of them, such as to Karlovy Vary where “there were many Hungarians and many Jews”.<sup>286</sup> This is the only occasion in his letters when he writes about Jews, although most probably all or nearly all of his fellow Hungarian students were Jewish. Even in this context he writes about Hungarian tourists and Jewish tourists in the famous bath town, not about students.



*Image IV.4.a. György Kis (on the right in the standing row), his friends and his landlady eating Hungarian goulash soup in Liberec/Reichenberg, 1926. Image property and courtesy of Ádám Kis, the son of György Kis.*

Miklós Glatter, who would soon become a famous poet with a new last name, Radnóti, enrolled in the same college in Liberec as György Kis, in the academic year following Kis’s graduation.<sup>287</sup> Both of them were exiles of the numerus clausus and both of them would die as

<sup>286</sup> He referred to Karlovy Vary with its German name, Karlsbad. Letter of May 9, 1926. Kis, *Apám levelei*, 111.

<sup>287</sup> At this time Radnóti in some documents referred to himself as Radnóti-Glatter, but in the college he still enrolled as Nikolaus Glatter. Szonja T. Egriné, “Radnóti Miklós egy éve Liberecben. [One Year of Miklós Radnóti in Liberec.]” *Forrás* 43, no. 9. (2011): 41-52.

victims of the Shoah. Their letters were published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the intention of documenting pre-Shoah correspondences for a general public (thus, not only for historians). Kis's letters were published by his son, Ádám Kis, who included in the same volume both the Liberec letters of his father and the letters György Kis sent home one and a half decade later, from the Eastern front of WWII as a Jewish forced laborer in the Hungarian army.<sup>288</sup> In this way the contrast between his happy youth and his sufferings during the Shoah to which he would fall victim is emphasized by his son who was deprived of the chance to know his father at all. Radnóti's Liberec letters, on the other hand, are part of a large collection published by the literary scholar Tamás Bíró-Balogh. In the huge corpus of Radnóti-letters the ones sent from Liberec are only testimonies of a life experience not deemed very important in the oeuvre neither by Radnóti nor Bíró-Balogh.<sup>289</sup>

Kis and Radnóti were taught the same subjects by the same professors in the same school, yet Kis immensely enjoyed the study program, while Radnóti detested it. The reason was their different motivation. Kis wanted to work with textiles and he indeed would work in this profession after his return to Hungary, while Radnóti was pressured to enroll by his adoptive father and could not wait to leave the whole textile industry behind and to enroll in a faculty of humanities which he would do later in Szeged.

Within its own field the Liberec *Textilschule* excelled and attracted students from numerous countries. In Hungary, there was no such training for the textile profession.<sup>290</sup> Both Kis and Radnóti were taught in the framework of the modernized study plan introduced in 1926. Unlike Kis, Radnóti highlighted in his letters that most of his fellow students in the cohort

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<sup>288</sup> Kis, *Apám levelei*.

<sup>289</sup> Tamás Bíró-Balogh (Ed.), *Különben magyar költő vagyok. Radnóti Miklós levelezése* [Otherwise I am a Hungarian Poet. The Correspondence of Miklós Radnóti] Vol. I. (Budapest: Jaffa, 2017).

<sup>290</sup> Later a college for light industries was established and incorporated in the University of Óbuda.

were Jewish: “there is a preponderance of Hungarians. And of Jews especially”.<sup>291</sup> The majority, thirty-eight students, indeed came from Hungary while there were only five Germans, one Czech, one Romanian, one Danish and one Russian student.<sup>292</sup>

Radnóti was so uninterested in his studies that he left without graduating. Nevertheless, except for the studies, he enjoyed his time in Liberec. He described the town as a

very nice, real ‘Studentenstadt’ [...] It has more bars, locals and cafés than Pest. All of them based on the pocket of the students. And this is entirely justified. The boys, here far away from the parental home and the fatherly slaps, perform incredible revels. I spent my money within two days, fortunately Uncle Dezső had paid for my accommodation and lunches in advance.<sup>293</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Liberec *Textilschule* was a kind of elite school characteristically training the children of families who already owned important businesses and factories in the textile industry. Such was the background of both György Kis and Miklós Radnóti in Hungary. Radnóti’s adoptive father, “Uncle Dezső”, Dezső Grósz, co-owned a prosperous textile accessory merchandising company, Brück & Gross. Kis’s father, Márton Kis had owned a textile factory in Mezőberény, Hungary. Kis’s son, Ádám Kis does not know exactly the financial circumstances of his ancestors, since by the mid-1920s Márton Kis was not the owner of the factory in Mezőberény. However, he assumes that the family invested the money they had sold the factory for and it was not a problem for them to pay the enrollment and tuition fees of the prominent *Textilschule*.<sup>294</sup>

Bence Szabolcsi’s letters – judged as worthy of publication by music historians Ferenc Bónis and György Kroó in the 1990s because of Szabolcsi’s role in establishing musicology in Hungary between the 1950s and 1970s – witness an attitude towards the institution he studied at – the University of Leipzig – somewhere in between Kis’s enthusiasm and Radnóti’s

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<sup>291</sup> Letter to Károly Hilbert and Ilona Nagy, October 8, 1927. Bíró-Balogh (Ed.), *Különben magyar költő vagyok*, 17.

<sup>292</sup> Bíró-Balogh, *Különben magyar költő vagyok*, 17.

<sup>293</sup> Dezső Baróti, *Kortárs útlevelére* [Passport of the Contemporary] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1977), 43.

<sup>294</sup> Interview with Ádám Kis on July 19, 2016.

indifference. He was passionately interested in his musicology studies, however, the positivist stance of the Leipzig musicology school alienated him.<sup>295</sup> In terms of socializing with fellow students, Bence Szabolcsi, similarly to György Kis, dedicated most time to meeting with fellow Hungarians (whose last names suggest Jewish origin). This was also due to necessity, as the brother of Lajos Szabolcsi he could not escape taking up the role of representing the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* in Leipzig and this rendered him a community leader of the local Hungarian Jewish student colony.<sup>296</sup> As he wrote in a letter in 1922:

I had to take upon myself managing the issues of the Student Action. [...] First it was somewhat hard to explain to them – just like to uncle Déry on the following day – that they are entitled to this stipend [...] and they do not need to kiss the hands of anybody for it. And that in addition this is not a private matter, this is the issue of a generation and so on.... These kids are poisoned by liberalism.<sup>297</sup>

Mr. Déry was the president of the Leipzig Hungarian Association, a gentleman who by this time had been living out of Hungary for four decades. The *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* tried to mobilize philanthropists of Hungarian (and Jewish) background everywhere to financially aid numerous clausus exiles. It seems that Bence Szabolcsi thought Mr. Déry was not generous enough in terms of not making the poor students feel inferior for needing his money. The young Szabolcsi interestingly attributed this behavior to the liberal bourgeois background he also came from. His correspondence both with his sister-in-law and with Zoltán Kodály indeed shows that in Leipzig he went through a process of detachment from this liberal bourgeois milieu.<sup>298</sup>

A somewhat atypical Hungarian Jewish student of interwar Germany, Jacob Katz, who would become a leading figure of the Jerusalem School of history, relied more on German

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<sup>295</sup> Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 168.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

<sup>297</sup> Letter of November 15, 1922. Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 176.

<sup>298</sup> György Kroó's already cited monograph on Bence Szabolcsi quotes numerous letters Bence Szabolcsi sent to his sister-in-law. In addition, Ferenc Bónis published Szabolcsi's letters to Zoltán Kodály from the Leipzig period: Ferenc Bónis (Ed.), *Szabolcsi Bence lipcsei levelei Kodályhoz* [Bence Szabolcsi's Letters to Kodály from Leipzig] (Kecskemét: Kodály Intézet, 1994).

Jewish than on Hungarian Jewish students for socializing. Katz came from a religious Orthodox Jewish family and he went to Frankfurt in 1928 to study in the famous Hirsch yeshivah named after Samson Raphael Hirsch, the founder of Modern Orthodox Judaism. In the meantime, Katz wished to study at a university in order to break out from the “narrow circle of Talmudic education and its limited means of livelihood”.<sup>299</sup> However, he had not graduated from high school, hence he needed to take an *Abitur* (high school leaving exam) in Germany. As a consequence, in the first two years of his time in Frankfurt he studied in the yeshiva and at the same time prepared for the *Abitur* in secular subjects.

He was ordained as a rabbi in the yeshivah, but he was determined to pursue a secular academic career. It is not known whether he would have considered taking the supplementary secondary school leaving exam and university studies in Hungary if it had not been for the numerus clausus. In any case, by the time he enrolled in the University of Frankfurt, he had a circle of friends of rabbinical students. Even while studying at the university, the primary framework of Katz’s social life remained the association of religious Jewish students, the *Verein Jüdischer Akademiker* (VJA).

Fortunately, Katz’s autobiography provides a glimpse into how other Jewish students organized their student life. According to his assessment, the VJA was atypical, where religious observance qualified for membership and other issues did not matter. However, most Jewish student associations followed the political party lines of society at large. Importantly, he also adds that in the recesses, student associations convened in their habitual meeting places and thereby groups kept to themselves even within the university walls.<sup>300</sup> It is important to note that Katz wrote his autobiography as a piece of *ego histoire*, thus a self-reflective writing by a

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<sup>299</sup> Jacob Katz, *With My Own Eyes. The Autobiography of an Historian*. Translated from Hebrew by Ann Brenner and Zipora Brody (Hanover–London: Brandeis University Press– University Press of New England, 1995), 70.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.* 78-79.

historian about a historical period they had lived through, as a famous Israeli historian. The original Hebrew book was published in 1989 and the English translation in 1995.

The best source of information on student life in Vienna is the famous author, Arthur Koestler, even though he was especially prone to reshape stories for the sake of self-fashioning. He wrote the story of the first 26 years of his life in the second half of his forties, in 1951 and it was later republished several times. Koestler was galvanized by the proliferation of student dueling fraternities (*Burschenschaften*) in Vienna and took an active role in one of them. According to his autobiography, about half of Viennese university students “wore colors”, that is, were members of *Burschenschaften*. Zionists were one of the three main types of *Burschenschaften* besides Pan-German and Liberal ones. The Socialists had no dueling fraternities, merely clubs. The membership of two Zionist fraternities, *Lebanonia* and *Jordania*, excelled in dueling as feared swordsmen. This was very much appreciated and needed by Jewish students, since the regular Saturday morning *Burschenschaft* parade in the university’s main aula often led to antisemitic riots.<sup>301</sup>

Koestler himself, however, started his Zionist career in the *Unitas Burschenschaft* and regarded its headquarters as his “second, and in fact, real home”. Moreover, his first visit there was so consequential as to trigger his 25-year-long engagement for the struggle for the Jewish state, four of which he spent in Palestine.<sup>302</sup> On a less serious note, however, his autobiography also elaborates on the rituals of *Unitas*, which just like any *Burschenschaft* tradition, involved a lot of alcohol consumption. While we may want to take his claim to be the youngest ever chairman of the convention of all Austrian Zionist *Burschenschaften* with a grain of salt, in assessing the importance of such involvement *for himself* we have no reason to doubt.

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<sup>301</sup> Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue*, 107-110.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* 112-113.

Apparently, his involvement in the Viennese Zionist student life gave him the three happiest years of his life (until age forty-six when he wrote this autobiography).<sup>303</sup>

Although, as we have seen from the Liberec letters, not all *numerus clausus* émigrés lived in poverty, student misery is one of the topics almost all recollections share. Some students chose an affordable city as a destination rather than one of the most prestigious institutions of their study field. László Kozma explains his decision – in his memoir written in 1981-1982 about his survival of WWII and the Shoah in Belgium and Hungary where his pre-WWII career is a prelude only – to go to Brno’s Technical College for purely material reasoning:

Why did I choose Brno? It had exclusively material reasons. It is a relatively small Czech town, cheaper than Vienna or Prague. I regarded the German or Swiss universities as unachievable, although they surely had a higher level than Brno. However, I simply needed a university degree. [...] During my student years in Brno I went through a lot of poverty, I was cold a lot and starved a lot, but in the end, I fulfilled the eight semesters in 1929.<sup>304</sup>

Others also included in their recollections how they coped with the lack of heating. Lili Fenyő and her roommates spent the Sunday mornings in museums in Florence which had free entrance on Sundays so that they only needed to heat their room in the afternoon.<sup>305</sup> László Farádi, as mentioned earlier, first moved to his aunt in Vienna. Moreover, this family connection was among the reasons he went to study to Vienna rather than elsewhere. However, he soon moved into a rented room in order to live in the downtown and have more possibility to participate in student social life. He paid the cost of poverty for this decision and similarly to Fenyő, he spent the Sunday mornings with his friends in a museum for the sake of spending time in a heated place for free.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid. 125-127.

<sup>304</sup> László Kozma, *Emlékezni csak pontosan.... Az antwerpeni Bell Labortól a gunskircheni lágerig* [To Remember Precisely.... From the Antwerp Bell Laboratory to the Gunskirchen Lager] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2015), 18-19.

<sup>305</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 53.

<sup>306</sup> Farádi *Diagnózis*, 64.

Fenyő also writes about skipping meals due to the lack of money and she was also disturbed by not being able to buy stamps to send letters to Hungary.<sup>307</sup> Once she and her roommates were not even able to pay the rent on time. They promised their landlady, “the signora”, that their parents would send money by the first day of the next month. The signora took such a pity on them that she lent them money.<sup>308</sup>

As Kozma remarked, Vienna and Prague were very expensive compared to Brno. At the same time, they had a larger Jewish institutional infrastructure supporting pauper students. According to Kun’s recollections, one hundred students had lunch in the Prague Jewish canteen daily.<sup>309</sup> He estimated that half of them were Zionists, half of them Communists and there were tussles between them.<sup>310</sup> In fact, the very first advice Kun received from another student upon arrival to Prague was to purchase groceries in the same store each time so that the shopkeeper would let him buy food on credit at the end of the month. This was a regular practice. Kun also followed the advice.<sup>311</sup> He struggled with the lack of money in Prague, but not as much as later in Vienna, where he transferred in order to follow his psychiatry professor, the famous Otto Plözl.<sup>312</sup>

Bence Szabolcsi, in addition to the widespread problem of housing poverty and malnourishment, witnessed the dramatic 1922 inflation in Weimar Germany. It even became impossible for his landlady to establish the monthly rental cost in advance, hence he had to pay the rent day by day. In Leipzig, the situation was aggravated by a massive strike which paralyzed the commuting system, hence, it was impossible to transfer wares to the city while there was coal enough for a few days only.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Fenyő *Pillanatfelvételek*, 58.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

<sup>309</sup> According to Arthur Linksz, the canteen operated five days a week. Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 376.

<sup>310</sup> Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 28.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.* 30.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>313</sup> Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 165.

The young Szabolcsi was worried that his brother, not living in Germany, would not believe him how quickly the prices rose and desperately emphasized that he only spent money on the most necessary things, he stopped buying books and urged his brother to look at his budget notes.<sup>314</sup> Earlier, before the inflation, when life in Leipzig was simply expensive, but prices were not rising by the hour yet, the young musicologist had a lighter tone when writing about his everyday life with the cousin he shared accommodation with: “Konrád decided to sew his socks by himself and I decided to write the books which I wanted to buy”.<sup>315</sup>

#### IV.5. A minority within a minority: Women’s perspectives

“*Snapshots from the life of Hungarian students abroad*” by Lili Fenyő is the most exhaustive ego document by a female *numerus clausus émigré* that focuses on the period of peregrination.<sup>316</sup> Since it was published in 1929, in the narrative the exile is not a mere prelude to the Holocaust like in the autobiographies and memoirs written after 1945. The author and her fellow Hungarian Jewish migrant students (women and men alike) she claims to represent, cannot imagine that they would experience more severe, even murderous, antisemitism than the discrimination in higher education they are suffering from.

While not many later memories, experiences and judgments interfere with the author’s recollections about the focus of her book, her mission to write the collective story of *numerus clausus* exiles does. Fenyő presents herself as the ideal scholarship holder of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee*: a Neolog Jew who keeps some central Jewish religious traditions and frames their Jewish identity as a religious belonging, compatible with Hungarian patriotism. The story told here is the story of young patriotic Hungarians (Fenyő and her friends) unjustly

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<sup>314</sup> Letter of December 22, 1922. Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 206.

<sup>315</sup> Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 155.

<sup>316</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*.

exiled from their homeland by the numerus clausus which they resent and yet they are willing to use the knowledge gained abroad in Hungary.

Since the experience Fenyő brings from Hungary is living in an atmosphere where antisemitism is widespread and being Jewish simply “matters” in all walks of life, her main observation about Italy is that being Jewish or not (surprisingly for her) simply does not matter. As a Jew, she finds it easy and pleasant to live in Florence. Student life is also pleasant for her, as described earlier. However, being a female student is slightly more difficult. As she describes her encounters with Italians, they are all kind people but not progressive enough to understand why it is important for women to study at university. They make fun of her and her female friends and wonder why they are not married. However, Lili and her friends are “serious student girls” who “have no time to deal with such childish questions”. They want to be “women who work”. She concludes this chain of thought with the observation that “these Italians are kind people, but they do not understand anything. One cannot have a serious conversation with them”.<sup>317</sup>

She describes a rich social life where Italian and Hungarian and other foreign students spend plenty of time together, men and women alike. She does not write about any encounter with men who court her, however, she presents an image of herself as a laborious student who does not want to take time from her life for such matters. At the same time, she includes an episode how she helped a (female) friend to prepare for a promising date.<sup>318</sup>

The three girls at the center of “*Snapshots*”, Lili and her two roommates, Teri and Margit, seem to have a closer and more confidential relationship with their local Italian landlady than the male ego document authors with theirs. Or at least Lili found it more important to write about this relationship. The same is true for the relationship among

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<sup>317</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 28.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.* 67-69.

roommates. They have several rituals to do together, such as the Sunday afternoon letter writing routine after the earlier mentioned Sunday morning museum visit to escape their heatless room for a while. All of them write basically the same message to their parents, only with different signatures.<sup>319</sup>

Fenyő also writes about the Jewish holidays in more detail and more intimately than her male fellow ego document authors – except for Bence Szabolcsi. Passover, where the family or community Seder dinner plays a central role, makes the *numerus clausus* exiles presented by Fenyő particularly sad and lonely. In a complaining tone she remarks that “here we do not even know when the holiday will be”.<sup>320</sup> It is also revealing about her secular background, since it means her life rhythm does not follow the Jewish calendar, she needs to be around her community and Jewish information sources to be aware of the major holidays’ timing.

Sadness and loneliness of *numerus clausus* exiles at Passover which is supposed to be celebrated with the family, is overcome by a Seder dinner invitation by an elderly Florentine Jewish couple. Before the dinner, Lili and her friends go to the synagogue and the description of the experience of being there as a foreign Jew is a telling testimony of the important role of the “community of fate” as a central aspect of Jewish identity even before the Shoah. Later a Jew claiming the community of fate as the basis of their Jewish identity came to be associated with the “Holocaust Jew”, someone who would not be Jewish if it was not for this communal trauma.

The importance Fenyő attributes to the Jewish community of *fate* which is at least as high a priority as the aspect of being a community of *faith* somewhat contradicts the official stance of the interwar Hungarian Neolog Jewish community. The latter identified Jews as

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. 70-71.

“Hungarians of the Israelite faith” whose only particularity among Hungarians is their faith and not their fate or where their loyalties are. However, the definition of who is Jewish was of course never so simple. Fenyő relates to this complex nature of Jewish identity in relation to her Florentine Passover in the following lines:

some kind of community holds us together – our religion, our language, our customs – or maybe our fate, the community of our suffering – and strongest of all: Jewish love. These customs are not strange for us – we speak this language perfectly – these songs are also old, familiar, sad melodies – this love connects us – it also brings Hungary closer – where our parents are praying in the temple in the same way.<sup>321</sup>

As it is seen from the abovementioned episodes of Fenyő’s narrative, the narrator’s main concerns are the experience of exile from Hungary, integration in Italy, Hungarian patriotism and Jewish community of fate and faith. Except for her thoughts on courtship conflicting with the lifestyle of a woman who takes her studies and ambition seriously, the reader mostly learns her opinion about spheres of life where gender played little role. Presumably, she would not have felt less sad and homesick as Passover, had she been a man. Presumably, her opinion about the natural symbiosis between Hungarian patriotism and Jewish solidarity would have been the same, had she been a man. About the specificities of being not only a foreign Jewish student but also a female student in Fascist Italy we learn more from the diary written by the Polish Jewish Dora Klein between 1936 and 1945 that she completed with retrospective reflections in her old age.<sup>322</sup>

Klein, similarly to Fenyő, moved to Italy as a student because she could not study in her home country due to antisemitic discrimination. Unlike Fenyő, she was politically persecuted as well, since she was a Communist, although it is not clear whether she left Poland as a Communist or joined the movement during her studies in Czechoslovakia. This remains unknown, since her published diary starts at the very end of her studies in Bologna. Although

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid. 72. “Temple” in this context refers to a synagogue.

<sup>322</sup> Dora Klein, *Vivere e sopravvivere. Diario 1936-1945* [To Live and to Survive. Diary 1936-1945] (Milano: Mursia, 2001).

her book is based on her diaries she started writing before the Shoah, it belongs to the testimonies edited and published many decades later and from a post-Shoah perspective. Unlike Fenyő, Klein had no intention to return to her native land and was inclined to repatriate even less after she fell in love with an Italian man. She would later be forced to return to Poland as a deported foreign Jew from Italy. Before the 1938 antisemitic turn of Italian Fascism, Klein's biggest disadvantage was not her being Jewish, foreigner or female, but being a Communist.

Yet she experienced repercussion for this only when she wanted to get married in 1936, since her fiancé was a navy officer and hence could only get married with the permission of the Navy Ministry. At this point Klein was obliged to leave Taranto, a port city where she had lived with her fiancé. Nevertheless, she was not sent back to Poland, but could settle anywhere in Italy on the condition that it was not a place of military importance. A few months later she was informed that the Ministry did not permit her fiancé to marry her because she was “subversive” – meaning that she had performed Communist activism before she moved to Italy.<sup>323</sup>

Unlike Klein, Fenyő does not share anything about her politics and love life with her readers. On the one hand, this is understandable since in the mid-1920s when she studied in Italy these aspects of life were less consequential than in the late 1930s when Klein graduated and met her future husband. On the other hand, Fenyő's self-portrait as a student absorbed in serious studies and busy social life at the expense of thinking about men and marriage may also be connected to her being a woman, as several male authors – György Kis, Miklós Kun, Arthur Linksz, László Farádi – write about their flirts while studying abroad.

Since it was considered natural that men take their studies seriously, their mentioning of unserious flirts did not jeopardize their image as devoted students. This could have been the

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<sup>323</sup> Klein, *Vivere e sopravvivere*, 34-44.

case for a woman, however, since Klein – whose experience as a Polish Jewish student in Italy can be read parallelly to the experience of Hungarian Jewish migrant students – was not afraid to include her love life in her recollections, it seems more likely to assume that Fenyő simply did not want to include too much about her personal life because her book was meant to be a memorandum of the situation of a community, the community of Hungarian Jewish students abroad.

Ida Somló's letters deal with topics related to being a woman even less than Fenyő's memoir. However, their tone is motherly, she regularly refers to her (a few years) younger male friend, Ödön Bánki, as "my son" and gives him advice from the position of the more experienced adult, one could even say of the "*yidishe mame*": "My son, write to your mother more often and take care of yourself. [...] Your mother sends as many kisses as you have sent to her."<sup>324</sup> A collective letter she sent to Bánki and two other friends reveals that she fashioned herself as the emotional caretaker of a whole circle of friends:

My children! Böske, Ilonka, Dönci!<sup>325</sup> It is still very recent that I have left, I am still in the train and abroad, I cannot write to you yet, just to thank you for accompanying me with love on my difficult road, you do not even know how much you helped me, I just want to ask you to stay there and stand by me and love me, because my love is great, true and never-ending.<sup>326</sup>

Somló's letters are unpublished and unedited and her surviving letters are those written to one of her many correspondence partners, Bánki. I received her letters written in the first half of the 1920s from the addressee's daughter, Esther Bánki. The addressee was himself a numerous *clausus* refugee, a medical student stemming from Győr who peregrinated to Germany and to the Netherlands. Somló and Bánki became good friends in the early 1920s while studying medicine in Würzburg and kept on corresponding for years to come. Thanks to

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<sup>324</sup> Letter from Ida Somló to Ödön Bánki without date and place, Private collection of Esther Bánki. The date and place of other letters show that the bulk of the Somló-Bánki correspondence was written between 1921 and 1925 in Würzburg, Leipzig, Sülzhayn and Bečkerek.

<sup>325</sup> Dönci is a nickname for Ödön.

<sup>326</sup> Letter from Ida Somló without date and place, Private collection of Esther Bánki.

Bánki's daughter, Esther Bánki, and Somló's son, Ivan Ivanji Serbian writer, I learned about the lives of both which help to contextualize the letters.

Ida Somló was possibly a *numerus clausus* exile in the sense that stemming from the Banat and being a Hungarian Jew, she may have wanted to study in a Hungarian university rather than a Serbian one and may have been prevented from doing so by the Hungarian *numerus clausus*. Her son, however, does not know the reason of his parents' choice of studying in Würzburg and later in Leipzig. Importantly, he knows that his parents started dating as teenagers and Ida followed her husband, Ferenc Iványi, to all the stations of his peregrination and then back home to the Banat. At the same time, she was a proud and independent '*modern woman*' which she expressed not only by pursuing university studies and a medical career, but with wearing short hair and smoking as well.<sup>327</sup>

Ilona and Erzsébet Kardos, two sisters addressed by Ida Somló in the above quoted letter as "Ilonka" and "Böske", are authors of numerous other letters sent to Ödön Bánki in the first half of the 1920s. They were exiles of the *numerus clausus* in the strictest sense: they left for Germany because of the Jewish quota in Hungary. Erzsébet Kardos wrote to Bánki in a similarly warm tone as Ida Somló, however without motherly undertones, rather from a position of equality.

Kardos does not mention specifically gender-related issues, her letters focus on the one hand on practicalities connected to peregrination, on the other hand on the alienation she felt. Her perception of having to be itinerant fits the exile narrative of Fenyő and of the Hungarian Jewish media. With the important difference that although she had a few close friends among fellow Hungarian Jewish students, generally she felt irritated by belonging to this group. She complained about a train ride that

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<sup>327</sup> Interview with Esther Bánki and Ivan Ivanji on April 30, 2019.

From Würzburg I was left alone with the two Hungarian Jews. It was impossible to avoid conversation. In Vienna I escaped, but then I met them again. [...] By the way, on the Viennese station, for my great surprise, I bumped in Bandi Weigl.<sup>328</sup>

In another letter where she complained about losing semesters due to switching between universities, she contemplated that

We have to sacrifice the value of the coming semester and of many years to come together with the possibilities of beauty they could bring, to something bigger that is beyond us, that is nowadays called “history”.<sup>329</sup>

Thus, she echoed Fenyő’s sense of mission to excel as students abroad (quoted in the very beginning of this dissertation), since for Hungarian Jews in the age of the *numerus clausus*, the possibility to study was not as natural as the desire to do so. Great sacrifices were involved in their peregrination.

#### IV.6. The image of the host countries

The dissertation focuses on Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Italy as *numerus clausus* emigration destinations, although these were not the only ones. These target countries are unevenly represented in the available ego documents, since few of them narrate experience connected to Italy.

On the whole, Austria and Germany feature as intellectually stimulating and therefore attractive, at the same time stressful countries – the disadvantages being different for different authors. Fascist Italy and Czechoslovakia, on the contrary, are praised for their hospitality and acceptance towards foreign – including Jewish – students. Within Czechoslovakia, the German University of Prague is also appreciated for the professional excellence of its medical faculty, while none of the Italian universities is presented as an academically remarkable institution.

Czechoslovakia is described by Kun as an “ideal democracy” and a refuge for persecuted East Central European Jewish students. He arrived in Prague after having left Graz

<sup>328</sup> Letter by Erzsébet Kardos to Ödön Bánki, around 1925, Private collection of Esther Bánki.

<sup>329</sup> Letter by Erzsébet Kardos to Ödön Bánki, first half of the 1920s, Private collection of Esther Bánki.

because of the conspicuous antisemitism experienced in everyday life. As opposed to Graz, Prague represented for him full-fledged tolerance where

Germans and Czechs lived happily next to each other, there was Deutsches Theater, German University, Czech University, Czech conservatory, German conservatory, *Prager Tageblatt* and *Prager Presse*, but there were even two Hungarian dailies [...] Jewish students came from Poland, where there was antisemitism as well, from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, where there was numerus clausus and antisemitism.<sup>330</sup>

László Kozma who enrolled in the German Technical College of Brno was similarly impressed by Czechoslovak neutrality towards religious differences: “what I could not achieve in Pest for four years as a Hungarian citizen [enrollment in a university], I achieved in Czechoslovakia in ten minutes. [...] And they were not even curious about my religion.”<sup>331</sup>

Linksz was so enchanted by Czechoslovak democracy that he leaves out mentioning an entire series of antisemitic protests taking place at the German University of Prague in 1922-23 when he was studying there. This is not to criticize or to expect a memoir author to account for events the historian treats as “history”. However, this lacuna is extremely telling for a memoir that treats the experience of being a Jew so much in detail with regard to both earlier and later periods of the author’s life. All the more so, because the 1922-23 antisemitic crisis ended in a way that could have been used to prove the democratic commitment of Czechoslovakia since in the end the state intervened against antisemitism. Evenly importantly, the below detailed Steinherz-case demonstrated the solidarity of the liberal German student organizations *Lese- und Redehalle* and *Alemania* (the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* its name notwithstanding did not represent all German students, only “Aryans”) and of the majority of the university’s professors.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 27.

<sup>331</sup> Kozma, *Emlékezni csak pontosan*, 18.

<sup>332</sup> Alena Mířková, “Die Lage der Juden an der Prager Deutschen Universität [The Situation of the Jews at the German University of Prague],” in *Judenemanzipation – Antisemitismus – Verfolgung in Deutschland, Österreich-Ungarn, den Böhmischem Ländern und in der Slowakei* [Jewish Emancipation – Antisemitism – Persecution in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Slovakia], edited by Jörg K. Hoensch, Stanislav Biman, L’ubomír Lipták (Essen: Klartext, 1999), 119-129 (122-123.)

The German University of Prague was considered as one of the least antisemitic German-language universities since the 1880s.<sup>333</sup> Yet this institution was not free from antisemitic institutional practices either. Prior to the 1920s, Jewish professors kept an unwritten harsh rule, imposed on them by their nationalist German colleagues, that if and when a Jewish professor was elected as rector, they would turn this position down. However, in July 1922, the historian Samuel Steinherz broke this tradition and accepted the position after being elected. This provoked an intense wave of anti-Jewish protests from antisemitic professors and students of the university itself and from students of Prague's and Brno's German Technical Colleges and even from a number of Austrian universities.<sup>334</sup> In the meantime the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* suggested to "Aryan" students of the German University of Prague to enroll for yet another semester rather than graduating while the Jewish Steinherz was the rector and thus accepting their degrees in the graduation ceremony "from the hands of a Jew".<sup>335</sup> Such student activism encouraged the *German National Party* to propose the restriction of the proportion of university instructors and students of the "Jewish ethnicity" (*jüdischer Volkszugehörigkeit*) by law, thus a Hungarian-style racist anti-Jewish numerus clausus in the Czechoslovak parliament.

Steinherz broke under such pressure and resigned. However, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education declared that someone being forced to give up a position because he was Jewish was such a nonsense that it could not happen in the Czechoslovak Republic where everyone was equal. Hence, Steinherz in the end served his full mandate as rector. It is also noteworthy that the majority of faculty members and a part of the student body stood up for Steinherz and protested the politicization of the university by the *Deutsche Studentenschaft*. The student body

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<sup>333</sup> Werner Hanak-Lettner, "The University: A Battleground (1875-1945). A Discussion with Mitchell Ash, Gabriella Hauch, Herbert Posch, and Oliver Rathkolb", in *Die Universität. Eine Kampfzone*, edited by Werner Hanak-Lettner (Wien: Picus Verlag, 2015), 63-76 (66).

<sup>334</sup> Pešek, "Jüdische Studenten an den Prager Universitäten 1882-1939," 430.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* 430.

on the whole seemed to be so unsupportive of everything the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* stood for (exclusivist German nationalism, antisemitism) that the organization's spokesman, Kleo Pleyer, chose to emigrate to Munich.<sup>336</sup> Antisemitic student demonstrations almost entirely ceased after these events in 1923. In 1929, however, both Czech and German students demonstrated in Prague for the introduction of a numerus clausus against foreign, Jewish and poor students. They did not achieve this goal while the first Czechoslovak Republic existed.<sup>337</sup>

While this story is entirely missing from Linksz's memoir, he does reflect on the antisemitic bias of a certain German nationalist professor at the same university. Professor Tschermak was "no friend of the Hungarian and mostly Jewish students invading the German University of Prague" and hence many Hungarian Jewish students failed the physiology exam once or twice.<sup>338</sup> Kun reflects on a similarly prejudiced anatomy professor at the same university who failed many Hungarians. In this context Kun does not explicitly say that this professor discriminated against the Hungarian students because most of them were Jewish. Instead, he emphasizes that many of them had difficulties speaking German and this provoked the professor's irritation.<sup>339</sup>

It is noteworthy with regard to German speech skills that Linksz also points out the difficulty of studying in German for many Hungarian Jewish students,<sup>340</sup> which is confirmed by the letters of Miklós Radnóti.<sup>341</sup> Thus, three ego document authors point out that we should refine the common historical knowledge that the Hungarian middleclass, Jews and Gentiles

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<sup>336</sup> Míšková, "Die Lage der Juden an der Prager Deutschen Universität," 124.

<sup>337</sup> Pešek, "Jüdische Studenten an der Prager Universitäten" 430-431.; Jan Havránek, "Anti-Semitism at Prague universities in November 1929," *Judaica Bohemiae* XXXVII, no. 1 (2001): 145-150.

<sup>338</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 349-350.

<sup>339</sup> Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 30.

<sup>340</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 349-350.

<sup>341</sup> "The school is a stupidity. I cannot understand a word from the lectures, they are in German." Letter to Károly Hilbert and Ilona Nagy, October 8, 1927. Bíró-Balogh, *Különben magyar költő vagyok*, 17. It must be noted that Radnóti was able to read *The Capital* by Marx in German, thus it was the technical vocabulary and his uninterest in his studies that caused him linguistic difficulty in school. Egriné, "Radnóti Miklós egy éve Liberecben".

alike, spoke German very well.<sup>342</sup> For sure they spoke well enough to dare to undertake studies in German institutions, but more importantly German was their strongest foreign language. Kun, for example, notes that he heard a rumor that Italy was the only country where foreigners could settle in the end of their studies, however, he did not go there because he spoke no Italian.<sup>343</sup> On the other hand, the lack of Italian knowledge did not prevent other Hungarians from undertaking studies in Italy as we know from Fenyő's memoir and from other sources as well.<sup>344</sup>

Importantly, the enthusiast view of Czechoslovakia as a perfect democracy by Links, Kun and Kozma is a retrospective gaze imprinted by interwar Czechoslovakia's nimbus as an island of democracy in the ocean of authoritarianism in East Central Europe. It is true that compared to all the other Central European countries, interwar Czechoslovakia was more democratic and was not oppressive towards Jews, especially not towards foreign Jewish students. Local Jews occasionally did have troubles if they belonged to the German or to the Hungarian speaking minorities.<sup>345</sup> In addition, numerous *clausus* refugees compared Czechoslovakia to Hungary where antisemitism was part of the mainstream politics. Furthermore, after all it was the Munich Pact of 1938 about the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia where European statesmen appeared for the last time to hope that a second world war was avoidable. It is no wonder that a view from the other side of the watershed of the war and the genocide beautifies interwar Czechoslovakia.

While Kun and Kozma saw the fact that Czechoslovak university authorities were not interested in their religious background as something to praise, Fenyő presents Italian

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<sup>342</sup> Frank, *Double Exile*, 98-99.

<sup>343</sup> Kun, Kékesi Hilda, 32.

<sup>344</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 10. For more details see my Master thesis which focused on the numerous *clausus* exiles in Italy. Kelemen, *Leaving an Antisemitic Regime for a Fascist Country*, 65.

<sup>345</sup> Tatjana Lichtenstein, *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2016); Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, *Mapping Jewish Loyalties in Interwar Slovakia*.

professors and students for something more remarkable: they were all welcoming towards foreign students and went out of their ways to help them.<sup>346</sup> The latter help foreigners to learn Italian and to explore Florence, to understand the university lectures and even their families are hospitable and curious of foreign students. All this makes integration rather easy:

And after one week all of us are loved and honored at the university and after one month all of us have Italian friends and after six weeks we know Italian families and our friend's mother regards us as her child and everybody is keen on making us forget that we are abroad alone.<sup>347</sup>

Simon Teich remembered Italian friendliness as fondly as Fenyő in his memoir, where, however, his student years are treated extremely briefly as a mere prelude to his partisan experience in the Italian antifascist resistance during the Nazi occupation of Northern Italy in 1943-45. When he wrote and published his story, he was in his late 90s with a very long and fulfilling career behind him as the founder of an acclaimed clinic of plastic surgery in Turin.<sup>348</sup> Since he mentions his social democratic political commitment for which his uncle stopped financing his studies, we can assume this had a part in his leaving Hungary for good in the 1930s. Unfortunately, this is the only remark he made about his studies and emigration to Italy in the oral history interview made with him in 2010. Due to his being a famous partisan and innovative plastic surgeon, the Italian interviewer's questions were directed towards these topics rather than his youth in Hungary.<sup>349</sup>

Unlike Teich, Fenyő and her fellow *numerus clausus* exiles intend to protect Hungary's good name abroad instead of complaining about the *numerus clausus*. (It is important to note, however, that Fenyő left Hungary for Italy a decade before Teich.) Thus, when their Italian landlady asks about why they are not studying in Hungary ("Are there no universities there?"), Teri, Lili's friend, explains that the Jewish quota was a necessity because of the Treaty of

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<sup>346</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 7-8.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>348</sup> Simone Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza: I luoghi, gli incontri, le scelte* [A Doctor of the Resistance: The Places, the Encounters, the Choices.] (Turin: SEB 27, 2010).

<sup>349</sup> DVD attachment to Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza*.

Trianon.<sup>350</sup> Such justification for their own trouble was congruent with the attitude of the Hungarian Jewish leadership. They kept arguing that Jews were not a minority and had no minority interests. Moreover, if they asked for international intervention based on such rights, that would jeopardize their status in Hungary.<sup>351</sup> Hence they did not ask the League of Nation's intervention against the *numerus clausus* law although it clearly violated the Peace Treaty of Trianon and thus it fell under the competence of the Wilsonian post- WWI international minority protection system. As the Jewish lawyer and politician, Vilmos Vázsonyi, famously put it, “the source of our nation's sorrow [the Trianon Treaty] cannot be the source of our [the Jews'] rights”.<sup>352</sup>

Unlike the Italian towns, Vienna had an ambiguous image as it unfolds from the autobiographies of Kun and Farádi. It was both a place of traumatic experiences of antisemitic violence and a city of inspiration with its dynamic scientific and cultural life – for Kun and Farádi it was also attractive for the strength of left-wing movements in Red Vienna. However, as Herbert Posch highlights, “the introduction of the Republic and democracy in Austria scarcely left a mark on the universities”,<sup>353</sup> and antisemitic abuses took place on the Viennese campus on a regular basis, just like in Budapest. The Viennese Technical College in fact even introduced a *numerus clausus* in the form of a 10% quota on foreign applicants of Jewish “*Volksbürgerschaft*” (ethnic citizenship) between 1923 and 1933, despite the disapproval of the Ministry of Education.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek*, 19.

<sup>351</sup> M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*, 60.

<sup>352</sup> Vilmos Vázsonyi, “Nemzetünk gyásza nem lehet jogaink forrása [Our Nation's Sorrow Cannot be the Source of Our Rights],” in *Vázsonyi Vilmos beszédei és írásai* [Speeches and Writings by Vilmos Vázsonyi], edited by József Balassa and Hugó Csergő 2<sup>nd</sup> vol. (Budapest: Országos Vázsonyi Emlékbizottság, 1927), 439.

<sup>353</sup> Hanak-Lettner, “The University: A Battleground (1875-1945). A Discussion with Mitchell Ash, Gabriella Hauch, Herbert Posch, and Oliver Rathkolb”, 73. On the larger context of the rise of the radical right in interwar Vienna see: Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918-1938* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>354</sup> In 1933 admission of foreigners to all Austrian universities was restricted.

At the University of Vienna, however, where the medical faculty belonged, the situation was different from the Viennese Technical College. Antisemitism was strong and violent, however, Jews were not pushed out, but rather segregated. Farádi's autobiography elaborates on this phenomenon and it is well known from scholarly literature on interwar academic antisemitism as well.<sup>355</sup> In each subject there was a course taught by an "Aryan" professor, in case the German nationalist students boycotted another one because of being Jewish or liberal or left-wing. For instance, the famous anatomy professor and public health and welfare innovator, Julius Tandler, led the "1<sup>st</sup> Anatomy Institute". He was both Jewish and a Social-Democrat, a city councilor of Red Vienna – plenty of reasons to be a target of antisemitic attacks. And there was a "2<sup>nd</sup> Anatomy Institute" led by the right-wing Ferdinand Hochstetter. The nationalist students chose Hochstetter's lecture and from time to time attacked Tandler's students, because one's choice of anatomy institute and lecturer implied opting for a political outlook and worldview.<sup>356</sup>

Yet the presence of a strong left-wing student movement made an enormous difference for Jewish students. As Farádi put it, unlike in Hungary, "in Vienna there were *tussles*, not *beatings*".<sup>357</sup> While in Hungary in the case of a "Jew beating" the non-Jewish students passively stood by, in Vienna there were Social Democratic students who got involved and sided with the abused Jewish fellow students.

At the same time, Vienna provided space for the encounter for Hungarian Jews with "Eastern" Jews ("Ostjuden") and through them potentially to a re-definition of their own Jewish identity. The second chapter has already touched upon the romanticizing exoticization of Ostjuden by interwar Zionists in general and by László Roboz and László Mózes, who were

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<sup>355</sup> *Alma Mater Antisemitica*, edited by Fritz, Rossoliński-Liebe and Starek; *Die Universität. Eine Kampfzone*, edited by Hanak-Lettner.

<sup>356</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 70–71.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.* 65.

Hungarian Jews who studied in Italy, in particular. They presented the numerus clausus related student migration to Italy as a stimulator of Jewish national awakening thanks to the encounter with Polish and Romanian Jews whom they saw as less “spoilt” by assimilation than Hungarian Jewish youth.<sup>358</sup>

Another Hungarian Zionist, however, Koestler, admits in his autobiography that he had felt repelled by the “jargon” of Ostjuden (i.e. the Yiddish language) “with its lilting sing-song” because it “turned every factual statement into an emotional one”. Moreover, he never lost his aversion for it.<sup>359</sup> He encountered Polish and Russian Jews brought up in a religious-traditional setting for the first time in Vienna, through the Zionist movement. First he felt bewildered by this encounter.<sup>360</sup> According to his claim the more he found out about Judaism, the more distressed he became and consequently the more Zionist, as he felt that only the Jewish state could cure a “sickness” that haunted Jews and which was intimately connected with the fact that the Jews lacked a country.<sup>361</sup> Thus, there was a self-perpetuating circle, he learned about Judaism because he met “real” Jews through the Zionist movement and this encounter made him more fervent in his Zionism.

Bence Szabolcsi also made interesting observations about the differences in Jewish culture in Weimar Germany and his native Hungary. Judit Frigyesi argues that although Szabolcsi identified with assimilated Jews culturally and ideologically, he felt uneasy about their modern ritual, which seemed artificial to him with its “pseudo-choruses” and “pseudo-rituals”.<sup>362</sup> In terms of liturgy, he preferred attending an Orthodox synagogue over a Reformed one in Leipzig, although he came from a Neolog family – a stream of Hungarian Judaism

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<sup>358</sup> “Olaszországi levél.”

<sup>359</sup> Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue*, 134.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>362</sup> Judit Frigyesi, “Bence Szabolcsi’s Unfinished Work: Jewish Identity and Cultural Ideology in Communist Hungary,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (2005): 496-522 (504.)

connected to the German Reform Jewish movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Frigyesi quotes Szabolcsi on his synagogue experiences from his Leipzig letters:

I do not like the synagogue where I go these days. Deadly silence, pseudo-choruses, complicated pseudo-preaching, pseudo-reform, pseudo-ritual. I inquired about the address of the Orthodox community, perhaps I will feel better there.<sup>363</sup>

Two weeks later he indeed reported that he had felt more at home in the Orthodox synagogue.<sup>364</sup> While it is true that he missed authenticity from the Reform service, another letter of his clarifies that he also felt at home in the Orthodox synagogue in Leipzig because it resembled the Csáky street Neolog synagogue in Budapest which he liked.<sup>365</sup>

Besides his own Jewish identity, however, Szabolcsi was forced to pay attention to the high level of xenophobia in his German environment. It was very much present in how clerks behaved towards him and his cousin when they had to take care of a passport issue on the turn of 1922 and 1923.<sup>366</sup> In January 1923, he was shocked to realize that it was not only a general contempt towards foreigners, but a specific prejudice targeting “us” – he does not specify if he means “us, Hungarians” or “us, Jews”. He felt so uneasy about this atmosphere that he concluded from the next spring it would be impossible to continue studying in Germany and thus he needed to speed up with writing his dissertation. Importantly, he connected this hostility to the economic crisis haunting the young Weimar Republic. In a letter he quotes the Hungarian Jewish historian, Henrik Marczali, who observed that “people become selfish, greedy and

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<sup>363</sup> This letter from September 17, 1921 is translated and quoted by Frigyesi, “Bence Szabolcsi’s Unfinished Work,” 504. See the original Hungarian text in Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 186.

<sup>364</sup> Frigyesi, “Bence Szabolcsi’s Unfinished Work,” 504.

<sup>365</sup> Letter of October 1, 1921. Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 186. Csáky street is nowadays Hegedűs Gyula street. Its synagogue – common belief claiming that it was a *status quo ante* prayer house notwithstanding – belonged to the Neolog Pest Israelite Community in the interwar period. The status quo ante stream was neither Neolog or Orthodox and some liturgically conservative but in terms of denomination Neolog synagogues of Budapest were considered as status quo because of their style. However, Budapest had no separate status quo community. Szonja Ráhel Komoróczy and Viktória Bányai, “Magyarországi zsidó vallási szervezetek, intézmények emlékezetpolitikája [Memory Politics of Jewish Religious Organizations and Institutions in Hungary.]” *Regio* 24, no. 3 (2016): 38-58 (41).

<sup>366</sup> Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 207.

intolerant when in misery” and added that “liberalism is the philosophy of the satiated stomach”. Hence “we all fall back to Hungary one after the other. It is impossible to settle in a defeated country”.<sup>367</sup>

Ida Somló was studying in Leipzig in the same period when Szabolcsi. From a letter written by her in late 1923, we see that indeed there was a phenomenon of “falling back to Hungary”. Unlike Szabolcsi, however, Somló did not complain about hostility against foreign Jewish students in Germany. She was more worried about aggression her friend – Erzsébet Kardos who appeared in the previous subchapter – would face in the University of Budapest, after hearing about campus violence in the Hungarian capital from another friend:

I do not understand Böske, why did she go to Pest? – After all, our fellow Roth is writing about the university circumstances there desperately. – One cannot study there more calmly either.<sup>368</sup>

With regard to Germany, Somló referred to the inflation as the only problem: “I think the crisis peaks now in Germany, I believe in one month or two they will pull themselves together to some extent and work will start again”.<sup>369</sup> She was indeed very enthusiastic about work and studies, in the same letter she stated that

The lectures were beautiful, I have seen and learned many things, I have read a lot and have worked practically as well – if I can arrange everything nicely back home, I can finally start to study seriously and I will be the happiest person.

The young Linkszy, was similarly enthusiastic about studying in Weimar Germany. He even made decisions for the sake thereof that his later self deems irrational in his. By 1923 he possessed a Czechoslovak passport,<sup>370</sup> he was exempted from military service for his study period and within two years he could have started practicing the medical profession in Czechoslovakia even without learning Czech or Slovak, with a degree from the German

<sup>367</sup> Letter of January 1, 1923. Kroó, *Szabolcsi Bence*, 207.

<sup>368</sup> Letter by Ida Somló to Ödön Bánki, Leipzig, December 6, 1923, Private collection of Esther Bánki.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> As it was mentioned in the third chapter, he had been born in Galgóc which due to the Treaty of Trianon became part of Czechoslovakia.

University of Prague and thanks to the large German speaking minority.<sup>371</sup> Yet he gave this all up because he believed his “emotional homeland” was the Weimar Republic.<sup>372</sup> He moved to Kiel to finish his medical studies with the knowledge that as a foreign citizen he could not receive a medical degree that would entitle him to practice the profession in Germany.<sup>373</sup> According to his own retrospective evaluation, he wasted his wife’s dowry and two years of their lives to gain Bavarian citizenship and pursue a medical university career in Germany. Yet he failed in this endeavor which retrospectively seems fortunate, because they would have had to leave Germany after the Nazi takeover in any case.

In Munich, Nazism was so rampant already in 1931 that it made life unbearable for Links. The last drop for him was an article titled “*Ein ungarischer Jude in der Universitäts-Augenklinik*” in the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, which singled him out as a Jew holding a position that should be given to an Aryan German doctor.<sup>374</sup> This story leads us to the last section of this chapter that investigates how the numerous *clausus* exiles remembered the rise of fascism and Nazism.

#### IV.7. The rise of antisemitism and the expansion of Nazism across Europe

The way survivors reflect on the rise of antisemitism and the expansion of Nazism are deeply impacted by the knowledge of the consequences. The authors are seeking explanation on why they did not recognize the “signs” of the coming disaster. Such foreseeing was the least possible in Fascist Italy where antisemitism was not the mainstream of either academic or political life. The influx of foreign, including Hungarian Jewish students was in fact a result of the Fascist Gentile reform of Italian higher education (named after philosopher and Minister for Public education Giovanni Gentile) that lured foreign students to Italy in order to

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<sup>371</sup> Links, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 347-348.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.* 354.

<sup>373</sup> For this, one needed to take a *Staatsprüfung* (state exam) which was not open to foreigners. Links, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 351.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.* 353-354.

internationalize Italian academia.<sup>375</sup> However, fascism's 1938 antisemitic turn shocked them as an unexpected calamity. With regard to Austria and Germany, we have more considerable insight into the rise of Austro-fascism and Nazism by Hungarian Jewish students.

In retrospect, Linksz considers having been attacked by the *Völkischer Beobachter* a stroke of luck since in this way he and his wife left Germany early enough.<sup>376</sup> The later a Jew left Germany, the more difficult it was to start over a career and a life somewhere else. Koestler's recollection is gloomier:

At a conservative estimate, three out of every four people whom I knew before I was thirty were subsequently killed in Spain, or hounded to death at Dachau, or gassed at Belsen, or deported to Russia, or liquidated in Russia; some jumped from windows in Vienna or Budapest, others were wrecked by the misery and aimlessness of permanent exile.<sup>377</sup>

Farádi links the demise of the excellent Viennese medical school to the Austro-fascist takeover of 1934: “they started to destroy the Viennese medicine with the same weapons with which they ruined the proud buildings of the Karl-Marx-Hof”.<sup>378</sup> Kun even looks at his younger self critically and feels guilty for being an anti-Zionist in the 1920s and 1930s for “those who left [the diaspora] survived, while the majority of those who stayed behind were murdered – the Zionists were right.”<sup>379</sup>

Katz's testimony about the rise of Nazism while he studied in Frankfurt is particularly insightful as he self-reflexively writes about it in his quality of eye witness and historian at the same time. He admits that although he was shocked by Hitler being appointed as chancellor, its significance was not immediately apparent to him. He remembers that in April 1933 his

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<sup>375</sup> For the details see my Master thesis. Kelemen, *Leaving an Antisemitic Regime for a Fascist Country*.

<sup>376</sup> Linksz, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 354.

<sup>377</sup> Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue*, 131.

<sup>378</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 58. The Karl-Marx-Hof is the most famous municipal apartment complex built in the framework of the social housing project of “Red Vienna” between 1927 and 1930. During the *Februaraufrstand*, the February Uprising of 1934, Socialist fighters barricaded themselves inside Karl Marx-Hof and were shelled by the Austrian army and paramilitary forces. Since it became such a historical place, today the Red Vienna Museum is housed in Karl-Marx-Hof.

<sup>379</sup> Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 28.

doctoral advisor, the famous initiator of the sociology of knowledge, Karl Mannheim, urged him to finish examination in the following summer. Katz protested because he did not feel ready for it. Mannheim, however, was afraid that soon it would become impossible for foreign students to take that exam while he believed “they [the Nazis] would not dare to touch a professor”. This conversation took place a few days before Mannheim, a left-wing Jew, became one of the first victims of the Nazi purge of German universities.<sup>380</sup>

Katz, who never planned to stay in Germany, was not in a hurry to leave as long as there was hope to finish his dissertation. And, indeed, he finished his dissertation on German Jewish assimilation in Nazi Germany in the summer of 1935. The worsening of the situation for German Jews in fact even helped his financial situation as due to the new rush for aliyah (Jewish immigration to Palestine), numerous German Jews took private Hebrew lessons from him.<sup>381</sup>

In the end, I quote a story about a life lesson by Kun. When Alfred Kohn, a well known medical professor of the German University of Prague, examined Kun in the mid-1920s, Kun protested at the injustice that he had to perform better for the excellent grade than others. Kohn responded to him that “Ein Kohn muss alles wissen. You will be expected to perform far better in life than the Gentiles!” This remark refers to a recognition of the Hungarian “Kun” name by Kohn as the widespread ‘Hungarianized’ version of the typically Jewish last name Kohn. After the WWII, when Kun visited Prague, he met Professor Kohn who had survived Theresianstadt and thanked him for that life lesson from two decades before.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Katz, *With My Own Eyes*, 90.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.* 97.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

#### IV.8. Conclusion

Most ego documents by *numerus clausus* émigrés match the ‘exile’ narrative of their peregrination that was dominant in the contemporary Hungarian Jewish media, because the students interacted with those who wrote about their plight. At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is contingent whose letters and diaries survived until today and who published memoirs and autobiographies. Lili Fenyő’s memoir is a unique source for two reasons: it is the only available memoir whose bracketed time is peregrination because of the *numerus clausus*, and the only relevant memoir written before the Holocaust. Fortunately, letters by other students written before the Shoah also survived. Yet most of the available ego document sources are memoirs and autobiographies written after the Shoah, in case of memoirs also focusing on the Shoah. Hence, they present the experience of studying abroad before WWII, as a life episode of less significance than the contemporary letters and journal articles treated it.

Poverty is an equally central topic in narratives by students and by journalists (the latter were analyzed in Chapter II) However, since ego documents – unlike many of the journal articles – were not written with the aim of fundraising, they also highlight the joys of their student life abroad. On the whole, the students remember interwar Austria and Germany as intellectually stimulating yet stressful environment due to the rise of antisemitism and xenophobia already in the 1920s. Czechoslovakia and Italy, on the contrary, are represented as friendly host countries. Although the politically minded students noticed the strength of the radical right wing in Austria and Germany (most notably Miklós Kun, Arthur Linksz, Bence Szabolcsi and László Farádi), almost all of them blame themselves retrospectively for not having foreseen the extent of the danger of Nazism.

Even though many of the ego documents were written after the Shoah, and thus by survivors, not all characters of this chapter survived. Ida Somló, Erzsébet Kardos, György Kis

and Miklós Radnóti perished, while Lili Fenyő's fate is not known. The next chapter will follow up the career and life trajectories of numerous clausus exiles after their studies to the extent it is possible.

## V. Life trajectories of numerus clausus émigrés abroad and in Hungary

### V.1. Introduction

In fact, nothing special happened to me. I lived through two world wars. [...] And I came to America just on time. ('Yes, doctor, you saved a lot of troubles for yourself that we had to go through.') Although my parents were stuck there and perished in Auschwitz. The wound, the woundedness may be eternal, but for sure is not unique."<sup>383</sup>

"We were absolutely certain that after Hitler's downfall, a classless, Socialist society would rise on the ruins of fascist Hungary."<sup>384</sup>

"I was no longer just a sympathizer, a theoretical Communist, but one who was willing to work for the future. This was the only conceivable sense of my life that I got back as a gift!"<sup>385</sup>

These three quotes grasp the experience of three very characteristic groups among numerus clausus exiles. Arthur Linksz in the first quote ironically encapsulated the path of those who emigrated for good before the Shoah and struggled with survival guilt for the rest of their lives. George G. Hodos in the second quote speaks for Communist Jews who returned to Hungary in 1945 to build socialism because they believed thereby they would redeem the country from its past filled with class-based oppression and genocidal antisemitism. László Farádi in the third quote elucidated a widespread sentiment among Jews who were deported from Hungary and returned from the concentration camps in a country liberated by the Red Army: they were grateful and converted to Communism out of a conviction that it would put an end to antisemitism. Of course, not all Hungarian Jews became Communist, however the post-1945 trajectory of numerus clausus exiles usually took one of the three paths signaled by Linksz, Hodos, and Farádi. On the top of the experience of persecution and genocide all Hungarian Jews experienced, the numerus clausus émigrés were also intellectuals harmed by marginalization before the war, whereas in 1945 they received possibilities to advance in their

<sup>383</sup> Linksz, *Visszanézek*, 8.

<sup>384</sup> George H. Hodos, *Show Trials: Stalinist Purges in Eastern Europe 1948-1954* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 52.

<sup>385</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 242.

careers beyond expectations. This is why they were less likely to emigrate after 1945 than other Hungarian Jews.

The present chapter, thus, on the one hand gives an overview of what trajectories the careers and lives of numerous *clausus émigrés* after their studies generally took, on the other hand provides a conclusion for the story of the 1,131 individuals told in this dissertation. While the previous chapters were based on contemporary journalistic sources, university enrollment forms, and ego documents written by migrant students, the current chapter's source base is mostly constituted by digital databases and secondary literature on the history of medicine and science.

I cross-checked my sample of *émigré* students presented in the third chapter with the databases of university students enrolled in Hungary in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, constructed in a research project led by social historians Victor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy in order to find out which characters of my story studied in Hungary before or after their emigration.<sup>386</sup> As it has been elaborated on in Chapter II, in the age of the *numerus clausus*, foreign degrees were normally nostrified under the condition of enrolling for four semesters in a Hungarian university after an application process in which applicants needed to get in the Jewish quota. Thus, enrollment in a Hungarian university after emigration indicates a serious motivation for becoming professionals and settling in Hungary. 175 of the migrant students in my sample enrolled in a Hungarian university after their emigration (few of them before) but only 94 of these had their foreign degree accepted as a result. It must be noted, however, that it is not known how many of the subjects in my sample graduated from a university abroad, as some may have enrolled without finishing their studies. In any case, in the four immediate post-

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<sup>386</sup> Karády and Nagy, "Culturally Composite Elites, Regime Changes and Social Crises in Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Confessional Eastern Europe." The same project's databases were used in Chapter III to compare the social background of Hungarian Jewish students enrolled in foreign and in Hungarian universities in the age of the *numerus clausus*.

war years (1945-1949), the pre-war foreign university degrees of 64 students were nostrified in Hungary. This confirms the intuition that numerous émigré students wished to settle in Hungary with their foreign degrees accepted and were hindered in this endeavor by the antisemitic policies of the Horthy-era.

The three further digital databases I consulted for traces about my characters' life trajectories are accessible online. Arcanum and Hungaricana are continuously expanding digital databases of Hungarian scientific and specialized journals, encyclopedias, and weekly and daily newspapers.<sup>387</sup> For my research purposes the telephone directories and lists of degrees issued by universities were particularly important sources. Telephone directories are the richest sources for finding traces of people who were not famous, since doctors and engineers had their profession and specialty next to their names in order to advertise themselves.<sup>388</sup> At the same time, these registrations do not help the identification of people who had common first names and last names. They are only identifiable in sources that contain date and place of birth, such as registration of nostrified foreign university degrees.

Students who besides their medical and engineering work became researchers and academics as well, turn up as authors of scientific publications, and possibly also appear in the Hungarian Biographic Lexicon.<sup>389</sup> Other students were discovered in articles and books due to their political involvement. There were martyrs of the Spanish Civil War among them, members of the illegal Hungarian Communist Party in the interwar period, and victims and survivors of the Stalinist show trials of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

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<sup>387</sup> Arcanum Digitheca <https://www.arcanum.hu/en> (Latest accessed: March 26, 2019); Hungaricana Hungarian Cultural Heritage Portal <https://hungaricana.hu/en/>. (Last accessed: March 26, 2019).

<sup>388</sup> See "A budapesti egységes hálózat (Budapest és környéke) betűrendes távbeszélő névsora" [The Alphabetical List of Telephones in the United Budapest Telephone Network-Budapest and Surroundings], published yearly.

<sup>389</sup> *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* [Hungarian Biographical Lexicon], 1st volume: A-K (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), 2nd volume: L-Z (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), *Supplementary volume A-Z* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981); *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1978-1991* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994). All of these volumes are digitally available on Arcanum.

In addition, I consulted the Central Database of Shoah Victim's Names ran by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust research and remembrance center.<sup>390</sup> Arcanum, Hungaricana, and the Yad Vashem database enabled me to reconstruct the post-university fate of 427 students, thus a little more than one third of my subjects. I identified 139 of them as Shoah victims, most of them appear on the List of Hungarian Labor Battalion Victims. 31 students have one or more pages of testimony submitted by family members or friends and acquaintances. Others appear in concentration camp registries, *yizkor* (commemorative) books of their local Jewish communities, and lists of deportees compiled by Jewish communities or municipal authorities after the war. Two students appear in the database of foreign Jews interned in Italy after 1940 when the Fascist regime entered WWII as the Third Reich's ally.<sup>391</sup>

About 38 students I found information elsewhere than the above described databases: in writings of peers and descendants, obituaries written by colleagues, and through informal conversations with descendants and local patriots of the places where some of my story's characters came from. In many cases, I found the descendants and the recollections about my subjects thanks to sheer luck.

Since this research intentionally focused on non-prominent and non-famous intellectuals, it was to be expected that the destinies of many would remain unknown even after laborious research benefitting from the ongoing digitization of sources of everyday life of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, this research has shed light on trends in *numerus clausus* exiles' life trajectories that would have remained unknown if one had concentrated only on the biographies of the prominent, famous, and successful among them. Nevertheless, one of the subchapters is dedicated to *numerus clausus* exiles who played a special role in the history of science, to move on then to the possibilities of returning to Hungary with a foreign university degree, followed

<sup>390</sup> The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/> (Last accessed: March 26, 2019).

<sup>391</sup> General Index of Foreign Jews Interned in Italy 1940-1943, Foundation Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center: [http://www.cdec.it/ebrei\\_stranieri/](http://www.cdec.it/ebrei_stranieri/) (Last accessed: March 26, 2019).

by their fates during the Shoah, and in the end concluding with post-war career and life trajectories. The sections on history of science and on post-war trajectories concentrate more on individuals and thus frame the sections on ways back to Hungary and fates during the Shoah which are rather collective biographies. Although my sample includes non-Jewish Hungarian migrant students as well, this collective biography concentrates on the over 80% who were Jewish.

## V.2. Numerus clausus exiles in the international history of science

With regard to the 1930s, the watershed years in the collective biography of numerus clausus exiles coincide with the turning points of European Jewish history, rather independently from the students' age and time of graduation. This is somewhat counterintuitive, since the age difference between the oldest and the youngest cohort could be over two decades, considering that the cohorts of the early 1920s included WWI veterans who had been forced to pause their studies and continue at a later age than usual. In those years, return to the universities at an older age was not at all a phenomenon limited to Jews, but a general generational experience.

Opportunities for working and living in the target countries of the numerus clausus provoked emigration were significantly better in the 1920s than in the 1930s, however, the dramatic changes of the 1930s also concerned those who had graduated earlier and established careers and families. It is well known that the fall of Weimar Germany – which was one of the primary target countries of Hungarian Jewish intellectual emigration – due to the Nazi takeover in 1933 meant that Jews who had chosen Germany as their adoptive homeland after being exiled by Hungarian antisemitism,<sup>392</sup> confronted yet another exile. This phenomenon has been treated in depth by Tibor Frank in his monograph *Double Exile*.

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<sup>392</sup> Or “driven away on racial grounds” as Tibor Frank put it. Frank, *Double Exile*, 25.

Jews leaving Germany as a consequence of Hitler's rise to power were part of the German-Jewish emigration. As Frank notes, contemporary statisticians and journalists tended to lump them together with German Jews, even if they had originally come from Hungary.<sup>393</sup> Monographers of intellectual history, such as Judit Szapor and Mary Joe Nye, however, acknowledge the significance of the Hungarian subgroup within the "German refugee" population.<sup>394</sup>

One Hungarian Jewish émigré, the neuropathologist Philipp Schwartz, in fact was an agent of the emigration of German Jewish academics (and some non-Jewish ones who were endangered by Nazism due to their politics). Schwartz's role in the rescuing of numerous intellectuals from Nazi Germany is so little known, that a study dedicated to his effort by Gerald Kreft is titled "The Forgotten Rescuer."<sup>395</sup> In a strict sense, Schwartz was not a *numerus clausus* refugee, since he concluded his doctorate back in Budapest in 1919 and he arrived to Frankfurt as an assistant professor. However, he was expelled from Hungary by the same intolerant, anti-Jewish, anti-liberal "Christian Course" that pushed so many Jewish, left-wing, and liberal intellectuals of his generation to leave Hungary, including Theodore von Kármán, the Polányi brothers, and Karl Mannheim to name just a few. By 1933, Schwartz was a well-established senior scholar who had spent fourteen years in Germany. Hence, he was well-connected and felt committed for an organizational activity to save German scholars from Nazism.

Frank asserts that Hungarian Jewish intellectuals in Germany were more alert than their native German counterparts, due to their earlier encounters with violent antisemitism in Hungary during the White Terror of 1919. Thus, they were more alarmed by the strengthening

<sup>393</sup> Frank, *Double Exile*, 18.

<sup>394</sup> Szapor, *A világhírű Polányiak*; Mary Jo Nye, *Michael Polanyi and His Generation: Origins of the Social Construction of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>395</sup> The University of Frankfurt attempted to amend this with a memorial dedicated to Schwartz in 2014. Gerald Kreft, "Der vergessene Retter. Philipp Schwartz – Organizer der Wissenschaftsemigration während des Nationalsozialismus [The Forgotten Rescuer. Philipp Schwartz – Organizer of Scientists' Emigration during National Socialism]," *Forschung Frankfurt*, no. 2 (2014): 123-127.

of the Nazis, and after the Nazi takeover they were quicker to take action.<sup>396</sup> Although the level of alertness differed greatly among individuals rather than among groups (in February 1933 Leo Szilard was ready to leave Berlin for Vienna when Michael Polanyi still doubted that the Reichstag fire had anything to do with the Nazis),<sup>397</sup> Philipp Schwartz's prompt reaction to the new Nazi legislation is a magnificent example for the alertness taken from native Hungary asserted by Frank.

The German "Law for the Reconstruction of the Professional Civil Service" promulgated by the Nazi government on April 7, 1933, authorized the dismissal or premature retirement from government service of persons who were not of "Aryan" descent, or were associated with groups politically undesirable in the new German state. As a consequence, 614 university instructors lost their jobs by 1934 (the vast majority for their "non-Aryan" descent).<sup>398</sup> The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the Anschluss of 1938, and the following Nazi territorial conquests in Europe increased the scale of this phenomenon to an unprecedented quantitative level in the history of academia, driving out approximately two thousand academics from the European continent. This phenomenon is also referred to as the "exodus of the mind" (*Exodus des Geistes*).<sup>399</sup>

Approximately two thirds of those who lost their academic jobs in 1933-34 left Germany in addition to an unknown number of liberal professionals (doctors, engineers, and lawyers), including 10,000 physicians.<sup>400</sup> The Hungarian-Jewish neuropathology professor Philipp Schwartz was also dismissed from the University of Frankfurt in 1933, immediately

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<sup>396</sup> Frank, *Double Exile*, 434.

<sup>397</sup> Nye, *Michael Polanyi and His Generation*, 73.

<sup>398</sup> Mitchell G. Ash and Alfons Söllner, "Introduction. Forced Migration and Scientific Change," in *Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Emigré German-Speaking Scientists and Scholars After 1933* (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-20 (6).

<sup>399</sup> Although Mitchell G. Ash, Alfons Söllner, and their colleagues in their volume *Forced Migration and Scientific Change* argue that it is exaggerated to speak about the "exodus of reason" from Nazi Germany and they promote a more neutral taxonomy of change, reconstruction, or redirection in sciences as a result of political upheaval. Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Kreft, "Der vergessene Retter," 123.

left for Switzerland, and took on the mission of helping as many of his peers as possible to jobs in their own professions abroad. For this aim he founded the first and most important aid organization of expelled German intellectuals, the *Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland* (Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars). The name of the organization purposefully alluded to an earlier organization in Weimar-Germany, the *Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft*, which had raised funds for scientific institutions during the financially critical early 1920s.

Schwartz's *Notgemeinschaft* through word of mouth, questionnaires, and correspondence, constructed a database of the already dismissed and probably would-be dismissed victims of the Nazification of German academia in May 1933. In 1936 they compiled the *List of Displaced German Scholars*, a very important document for contemporary academia and for historians of the “exodus of the mind.”<sup>401</sup> The document included information on over 1,600 scholars in 60 disciplines including sciences, fields of medicine and engineering, humanities, and social sciences. The short academic bios, the language skills, marital status, and number of children of each of them is described alongside with their current position (unplaced, temporarily placed, or permanently placed) abroad.

Besides the double exile of Hungarian Jewish liberal and left-wing intelligentsia, the story of the numerous *clausus* exiles is also intertwined with the story of the emigration of natural scientists from Hungary, referred to as the “Hungarian phenomenon” by Gábor Palló.<sup>402</sup> Palló uses this term for a group of twenty-six 20th century émigré Hungarian scientists who became members of the international scientific elite. They were socialized in Hungary, made

<sup>401</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 901/91878.

<sup>402</sup> Gábor Palló, “A kémia szerepe a magyar jelenségben [The Role of Chemistry in the Hungarian Phenomenon],” in *Akadémiai műhely – Közgyűlési előadások. Millennium az Akadémián. [Academic Workshop. – Lectures in the Assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Millennium at the Academy.]* 3rd volume, edited by Ferenc Glatz, 1033-1042. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001.

extraordinarily successful scientific careers abroad, were theoretically excellent but also interested in the practical usage of science, and they were politically engaged.

There is a “Hungarian phenomenon” in the history of science in Palestine under British Mandate as well. At this point it is worth to remember again Ernő Feldmár’s call for fellow Jewish students to study in the newly established Hebrew University of Jerusalem that was quoted in Chapter II.<sup>403</sup> It is important to add that Hungarian Jewish students’ interest in the new alma mater was negligible when compared to their interest in Western and Central European universities.<sup>404</sup> At the same time, an older generation of Hungarian Jews gave some of the founding faculty of the Hebrew University.

The case of Hungarian Jews with the Hebrew University, this Zionist cultural project, was similar to their stance towards Zionism in general. Some of the founding fathers of both were Hungarian Jews, but they were not followed by many. Theodor Herzl, the initiator of political Zionism, was born in Hungary just like another founding father of the movement, Max Nordau. However, the mass basis of the movement came from the Russian Empire. A Hungarian scientist, Andor Fodor, filled the very first professorship of the young university in Jerusalem and also organized its first department, the institute of chemistry. Another Hungarian, the mathematician Mihály (Moshe) Fekete served several times as the dean of the faculty for sciences and as the rector between 1945 and 1948. Both Fodor and Fekete were born in 1884, thus they were too old to be *numerus clausus* exiles.

The generation of *numerus clausus* exiles joined the Hebrew University only after 1933 upon fleeing Nazi Germany. Raphael Patai, to whom the first Ph.D. of the Hebrew University was granted in 1936, immigrated to Palestine due to his Zionism. Despite his excellent high

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<sup>403</sup> “Olaszországi levél.”

<sup>404</sup> In the first academic year when teaching was launched (1928-29), no student from Hungary enrolled. Eleven years later (1939-40) 41 did. *Yearbook of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1957), 166.

school diploma, he did not fit in the Jewish quota in the University of Budapest in 1928. Yet he did study in Hungary before emigrating, as he was fortunate enough to be interested in rabbinic studies and thus could evade the numerus clausus in Budapest by enrolling in the Rabbinical Seminary whose students were also obliged and allowed to earn a doctorate in the faculty of humanities at the University of Budapest.<sup>405</sup> Patai earned his first Ph.D. there in 1933 and his *smichah* (rabbinical ordination) in the Rabbinical Seminary in 1936. In the mid-1930s he kept going back to Budapest, but gradually settled in Jerusalem.

Despite being the first Ph.D. graduate in Jerusalem, Patai's tense relationship with rector Yehuda Leon Magnes made it difficult for him to establish an academic career in Palestine.<sup>406</sup> He was employed in Jerusalem year after year in a temporary position between 1938 and 1942 to teach Hebrew to students who had recently immigrated and spoke little or no Hebrew. Yet in the 1940s Patai founded the Hebrew University's research center for ethnology and from 1948 he taught anthropology at different American universities and wrote numerous books in the field of Jewish Studies.

Others, however, only chose Jerusalem after failing to find positions they wished for in England, like the physical chemist Farkas brothers Ladislaus and Adalbert. Previously they studied at the Viennese Technische Hochschule and worked in the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute for Physical Chemistry in Berlin with Fritz Haber, Michael Polányi, and Eugene Wigner. They were unhappy with the employment they found in England after fleeing Germany, hence

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<sup>405</sup> Previously his father, József Patai, journalist, editor in chief of the Zionist *Múlt és Jövő* cultural magazine, "pulled some strings" for his son's admission to the Technical University of Budapest. However, mechanical engineering turned out not to be the young Patai's "cup of tea." Raphael Patai, *Apprenticeship in Budapest. Memories of a World That Is No More* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 259-264.

<sup>406</sup> For details, see Patai's personal file in the archive of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For instance, when Patai signed his articles published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* and in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* as "member of the academic staff of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem," Magnes hurried to inform the editors Cyrus Adler and J. W. Morgenstern respectively that Patai was in fact not a member of the university's academic staff, but merely a language instructor, and asked them not to make the mistake of identifying Patai as a faculty member again. Magnes was thus invested in distancing his institution from Patai and emphasizing Patai's lack of permanent institutional affiliation.

Ladislaus accepted an assistant professorship in Jerusalem in 1935 and Adalbert followed suit one year later. Adalbert's temporary position was not prolonged after 1941, hence he moved to the United States. Ladislaus remained in Palestine until his tragic death in an airplane crash en route to America to purchase scientific instruments in 1948. Until then he served as the secretary of the *Scientific Advisory Committee to the Palestine War Supply Board*. In this quality he worked on similar projects related to the war effort to defeat the Third Reich like his fellow Hungarian scientists Kármán, Szilard, Wigner, Teller, and Neumann in the United States.<sup>407</sup>

### V.3. Ways back to Hungary

Homecoming with a foreign university degree was hard. Up until 1928 the process of foreign degrees' nostrification was subject to the arbitrariness of university bureaucrats and if students turned to the Ministry of Religion and Public Education to amend that, then the arbitrary decisions of Ministry clerks came to play. There was no general rule to turn down requests for degree nostrification by Jews. Yet it seems that it was widely understood that this was the right thing (and of course logical) to do to be in line with the *numerus clausus* law.

The 1928 regulation of nostrification made the process even harder with the obligation to enroll for four semesters in Hungary, thus to apply and compete for the places of the 6% Jewish quota. As we know from the memoirs of Miklós Kun and László Farádi, one was most likely to succeed in this endeavor if finding a good personal contact in the faculty of a university. Kun's uncle found a valuable connection in Szeged and Farádi got in the medical faculty in Pécs after several years of unsuccessful applications when a professor put his name on a "list of Jewish students to be admitted."<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Gábor Palló, "The Hungarian Phenomenon in Israeli Science," *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry* 25, no. 1 (2000): 35-42 (38-39).

<sup>408</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*, 123; Kun, *Kedves Hilda*, 32.

Many numerus clausus exiles, however, failed to get their degrees nostrified or even to enroll in Hungary. Thus, it could easily happen that after years of studies abroad, one was unable to work in Hungary. This frustration made many returnees pick up the “wandering stick” again to quote a beloved image of the contemporary Jewish press. When numerus clausus exiles who failed to get their degrees nostrified in Hungary later became successful abroad, it gave a good opportunity for the press to ridicule Hungary’s antisemitic policies. So did the Social Democratic daily *Népszava* through the example of Jakab Fürth, who got an award in a medical congress in Philadelphia for his research on leukemia:

America gives opportunity and space for research for those who – like Dr. Fürth – because of the numerus clausus cannot teach or work in laboratories and cannot even have their foreign university degrees nostrified.<sup>409</sup>

The Jewish weekly *Egyenlőség* in 1929 published a list of numerus clausus exiles who had graduated in Vienna with the financial help of the philanthropist Mihály Uprimny and then made careers abroad. Most members of the list were doctors. Their places of residence included Vienna, Paris, New York, Silesia, Saxony, and Italy. Besides, there was an engineer in Berlin, an assistant professor of chemistry in Vienna, and a librarian and a professor of chemistry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (the latter two were a married couple) among them.<sup>410</sup> The report finished on a critical and sad note about Hungary: “We are proud of them, of the émigrés of the numerus clausus and of their successes which, regrettably, were not achieved here.”<sup>411</sup>

The order could be reversed: success abroad and yet no recognition and employment in Hungary afterwards. Although Kuno Klebelsberg, minister of religion and public education, claimed to strive for bringing back the talented Hungarians from abroad, Jewish expatriate scientists were not welcome. All expatriate Jewish physicists and mathematicians applied for

<sup>409</sup> “Új hősök [New Heroes],” *Népszava*, July 17, 1931, 7.

<sup>410</sup> Personal folder of Jolán Edlitz-Pfeffermann, Archives of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

<sup>411</sup> “Egyetemi tanárok, tanársegédek, egyetemi könyvtárosok lettek a numerus clausus számúzóttjei [The Exiles of the Numerus Clausus Became University Professors, Assistant Professors and University Librarians],” *Egyenlőség*, April 6, 1929, 2.

professorial positions in vain, even those who had become international top players of their fields.<sup>412</sup>

Instead of leaving again, returnees could also settle in Hungary and work in fields related to their university training as interns or in positions for which they were overqualified. For doctors it was typical to be interns or “titular assistant doctors” in Jewish hospitals, most notably in the hospital of the Pest Israelite Community in Szabolcs street in Budapest.<sup>413</sup> This was the case for more than a dozen of the students in my sample and for Imre Strausz, a graduate of Bologna and Rome, who became famous later beyond his excellence in internal medicine for writing the history of the Jewish emergency hospital in the ghetto.<sup>414</sup> By the interwar period, “the Jewish Hospital” had become in fact a conglomerate of several buildings and institutions, including the Jewish community’s hospital and clinics established by private Jewish donors: Kaszab Aladár and Józsa Polyclinic (founded by the philanthropist Aladár Kaszab mentioned as a generous supporter of *numerus clausus* exiles in Chapter II.2), Bródy Adél Children’s Hospital (founded by Zsigmond Bródy publishing house owner to commemorate his wife), and Weiss Alice Birthing Home (founded by the industrialist Manfréd Weiss and dedicated to the memory of his wife Alice Weiss).

While most doctors employed in these institutions were Jewish, around a third of the 14,000 patients treated each year were non-Jews even in the late 1930s. Earlier (in 1910) 64% of patients were non-Jewish due to the Neolog policy of integration into the majority society. Their proportion shrank as a consequence of increasing separation of Jews and non-Jews under

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<sup>412</sup> Hargittai, “Unaccounted for,” 168.

<sup>413</sup> The Szabolcs street hospital was nationalized in 1950 and served as a clinic for professional training for doctors for most of the post-war period. In 2007 it was closed down.

<sup>414</sup> Imre Strausz, “Egy zsidó kórház 1944-ben. Emlékezés-vázlat ötven év múltán” [A Jewish Hospital in 1944. Outline of A Commemoration 50 years after], *Múlt és Jövő* 1994/4: 48-60.

political pressure.<sup>415</sup> The Kaszab Polyclinic specifically aimed to provide health care for the poor of Budapest and opportunity for young doctors' professional development.<sup>416</sup>

The more fortunate repatriating *numerus clausus* exiles managed to enroll in a Hungarian university and could count on having their university degrees accepted after four semesters of studies in Hungary while working as interns in a Jewish hospital. Such was the situation of Arthur Links, who enrolled in the medical faculty of Pécs in order to nostrify his German degree while working as an unsalaried titular assistant ophthalmologist in the Jewish hospital in Budapest. The hospital's chief ophthalmologist divided a part of his own salary to help his assistants.<sup>417</sup> Thus, in financial terms it was a meager existence to work in the famous Jewish hospital. This is also reflected by the fact that dozens of doctors were eligible for discounted lunch provided by the Social Mission for Doctors.<sup>418</sup>

The Pest Israelite Community aimed to create jobs for as many young Jewish doctors as possible, and the fact that its hospitals treated 14,000 patients yearly, shows that hundreds of doctors could be absorbed by the system. Yet, it could not secure enough proper jobs with proper salary to all Jewish doctors who graduated abroad. Ironically, this was beneficial for the patients, since the doctor-patient ratio became more favorable here than in other Hungarian hospitals and as another consequence of such surplus of Jewish doctors, even nursing tasks (e.g., giving injections) were performed by doctors. Hence, if one could afford to work in an underpaid job due to having side jobs or family support to rely on, it was a good professional

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<sup>415</sup> Kinga Frojimovics, "Jewish Refugees from Austria in the Hospitals of the Jewish Community of Pest After the 'Anschluß'," *S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation* 5 (2018) 2: 95-103 (97).

<sup>416</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Kaszab Polyclinic Committee's meeting, June 30, 1937. Documents of the Pest Israelite Community/1937/Nr. 10524. Hungaricana: [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi\\_hitkozsegek\\_pest\\_1937\\_01\\_10000-11000/?pg=296&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi_hitkozsegek_pest_1937_01_10000-11000/?pg=296&layout=s) (Downloaded: March 26, 2019).

<sup>417</sup> Links, *Harc a harmadik halállal*, 377.

<sup>418</sup> List of recipients of discounted lunch from the Social Mission for doctors, August 5, 1937. Documents of the Pest Israelite Community/1937/Nr. 10487. Hungaricana: [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi\\_hitkozsegek\\_pest\\_1937\\_01\\_10000-11000/?pg=272&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi_hitkozsegek_pest_1937_01_10000-11000/?pg=272&layout=s) (Downloaded: March 26, 2019). 7 of the 40 doctors on the list are also part of my database of migrant students: László Deutsch, László Egyedi, Imre Hajdú, Imre Fodor, György Molnár, Jenő Steinberger, and István Róth.

opportunity to work in the Jewish Hospital in Szabolcs street. It was one of the most prestigious hospitals of interwar Budapest with some pioneering departments. It is noteworthy that this was ironically connected to the fact that so many Jewish medical students studied in the best medical faculties of the region (in Vienna and Prague) instead of the ones in Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs, and Szeged, as a consequence of the numerus clausus. Yet, the excellence of the Szabolcs street conglomerate was also a result of conscious support by the community and by philanthropists dating back to the foundation of the Pest community's hospital in 1889. Its departments for internal medicine, gynecology, and radiology deserve special attention as the most advanced institutions in their respective fields in interwar Hungary. The hospital as a whole was the seed of the Institute for Advanced Medical Training established in 1954.

The department for internal medicine was led by Lajos Lévy, a leading internist of Hungary, who in 1936 became the director of the whole hospital. He acquired international fame as the physician of Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna, when they all lived in emigration in London.<sup>419</sup> Tivadar Bársony, the head of the radiology department in Szabolcs street since 1933, was also an internationally acclaimed pioneer of his field. He pioneered radiology when radiology developed into a distinct discipline and was institutionalized.<sup>420</sup> Besides being an excellent physician, Bársony was a school-founder with several homecoming numerus clausus exiles among his disciples: Ernő Koppenstein, Béla Wald, Imre Hajdú, Mária Fogel, and Zsuzsa Leichner. Wald, Hajdú, and Fogel are part of my database as Viennese medical students. In 1945, when the Jewish hospital could move back from the ghetto to its original buildings, Leichner became the head of the famous radiology department. She soon left Hungary for two years because her husband (dr. Emil Weil) was appointed as Hungary's ambassador to the

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<sup>419</sup> Lévy was interested in psychoanalysis, he was also a member of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association established by Sándor Ferenczi, and he was married to a psychoanalyst, Katalin Freud.

<sup>420</sup> György Csákány, "Bársony Tivadar (1886-1942)," *Orvosi hetilap* 120, no.14 (1979): 839-840.

United States. After their return Leichner continued Bársony's radiology school with teaching several younger generations of Hungarian radiologists.<sup>421</sup>

In some cases, employment in Hungary was difficult because of the novelty of the specialty of repatriating students or its lack of institutionalization. Such was the case of Bence Szabolcsi's musicology doctoral degree earned in Leipzig and Ferenc Mérei's French degree from the French National Institute of Professional Orientation. Szabolcsi worked as a freelance journalist and an independent scholar until the war. He conducted musicology research and published books without an academic affiliation. During the war he was called up for forced labor service in the military which he fortunately survived. Due to his earlier marginalization and his left-wing sympathies, in 1945 he could start a delayed academic career (two decades after his Ph.D.) and in fact became the person who institutionalized musicology in Hungary by establishing the musicology department at the Music Academy in 1951.

Mérei utilized his French degree in the 1930s as an unsalaried psychologist in the Children's Psychology Institute in Budapest and he also joined the psychological laboratory of the College for Special Needs Education led by Lipót Szondi and collaborated in the creation of the famous Szondi-test. Szondi was the founding father of fate analysis, a school based on the theory that genetics influences what kinds of people, ideas, and activities attract a person and what type of mental illness they may acquire during their lifetime. This does not mean that genetics determine fate, but it means that genetics delineates a field within which human agency is operational. If one's attractions are unfulfilled or pursued to an extreme level, it leads to certain mental illnesses. These genetically programmed attractions also function as forces that make a person choose in certain ways from the possibilities the circumstances offer. The family background and the social environment also greatly influence how a person can

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<sup>421</sup> György Csákány, "Dr. Weilné Dr. Leichner Zsuzsa (1902-1984)," *Orvosi hetilap* 126, no. 8 (1985): 435-436.

negotiate their instinctive attractions under the circumstances that life provides to them. Szondi identified eight instinctive needs that are genetically determined but can play out in different ways if a person gets proper guidance on how to negotiate them. To that aim his research team – that included repatriating numerous *clausus exiles* Ferenc Mérei and Miklós Kun – developed the Szondi-test. In the Szondi-school, science and research were thus first and foremost tools to help humanity.

Mérei and Kun, these two repatriating Jewish students and underground Communists, became friends while working in Szondi's team. Due to the anti-Jewish laws of the late 1930s, Szondi's laboratory was dissolved. Mérei and Kun thus joined the National Israelite Patronage Association, led by the psychiatrist Júlia György, which was engaged in child- and youth care by managing nurseries, kindergartens, and psychotherapy for adolescents. One of Kun's clients was the young György Aczél, a "troubled child" from the Jewish orphanage who would grow into a Zionist activist, an underground Communist organizer of rescuing Jews during the Shoah, and the leader of cultural politics during the Kádár-regime.<sup>422</sup>

It is important to note that while counseling on career choice was not widespread in Hungary in general, the Jewish community invested in such services for Jewish youth in the late 1930s due to the narrowing of available study and career paths as a consequence of the anti-Jewish laws. The Pest Israelite Community notified its members in March 1938 that

The Israelite Community of Pest is filled with the grave problem of its youth. Hence – listening to the spirit of the time – we wish to take care of the youth's employment already in the stage of choosing a profession. [...] All youngsters will be thoroughly examined by a counseling committee on choice of profession.<sup>423</sup>

<sup>422</sup> Melinda Kovai, *Lélektan és politika. Pszichotudományok a magyarországi államszocializmusban 1945-1970* [Psychology and Politics: Psychosciences in Hungarian State Socialism, 1945-1970] (Budapest: Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary – L'Harmattan, 2016), 352-353.

<sup>423</sup> Letter of the Pest Israelite Community, March 27, 1938. *Hungaricana/ Zsidó Gyűjtemények Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár/ 1938/ Nr. 4141*. [Hungaricana Digital Collection/Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive/ Documents of the Pest Israelite Community/1938/Nr. 4141.] *Hungaricana*: [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi\\_hitkozsegek\\_pest\\_1938\\_04000-05000/?pg=22&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/mioi_hitkozsegek_pest_1938_04000-05000/?pg=22&layout=s) (Downloaded: March 28, 2019).

Younger cohorts of numerus clausus exiles who returned could not find such niches as the Jewish Hospital or Szondi's laboratory that provided good opportunities for professional fulfillment. Hence they needed to fill marginal niches of their profession. Éva Gergely, for instance, who returned to Hungary with a medical degree from Prague in 1938, volunteered in giving injections to private patients. Presumably, financially she relied on her parents.<sup>424</sup> Her degree was only recognized in Hungary after WWII.

Engineers often found employment in the large United Incandescent Lamps and Electrical Co. (Egyesült Izzólámpa es Villamossági Rt.), better known as Tungfram (for instance, the engineer István Barta)<sup>425</sup> or in Standard Electrical Co. Ltd (for instance, László Kozma whose memoir was quoted in Chapter IV). Tungfram benefitted from the fact that during the 1920s electric light replaced gas lighting in a large part of the world. This expansion of the market brought about a fast development in the electronic and telecommunication industries. Thus, Tungfram's executive director, Lipót Aschner's decision in the beginning of the decade to narrow down the production profile to a Lamp Manufacturing Department and a Telephone and Telegraph Department turned out to be beneficial for the company's profit.<sup>426</sup> Through Aschner's presidency in the Standard Electrical Co. Ltd. (founded in 1928), Tungfram was the main beneficiary of the expansion of the telephone network in Hungary. In addition, radio tubes developed by Tungfram were sold over the world by the late 1920s.<sup>427</sup>

Tungfram was the only industrial company in Hungary to have a research laboratory (established in 1921).<sup>428</sup> As such, it provided employment to some of the most successful science and engineering graduate numerus clausus exiles who returned to Hungary (Egon

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<sup>424</sup> Interview with her son, Dr. János Almai, September 28, 2018.

<sup>425</sup> He studied in the technical universities of Vienna, Brno, and Karlsruhe. Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 173.

<sup>426</sup> Károly Jeney and Ferenc Gáspár, *The History of Tungfram 1896-1945* (Budapest: History Committee of Tungfram Co. Ltd., 1990), 39.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.* 52; Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 160.

Orowan, Ferenc Kőrösy) or stayed abroad and took up part-time appointment as external advisors at Tungstram (Dennis Gábor). Importantly for Jews, the research laboratory was headed by Ignác Pfeifer, a chemical engineer earlier in charge of the chemistry department at the Technical University of Budapest and an active public figure of Jewish life as a member of the Buda Israelite Community's leadership and as an organizer of Jewish charitable organizations.<sup>429</sup> In the 1910s he was a lecturer in chemistry at the Technical University of Budapest and was either forced to leave the university because of alleged involvement in the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919<sup>430</sup> or resigned voluntarily "to protest against the measures [numerus clausus] irreconcilable with the idea of human rights."<sup>431</sup> No wonder he showed solidarity with the exiles of the numerus clausus. Lipót Aschner, the head of Tungstram, was also Jewish, but it was Pfeifer who took special interest in helping young Jewish colleagues.<sup>432</sup> He attracted such excellent scientists to work for Tungstram's research laboratory, as the expatriate physical chemist Michael Polányi and the physicist Imre Bródy who had returned shortly before.

The most important achievement of this laboratory was the development of the krypton filled incandescent lamp bulb in the first half of the 1930s.<sup>433</sup> This was the result of a project involving Imre Bródy, Michael Polányi, Egon Orowan, and Ferenc Kőrösy – of the latter two were numerus clausus exiles. Bródy graduated by the time of the numerus clausus and was even invited to teach at the Technical University of Budapest as an assistant professor. He could not pursue a university career in Hungary, however, in the antisemitic academic

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<sup>429</sup> Ujvári, *Zsidó lexikon*, 708.

<sup>430</sup> Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 160.

<sup>431</sup> Jeney and Gáspár, *The History of Tungstram 1896-1945*, 53.

<sup>432</sup> As remembered by physical chemist Ferenc Kőrösy in an interview in his old age in Israel. Gábor Palló, "'Környezetem tele volt kiváló emberekkel' Izraeli beszélgetés Kőrösy Ferencsel [There Were Plenty of Excellent People Around Me. Conversation with Ferenc Kőrösy in Israel]," *Fizikai Szemle* 46, no. 9 (1996): 309-311.

<sup>433</sup> The first krypton filled lamps were produced in 1932 already, however, it took several years to develop a model that made sense commercially. Hence the building of Tungstram's krypton factory in Ajka only began in 1936 and production was launched in 1937. Jeney and Gáspár, *The History of Tungstram 1896-1945*, 62-67.

atmosphere of the Horthy-era. He left the country in the year of the numerus clausus to work with the famous physicist Max Born in Göttingen. Two years later he returned and joined Tungsram's research laboratory.<sup>434</sup>

Orowan's trajectory was described earlier in the framework of the "exodus of the mind" from Germany. Kőrösy integrated in Hungary more easily after his return from Germany (in the 1920s he studied at the Technische Hochschule of Karlsruhe) than Orowan. He enrolled and graduated in the Technical University of Budapest and – atypically for Jews – he was even employed in a laboratory of the University of Budapest between 1939 and 1944. After 1947 he was a university lecturer in physical chemistry in Budapest until his emigration to Israel in 1957 where he was a researcher in prestigious laboratories.

Making a career with a foreign university degree was never easy in interwar Hungary, but it became even harder in May 1938 when the so called "First Jewish Law" (Law XV of 1938) was introduced,<sup>435</sup> which was basically an extension of the numerus clausus from the universities to the job market of the liberal professions.<sup>436</sup> The same year also brought about dramatic events in several other countries that significantly worsened the situation of Jews in general and numerus clausus exiles in particular. The Anschluss of Austria to the Third Reich (March 1938) was immediately followed by the "Ausschluss" (exclusion) of Jews from universities except for few students allowed to continue their studies on the basis of a 2% numerus clausus.<sup>437</sup> In August, Fascist Italy took an antisemitic turn starting with the prohibition of foreign Jews' enrollment in universities, soon to be continued with the expulsion of foreign Jews who were not citizens or who had gained Italian citizenship later than 1919. In autumn of the same year, the Munich Pact brought about the dismemberment of

<sup>434</sup> Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 159-160.

<sup>435</sup> Although as argued earlier, the numerus clausus law of 1920 would more justifiably bear this term.

<sup>436</sup> Albeit with a higher 20% quota. M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 55.

<sup>437</sup> Adina Seeger, "Expulsion, Exile and (no) Return: Jewish Academics and Students at the Viennese Universities in 1938 and Afterwards," in *Die Universität. Eine Kampfzone*, edited by Werner Hanak-Lettner, 159-178 (160).

Czechoslovakia and increasing Nazi threat even on the Bohemian and Moravian lands not annexed to the Reich yet.

Anti-Jewish persecution characteristically started with increasing discrimination and often expulsion of foreign Jews. Hence, numerous *clausus* exiles who in 1938 lived in Austria, Italy, or Czechoslovakia – who possibly had lived in Germany before 1933, thus once they had already fled as foreign Jews – needed to return to Hungary. Except for the few who managed to settle in Western Europe or overseas. The possibilities and decisions somewhat varied among individuals. One of the students in my sample, Klára Lázár, after returning from the German University of Prague in the 1920s joined the Budapest School of psychoanalysis and in 1939 emigrated to Australia where she became the first supervisor psychoanalyst in Melbourne, thereby linking the origins of Australian psychoanalysis to the Budapest School.

In Italy, former *clausus* exiles who by 1938 established careers and families with Italian Catholic spouses and had converted could evade expulsion and persecution up until the Nazi occupation of Northern Italy and the establishment of their puppet state, the Republic of Salò, in 1943.<sup>438</sup> A revealing example is the contrast between the situation of two friends from the same Hungarian small town, Kiskunhalas. Dezső Winter was expelled with his wife and child in 1938 and went back to Hungary, while Miklós Berger stayed in Italy with his Italian wife.<sup>439</sup>

Two sisters among the characters of this dissertation, Éva (mentioned earlier) and Klára Gergely were medical students at the German University of Prague in the time of the Munich Pact. Éva, having finished her studies, decided to return to their parents in Budapest, while Klára went to Zurich to finish her medical studies. There she met her future husband, a German Jewish medical student who had been expelled from Italy. In 1940 they settled in Cuba and

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<sup>438</sup> For more details, see Kelemen, *Leaving an Antisemitic Regime for a Fascist Country*, 71-85.

<sup>439</sup> Correspondence with Dezső Winter's nephew, Pál Várnai. September 6, 2015.

waited five years to get in the United States.<sup>440</sup> Éva's choice was more typical, since hospitality for Jewish immigrants decreased all over the world and hence most numerous *clausus* exiles had no choice but to return to Hungary (or the residents of Czechoslovakia to Czechoslovakia) where they were still Jews, but at least not foreigners. Upon returning they faced the introduction of the "First Jewish Law."

Yet, in view of the outbreak of WWII in 1939, Hungary was a relatively safe space for Jews when compared to the Nazi occupied territories of Europe. Due to the twenty-one antisemitic laws introduced between 1938 and 1944, the professional and economic circumstances worsened tremendously.<sup>441</sup> At the same time, in the first years of the war, most Jews' lives in Hungary were not directly threatened, unlike in Nazi occupied Europe. Yet, tens of thousands of Jewish men died on the front in forced labor service by March 1944 when the Nazis occupied Hungary. Within the country still approximately 800,000 civilian Jews lived. The genocide against Hungarian Jewry occurred late in the war but was committed with an all the more devastating speed. The next sub-chapter is dedicated to the fates of numerous *clausus* exiles during the Shoah.

#### V.4. Fates during the Shoah

The genocide against Hungarian Jewry is regarded as the last chapter of the Holocaust. Most of it took place after the Nazi occupation of Hungary in March 1944 when it was already clear that the Nazis were going to lose WWII. By "most of it" I mean that the Hungarian Holocaust started earlier than 1944, but the bulk of Hungarian Jewry was murdered in 1944. The first episode of the Holocaust where Hungarian Jews were mass murdered is the 1941

<sup>440</sup> Interview with Éva Gergely's son, János Almai. September 28, 2018.

<sup>441</sup> The collective memory only counts three anti-Jewish laws (1938: XV, 1939: IV. and 1941: XV), however, in fact 21 antisemitic laws were introduced between 1938 and 1944. Together with the *clausus* of 1920, the Hungarian state institutionalized 22 anti-Jewish laws. György Karsai, "A magyarországi zsidótörvények és rendeletek, 1920–1944 [The Anti-Jewish Laws and Orders of Hungary 1920-1944]," in *A holokauszt Magyarországon európai perspektívában* [The Holocaust in Hungary in a European perspective], edited by Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi, 2005), 140-163 (141).

Kamenec-Podolsky murder of 23,600 Jews by German Einsatzgruppen and Ukrainian and Hungarian collaborators.<sup>442</sup> 15,000 of the victims were sent there from Hungary. Many of them had arrived there as refugees from Poland after 1939.<sup>443</sup> However, the group included Hungarian Jews who were regarded as stateless or foreigners because they were unable to prove their Hungarian citizenship which was intentionally designed to be a difficult bureaucratic process. Thus, like most states, Hungary first contributed to the murder of foreign Jews, before jeopardizing Hungarian citizen Jews' lives.<sup>444</sup> But the operation to drive out foreign Jews from the country was also exploited as an opportunity to get rid of native Jews.

Other tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews died on the front between 1941 and 1944 who are to be regarded as Shoah victims due to the specificity of the Hungarian "labor service."<sup>445</sup> According to an order of August 23, 1940, Jewish men drafted to the army were not allowed to perform armed military service like "reliable citizens" did, they had to perform labor service instead. From 1941, a series of harsh, specifically anti-Jewish measures were introduced in the regulation of labor service.<sup>446</sup> This meant that the labor service battalions were sent to the Eastern front (where even properly equipped soldiers fell victims in great numbers) without weapons and with worse clothing and smaller food portions than soldiers. Thus, the labor service was one of the ways for the Hungarian state to jeopardize the lives of its Jewish citizens. By 1942, 50,000 Jewish men were drafted in labor service. This number

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<sup>442</sup> In the summer of 1941, the Hungarian army also participated in the occupation of the Soviet Union as allies of the Wehrmacht and played an active role in the genocide of Soviet Jews. Tamás Krausz and Éva Mária Varga, eds., *A magyar megszálló csapatok a Szovjetunióban – Levéltári dokumentumok 1941-1947* [The Hungarian Occupying Troops in the Soviet Union – Archival Documents, 1941-1947] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2013); Krisztián Ungváry, *A magyar megszálló csapatok a Szovjetunióban, 1941-1944* [The Hungarian Occupying Troops in the Soviet Union, 1941-1944] (Budapest: Osiris, 2015).

<sup>443</sup> G. Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon II. kötet: 1849-től a jelenkorig*, 623-626.

<sup>444</sup> Kinga Frojimovics, *I Have Been a Stranger in a Strange Land: The Hungarian State and Jewish Refugees in Hungary, 1933-1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007).

<sup>445</sup> Counting both civilians and Jews conscripted in the labor service battalions of the Hungarian army, 62,000 Hungarian Jews had become victims by the time of the Nazi occupation of the country on March 19, 1944. András Kovács and Randolph L. Braham eds., "Bevezető" [Introduction], in *A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán. Történelem és emlékezet* [The Holocaust in Hungary – Seventy Years After. History and Memory] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2015), 7-10 (7).

<sup>446</sup> G. Komoróczy, *A zsidók története II.*, 576.

needs to be understood in the context of an army of 250,000 soldiers.<sup>447</sup> Jewish intellectuals were particularly singled out to be sent to the frontline as the minutes of a meeting in the Ministry of Defense from November 1942 testify: “the main thing is that the more Jews are sent to territories of military action the better, especially the intellectuals.”<sup>448</sup>

This anti-intellectual furor of antisemitism is also connected to the history of the numerous *clausus*. As it was argued earlier, universities played a central role in the history of antisemitism in Central Europe from the very beginning of modern antisemitism in the 1880s, the small proportion of both Jews and non-Jews being involved in higher education notwithstanding. Upward social mobility through higher education and through careers in the liberal professions was a central assimilation strategy of Jews and universities became hotbeds of antisemitism as a backlash. In addition, during WWI, it was assumed and advocated by antisemites that Jews were less likely to die on the front due to the high proportion of intellectuals among them when compared to other men, since it was easier for intellectuals to stay away from the frontline.<sup>449</sup> This assumption and accusation probably influenced a new generation of antisemites during WWII to expose Jewish intellectuals to the dangerous frontline as much as possible.

Yet, Victor Karády’s case study about the 1940 and 1947 membership of the Doctors’ chamber shows that the proportion of victims in the medical profession was somewhat lower than in the general Jewish population in Hungary.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, half of Jewish doctors survived,

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<sup>447</sup> M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*, 126.

<sup>448</sup> Quoted by Elek Karsai, ed., “*Fegyvertelen álltak az aknamezőkön...*” *Dokumentumok a munkaszolgálat történetéhez Magyarországon* [“They Were Standing There Unarmed on the Minefields...” Documents Pertaining to the History of the Labor Service in Hungary] (Budapest: Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Képviselője, 1962), Vol. 2., 155-174.

<sup>449</sup> Péter Bihari, *Lövészárkok a hátországban. Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországon* [Trenches in the Heartland. Middleclass, Jewish Question, Antisemitism in WWI Hungary] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008), 150-151.

<sup>450</sup> Viktor Karády, “A soá mérlege az orvosi kamarák tagságában” [The Shoah’s Balance Sheet in the Membership of the Doctors’ Chambers], in *A holokauszt Magyarországon hetven év múltán*, edited by Randolph L. Brahm and András Kovács 148-172 (171).

while only one quarter of Jews in general did. Chances of survival greatly depended on whether one lived in Budapest or in the countryside, since only the ghetto of Budapest was spared from deportation. At the same time, among the liberal professions, doctors were an especially endangered group of Jewish intellectuals, as Mária M. Kovács demonstrated in her monograph on professional organizations.<sup>451</sup> It was due to the especially harsh antisemitism and proactivity of the professional association MONE (Magyar Orvosok Nemzeti Egyesülete / Hungarian Doctors' National Association) – that half of Hungarian Jewish doctors (2,500 people) perished during the war.<sup>452</sup>

Each labor battalion needed one physician per 220 men. However, due to MONE's lobbying, in the winter of 1942 ten to twelve times as many Jewish doctors were on the front. In 1941 the Ministry of Defense agreed with MONE to take over its lists of Jewish doctors and to use them when compiling lists of Jews to be called up for labor service. At this time the Minister of Interior, Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, intervened and moved all the Jewish physicians who were not needed on the front to public medical establishments in Hungary.<sup>453</sup> In the following two years doctors were exposed to the dangers of the front to the same extent as other Jewish men.

In March 1944 Jewish doctors, engineers, and lawyers were forbidden to work alike, however, engineers' and lawyers' survival chance depended on the same factors as that of all Jews (residence, gender, age, level of assimilation). In the beginning of the Nazi occupation the doctors' situation seemed to be the most protected since a third of them performed civilian labor service in public health care which meant a protection from ghettoization and deportation. The Ministry of Interior insisted on this arrangement because there were not enough non-

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<sup>451</sup> M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid. 131. The doctors' chamber was a professional association in the stricter sense of the word, thus it was not joined on political basis, but included all doctors who were allowed to work in the profession, thus it included non-antisemitic doctors as well, unlike MONE.

<sup>453</sup> M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*, 127.

Jewish doctors to substitute so many Jewish ones. Hence the removal of the Jews would have deprived entire regions of public health care.<sup>454</sup> And yet the Doctors' chamber (headed by László Csík) and MONE (led by Ferenc Orsós) pushed further for ridding the country of the Jewish doctors. By early May, Csík and Orsós achieved that the local offices of the Chamber were allowed to coordinate with the army in order to relocate Jewish doctors to areas where Jews were already being collected for deportation.<sup>455</sup>

In the meantime, the Chamber of engineers at least protected those Jewish engineers, who had been exempted from the effect of the 1939 antisemitic law (Law IV of 1939) with renewing their membership certificates. In addition, it did not sanction Jewish engineers who continued working illegally after March 1944 and occasionally provided them with certificates that they were authorized by the Chamber to perform their work despite being Jewish.<sup>456</sup>

Normally, Jewish men between the ages of 18 and 42 were conscripted in the labor service battalions and most numerous *clausus* exiles fell in this age cohort, as they were mostly born in the first two decades of the 20th century. In addition, they were intellectuals, thus especially singled out for labor service. Hence the 814 Jewish men of my sample almost certainly performed labor service for a few months at least. 29 of them appear on the List of Hungarian labor battalion victims.

Altogether 243 students appear in the Central Database of Shoah Victim's Names as persecuted Jews who either survived, or their fate is unstated, or they perished. This does not mean that all other former students, who do not appear in Yad Vashem's database, survived. In the following pages I am going to elaborate on the complexity of identifying Shoah victims.

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid. 131.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. 131.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. 132.

It is for sure, however, that 139 of the above mentioned 243 students certainly perished, as I could unambiguously identify them.

Unambiguous identification was not always possible due to the individuals bearing very common names and many source types (lists of deportees, labor battalion victims, *yizkhor* books) listing only names without other information. However, pages of testimony and post-war press notifications of municipal authorities about perished persons who had been residents of the locality (published in the official *Hungarian Gazette* in 1945-46) include more ample information on individuals. The *Hungarian Gazette* did not refer to the victims as victims of mass murder. However, the place and time of those persons' disappearance or death makes it clear that they had been victims of the *Judeocide*. Such notifications often also mention the names of concentration camps where they had been seen for the last time.

It is important to note that Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victim's Names is a conglomerate of diverse databases and lists with different structures and organizational principles. As a consequence, some victims appear in several contexts (for instance, as ghetto inmates, on lists of deportees, concentration camp inmates' lists, *yizkhor* books). At the same time numerous families and communities were exterminated to the extent that no one survived to remember, testify, and commemorate the others. Hence many of the victims are missing from all Shoah victims' lists and databases.

Right after the war, survivors compiled lists of victims' names in order to commemorate their families and acquaintances who had perished. Reorganized communities continued the Jewish tradition of communal commemorative books to provide a memento for a community's loss.<sup>457</sup> Yad Vashem collects information about the victims in so-called pages of testimony since the 1950s, an information sheet available in numerous languages that anyone can submit

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<sup>457</sup> The Hebrew term for such books – *yizkhor* – means “remember!” in an imperative form.

who possesses information on a victim. However, many Hungarian survivors did not know about this possibility and it was in any case not encouraged to correspond with Israeli institutions in the age of the Iron Curtain.

In the 1980s, the historian Serge Klarsfeld launched the “*Nevek*” (meaning “Names” in Hungarian) project to systematically collect names of Hungarian Jews persecuted and/or murdered during the Shoah on the basis of lists of labor battalions and concentration camp inmates. This was the most complete source regarding Hungarian victims up until 2007, when Yad Vashem embarked on another project to record the personal data of Hungarian Holocaust victims. At the outset of the project 260,000 names were known representing approximately 43% of the 600,000 victims from Hungary.<sup>458</sup> By the conclusion of the project the names of half million of them were recovered and more information about their life (including photos) were reconstructed.

There are continuous research efforts to identify the 100,000 still missing individuals behind the number, the 600,000 Hungarian Shoah victims. Most recently in 2018 László Nemes-Jeles, director of the Oscar winning film “Saul’s son,” initiated a research project together with the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, “Saul’s Children Commemorative Program,” to reconstruct the fates of Hungarian child victims. Children’s traces are especially hard to find, since due to their youth children do not appear in a series of document types where adults do (marriage certificates, telephone directories, military documents including list of labor battalion victims) and hence it is even more difficult to learn about children who had lived before the genocide than about adults.

Thus, one can reckon that by now the majority of Hungarian Jews who perished as adults are identified, except if stemming from tiny communities and families that perished in

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<sup>458</sup> “From Hungary” in this context refers to Hungary’s territory in 1944 when it included the Southern part of Slovakia, Transcarpathia, a part of Vojvodina, and Northern Transylvania.

their entirety. For the lack of information on where my subjects were residing during the war (except in the case of those included in Yad Vashem's database and in individual cases where the biography is known in detail), it is impossible to establish how many of the Jews (in terms of antisemitic laws) among them (921) may have perished alongside with their entire family and community and have hence left no trace. Almost a third of them (287) were born in villages and small towns. However, this does not mean that they were residents there during the war.

Since the post-war trajectories were also part of my research, it can be established that 178 of the Jewish students certainly survived the Shoah based on information about their post-war career. Twelve of them survived because they lived overseas or in neutral countries during the Holocaust. This small number includes the celebrities Leo Szilard, his brother Bela Silard, Eugene Wigner, Egon Orowan, and Klára Lázár. Other, less well-known former numerus clausus exiles were saved through adventures. Teodor Adler, a medical student in Vienna in 1926, survived in Shanghai. In 1945 we find him in Budapest where his university degree was finally accepted. Irma Edelman who survived in Hong Kong, in 1946 inquired in a Hungarian newspaper if anyone knew about her parents' fate, requesting the replies to be sent to her new address in London.<sup>459</sup>

#### V.5. Post-war trajectories in Hungary

Hardly more than one third of Hungarian Jewry (191,000 people)<sup>460</sup> survived and over one fourth of this so called "remnant Jewry" left Hungary by 1957, in two major waves, first between 1945 and 1949 and then in 1956-1957, since during the years of Stalinism (1949-1956) – thus the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party – emigration was almost impossible.<sup>461</sup> Counterintuitively, former numerus clausus émigrés

<sup>459</sup> *Világosság*, February 24, 1946, 5.

<sup>460</sup> Viktor Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők. Fejezetek a magyar zsidóság szociológiájából 1945 után* [Survivors and Re-Starters: Chapters from the Sociology of Post-1945 Hungarian Jewry] (Budapest: Múlt és jövő, 2002), 68-69.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

were not likely to join these migratory movements, their experience of emigration and foreign contacts notwithstanding. The reason is sociological rather than political: employed intellectuals had less interest in leaving than Jews who either owned capital (companies, factories, or apartment buildings) that would be nationalized while the owners would be persecuted as class enemies; or Jews who had a hard time to integrate in post-1945 Hungarian society due to their religious lifestyle and lower level of *secular* education (even if possibly well versed in Talmudic studies). Former *numerus clausus* exiles were intellectuals marginalized and persecuted by the previous Horthy and Arrow Cross regimes, hence they were a perfect fit for jobs where educated employees were needed to substitute the previous, politically unreliable elements (both during the democratic transition in 1945-1947 and after the Communist takeover in 1948-1949). Public administration, ministries, health care, and industrial companies absorbed Jewish intellectuals in great numbers not only to substitute pre-1945 personnel, but also in new institutional structures, such as NÉKOSZ (National Association of People's Colleges). To put it in another way, Jewish intellectuals (similarly to the "popular cadres" and to the veterans of the labor movement and their children) were rich in a new kind of capital: political reliability.<sup>462</sup>

As a consequence, most of those *numerus clausus* exiles whom we find in Hungary in 1945, are to be found here in the decades of state socialism as well. This finding is based on the survey of the students in the sample of this dissertation and the biographies of Jewish intellectuals of Socialist Hungary who had studied abroad in the age of the *numerus clausus*. The narrative of this section, however, focuses on those who featured in previous chapters as members of the sample from Vienna, Prague, Berlin, and Bologna or as ego document authors (László Kozma, Miklós Kun) and on *numerus clausus* exiles who did not feature in previous chapters but played an important role in the history of Socialist Hungary (Tibor Szőnyi, Ferenc

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid. 172.

Mérei, György Hódos). After 1945 many former *numerus clausus émigrés* got into positions of power both due to their professional achievements and Communist loyalty (László Farádi), many others faced persecution (László Kozma) and the most interesting group is the third, which experienced both power and then persecution as a Communist whose loyalty with the Rákosi or with the Kádár regime or with both was questioned (György Hódos, Ferenc Mérei).

The protagonists of this section belonged to different shades of left-wing politics. This does not mean that left-wing politics was a feature of *numerus clausus* exiles in general, only that manifestations of left-wing political behavior is more salient than other ones, since this group lived the better part of their professionally fruitful years in Socialist Hungary. Even those who died earlier, if it was not in the Shoah, were most likely to be remembered in Hungarian lexicons and commemorative articles if they were Communist or at least left-wing heroes of the anti-fascist struggle in Spain or in WWII.<sup>463</sup>

That being said, in 1945 for the majority of those who survived the forced labor service, the deportations, the concentration camps and the Arrow Cross terror, the main concern was how to rebuild their private and professional lives. Many previously marginalized and persecuted Jewish intellectuals in general and former *numerus clausus* exiles in particular started late blooming careers right after the liberation. The medical faculty of the University of Budapest and the Technical University of Budapest nostrified the foreign degrees earned before the war by 64 doctors and engineers who feature in this dissertation as members of the sample of interwar migrant students. Thus, with a delay of many years during which even their lives were threatened, they could finally start working in their professions in positions they were

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<sup>463</sup> For instance, I found out that György Schön fought and died in the Spanish Civil War as a Communist from an article of *Somogyi Néplap* which commemorated Communist martyrs who had stemmed from Kaposvár: “Mindig voltak, akik magasba emelték a zászlót [There Were Always Some Who Lifted the Flag],” *Somogyi Néplap*, January 6, 1972, 1. Similarly, I found information on Ferenc Schwimmer’s politics and martyrdom from a commemorative article in the local newspaper of his native town Szolnok. “Emlékezünk [We remember],” *Szolnok Megyei Néplap*, December 26, 1954, 2.

qualified for. The earlier mentioned 1938 graduate of the medical faculty of the German University of Prague, Éva Gergely, was one of them.

Not only the delay, but the blooming needs to be emphasized as well. These people took their forcefully delayed first steps in their official and recognized professional paths (as opposed to the jobs they could take on earlier in lack of their foreign degrees' recognition) during the transitory democratic period lasting until the Communist takeover in 1948. We can speak about delayed blooming careers also among those who had managed to nostrify their foreign degrees in the Horthy-era but were marginalized as Jews, such as Miklós Kun and László Farádi whose memoirs were quoted at length in Chapter IV.

In the immediate post-war years many Jewish intellectuals filled positions of leadership within their profession by virtue of having been persecuted by the previous political establishments (the Horthy regime and the Arrow Cross regime) and thus not having been politically compromised. Their Jewish descent turned almost overnight from a disadvantage into an advantage and having been an émigré and excluded from practicing their profession in Hungary before topped that for former migrant students.<sup>464</sup>

This advantage was double-edged, however, since the phenomenon of quickly progressing careers of Jews became especially salient after the Communist takeover. Reshaped or newly founded institutions needed highly educated personnel with no involvement in public institutions and politics before 1945 and due to the antisemitism of pre-1945 regimes a large part of such eligible candidates were Jewish. In fact, Jews remained visible in prominent intellectual positions throughout the entire Communist period.<sup>465</sup> The impressive quick social mobility of Jews fueled the antisemitic myths of “Jewish power” and “*Judeocommunism*.” This

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<sup>464</sup> Alexander Emed, *Zsidó származású magyar orvosok* [Hungarian Doctors of Jewish Origin] (Budapest: Fapadoskönyv.hu, 2011), 7.

<sup>465</sup> András Kovács (Ed.), *Communism's Jewish Question. Jewish Issues in Communist Archives* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2017), 3.

built up an image of the Communist political system as something imposed on the country by Jews which clearly undermined Communist efforts to gain more sympathy in the general population.<sup>466</sup> These phenomena applied to other post-war newly established Communist regimes in East Central Europe as well, most notably to Poland and Romania. Now, however, I turn to the specificities of the situation of Hungarian Jews.

Communist leaders (including those of Jewish origin) held genuine suspicions against Jews and particularly Jewish intellectuals, even though they needed them. This can be explained by the fact that many of these Jews were at the intersection of the despised category of the bourgeoisie and the suspected categories of the intelligentsia and the people who have lived abroad before (and were not so-called *Moscovites*, thus Communists who had moved to the Soviet Union in the interwar period). Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's Stalinist dictator between 1948 and 1956, was famously convinced that Jewish intellectuals could never develop into entirely trustworthy cadres. In July 1949 he warned Géza Losonczy, state secretary in the Ministry for Public Education, that “we can never know *when* they will turn into spies and *when* will they destroy our efforts.”<sup>467</sup>

Rákosi's insinuation notwithstanding, not all Jewish intellectuals needed to be “turned into” Communists. The same was true for those numerous *clausus exiles* who were genuinely waiting for the possibility to get into positions of professional and political power in order to build socialism and thereby redeem Hungarian society from inequalities and injustices. Ferenc Mérei, a member of the illegal Hungarian Communist Party from 1927, who studied in Paris and joined the French Communist Party in 1930, and was also a veteran of the Red Army since WWII, had escaped from his forced labor battalion in the Hungarian military on the Eastern front and claimed (retrospectively) that he had always known “his time would come”: I felt I was one of the very few revolutionary minded people who dealt with children and pedagogy. I was preparing for this. I knew that a moment would arrive when the educational system could be transformed.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>467</sup> As Losonczy quoted in his letter to his superior, the Minister for Public Education, József Révai. Letter to József Révai by Géza Losonczy, July 14, 1949. Quoted by Éva Standeisky, “A kommunista polgárellenség [Communist Anti-Bourgeois Hostility],” *Budapesti Negyed* 3, no. 8 (1995): 209-226 (211).

<sup>468</sup> Kovai, *Lélektan és politika*, 142.

After 1945, for a short time Mérei indeed held a position of power and had the possibility to transform Hungarian education. He became the director of the Psychology Institute of Budapest and the leader of NÉKOSZ's (National Association of People's Colleges) central seminar. This meant a significant influence on the educational methodology used in the colleges that emerged in the country in great numbers between 1945 and 1949. In fact, Mérei provided the system with scholarly legitimization with his book *The Collective experience*<sup>469</sup> and with a commitment to communal learning and social mobility.<sup>470</sup> By 1949, NÉKOSZ included 210 residential colleges over the country with 9,500 students where resident secondary and higher education was provided for talented youth with peasant and working-class background.<sup>471</sup> NÉKOSZ was dissolved and its colleges turned into ordinary student residences in 1949 since its principle of collective self-government was incompatible with the emerging Stalinist dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi.

Just like Mérei's view on pedagogy as a scholar and practitioner of educational psychology, for which he was excluded from the Hungarian Workers' Party in 1951, as the party chose to promote the educational mobility of the working and peasant classes by simply excluding the "class enemies" from higher education with quotas rather than providing the necessary tools for the children of the working class and peasantry to eliminate the disadvantages entailed in their social background when studying and competing with children of the intelligentsia. This logic was similar to the interwar period's antisemitic numerus clausus where Jews were excluded from universities instead of underprivileged Gentiles being helped to get into higher education. No wonder that Mérei, a first generation-intellectual in his family,

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<sup>469</sup> Ferenc Mérei, *Az együttes élmény* [The Collective Experience] (Budapest: Officina, 1947).

<sup>470</sup> Judith Szapor, "The Generation of 'Bright Winds': A Generation Denied," in *History by Generations. Generational Dynamics in Modern History*, edited by Hartmut Gerghoff et al., (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), 239-257 (248). 'Bright winds' refers to a quote in NÉKOSZ's anthem and to the title of a 1968 cult film about NÉKOSZ directed by Miklós Jancsó, a former collegian. In the West, the film was shown with the title *Confrontation*.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.* 246.

who achieved social mobility despite the *numerus clausus* in his youth, insisted on promoting social mobility with educational psychology rather than with a restrictive quota. However, the *numerus clausus*-like class-based exclusion of the former nobility and former owners of capital remained the basic principle of the educational system until 1963.

According to the sociologist and psychologist Melinda Kovai, the monographer of psy-sciences under Hungarian state socialism, Mérei's involvement with NÉKOSZ was a manifestation of a self-ascribed role filled by intellectuals where professional and social engagement were united. Such attitude was widespread among intellectuals who got in high positions right after 1945.<sup>472</sup> As it has been mentioned (see Chapter V.3), the young Mérei who had returned from France in the 1930s also joined a group that was committed for utilizing science for the benefit of society: the psychological laboratory of the College for Special Need Education led by Szondi.

Mérei's friend Kun went through similar stages in his personal and professional development as well, even though he arrived to psy-sciences from medicine whereas Mérei arrived from a background in humanities and social sciences (he studied philosophy, sociology, pedagogy, and psychology in Paris) and Mérei arrived to Paris as a Communist, while Kun joined the illegal party after his return from Austria in 1932. Kun could nostrify his Austrian medical degree with enrolling to the University of Szeged and found (salaried) employment in the Jewish Hospital's neurology department. He was more drawn to psychiatry, however, and hence joined Szondi's laboratory.

During WWII Kun was called up for forced labor service in the army, like all Jewish men of his age cohort. After having survived it, during the Nazi occupation of Hungary he managed a children's home where with the help of the Red Cross and with false documents,

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<sup>472</sup> Kovai, *Lélektan és politika*, 147.

Kun saved Jewish children. Thanks to his long engagement with the Communist movement and his experience in childcare, he became the head of department for the Protection of Mothers, Babies, and Children within the Ministry of Welfare immediately after the liberation. In fact, he even had participated in the reorganization of this ministry already in 1944 under the temporary government of Debrecen when the Western part of Hungary was still under Nazi occupation.

Sándor Szalai was similarly a left-wing *numerus clausus* exile whose time for professional advancement finally came after the liberation. After studies in Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, and Zurich, he graduated in humanities in 1934 in Zurich and returned to Hungary to work in publishing as an editor. Unlike Mérei and Kun, Szalai was a Social Democrat and as such he led the Social Democratic party's foreign secretariat between 1945 and 1947. In the meantime, he became the head of the sociology institute at the University of Budapest in 1946. In 1950, however, he was put on a show trial like so many other leading intellectuals and was in jail until 1956. In 1957 he was rehabilitated, but silenced, thus his works could not be published and it was not until the post-1963 rebirth of sociology in Hungary that Szalai could take up a leading role in scholarship.<sup>473</sup>

Obviously, not everyone was lucky enough to be alive when their time came, as were Mérei, Kun, and Szalai. Four members of my sample of *numerus clausus* exiles suffered martyrdom for the Communist cause and thereby avoided being murdered as Jews in the Shoah: Ferenc Schwimmer, György Schön, Dezső Tallenberg, and Sándor Strausz. Schwimmer, an engineer who studied in 1926 in Prague, was murdered in a camp as a political prisoner.<sup>474</sup> Schön, a medical student in Bologna in 1931, returned to Hungary and was jailed for his activity

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<sup>473</sup> Victor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, *Sociology in Hungary: A Social, Political and Institutional History* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 93-125.

<sup>474</sup> "Emlékezünk [We Remember]," *Szolnok Megyei Néplap*, December 26, 1954, 2.

in the underground Communist party.<sup>475</sup> Soon he sacrificed his life for his political ideal in the Spanish Civil War. Tallenberg, a medical student in Prague in 1926 died in the same war for the same cause.<sup>476</sup>

Strausz got in the Jewish quota at the University of Szeged, however he was expelled as a Communist and hence continued his studies in Prague. Unlike Schön and Tallenberg, he survived the Spanish Civil War and was interned in Southern France, like so many other refugees from Spain. For his Communist activity he was put on trial in a military court but succeeded to escape to Belgium in 1940. There he continued his Communist activity and fought against the Nazi occupiers. He almost survived the war, but the Nazis caught and executed him in August 1944, just twelve hours before Brussels's liberation.<sup>477</sup>

Schwimmer, Schön, Tallenberg, and Strausz can be still regarded as more fortunate than the survivors of the Spanish Civil War and other episodes of the international anti-fascist struggle, since they were murdered by enemies and respected by their comrades as martyrs, unlike László Rajk and so many other Communists who had fought in Spain which was in the late 1940s seen as a liability and used against them in show trials.<sup>478</sup> The accused in these trials were humiliated, tortured, forced to “confess” false accusations such as conspiracy against Communism, cooperation with “imperialist” intelligence services, Titoism, Trotskyism, and were ultimately executed by their own comrades. In the years of Stalinism, Communists were

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<sup>475</sup> “Mindig voltak, akik magasba emelték a zászlót” [There Were Always Some Who Lifted the Flag], *Somogyi Néplap*, January 6, 1972, 1.

<sup>476</sup> Jenő Györkei, “A spanyolországi nemzetközi brigádok egészségügyi szolgálata [The Healthcare Service of the International Brigades in Spain],” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 33, no. 4 (1986): 740-750 (740).

<sup>477</sup> *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* [Hungarian Biographical Lexicon] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982) Vol. 2: L-Z, 662.

<sup>478</sup> Although one of the survivors of the Spanish Civil War among my subjects, Oszkár Koref – a medical student in Prague in 1921 – was fortunate enough to spend the decade between 1945 and 1955 in Chile as Hungary's ambassador and not be put on a show trial in Budapest. In the second half of the 1950s he returned to medicine and became the leader of Semmelweis University's endocrinology laboratory in Budapest. *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1978-1991* [Hungarian Biographical Lexicon 1978-1991] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994), 502. (The medical faculty of the University of Budapest became an independent institution in 1950 and took on a new name: Budapesti Orvostudományi Egyetem / Medical University of Budapest. It took on the name of Ignác Semmelweis on the institution's bicentenary in 1969.)

at least as much at risk of facing political persecution as enemies of Communism. Occasionally even more, because in order to repress dissent, a constant atmosphere of threat was built up and hence high-ranking officials of the party and of state organs were “uncovered” as betrayers to make the argument that the country was in danger since enemies could be found anywhere, even in the party’s leadership. There were former *numerus clausus* exiles among the victims of this mechanism, because Communist antisemitism was part of the game just like distrust towards a past abroad, especially a “past in the West,” which was for instance the case of Jews who studied in Switzerland in the age of the *numerus clausus* around whom a whole show trial (a satellite trial of the Rajk trial) was organized involving death penalties.

On the top of the abovementioned cruel mechanism of Stalinist dictatorships, the time of the construction of the Hungarian Communist party-state coincided with the anti-Zionist turn of the Soviet bloc (1948-1949). In 1947-1948, the Soviet Union and its satellites supported the establishment of the State of Israel, however, the new state quickly turned out to be leaning towards an alliance with the United States rather than with the Soviet Union. In addition, Israeli diplomacy aimed to attract Jews from the Soviet Union and East Central Europe in order to provide a Jewish majority population for the Jewish State. Hence the Soviet Union and – in compliance with it – the satellites turned against Israel. This development was manifested in the early 1950s in a series of allegedly “anti-Zionist” show trials against Communist politicians of Jewish origin in the Eastern bloc, such as the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia, the persecution of Ana Pauker in Romania, and the 1953 arrest of István Szirmai in Hungary.

During the 1948-1949 construction of the party-state in Hungary the Soviet-Yugoslav schism between Stalin and Tito took place. The Yugoslavs were accused to be agents of imperialism which meant cooperation with the Western great powers, particularly the United States. Since after Stalin’s break up with the State of Israel “Zionism” was used as an

expression for stigmatization and as a proxy for “imperialism,” charges of Zionism and Titoism were occasionally intertwined.

In Hungary, Interior Minister László Rajk was accused of conspiracy with Tito very early after the Stalinist excommunication of Yugoslavia. The Rajk trial served as a model for the show trials of all satellite states in the region.<sup>479</sup> The culprits were high profile Communists, forced to confess fictitious crimes of betrayal of Communism in *autodafe*-like rites which followed scripts constructed by Soviet advisors on the model of Soviet show trials during the Stalinist purges in the 1930s. The most important difference was that in the 1930s the aim of the purge was to solidify Stalin’s rule against other Bolshevik currents within the Soviet Union, whereas in the show trials in East Central Europe at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s Stalinists attacked other Stalinists and the aim was to subdue the satellites to the Soviet Union – as a former *numerus clausus* refugee and a survivor of the Rajk trial, George H. Hodos, analyzed.<sup>480</sup>

Although the most powerful leaders of Hungary in its Stalinist period (1948-1956), the members of the Committee for Defense better known as “the troika” (Mátyás Rákosi, Mihály Farkas, Ernő Gerő) were of Jewish origin, the mechanisms leading up to the Rajk-trial were not free from antisemitism. In the very first preparatory period of the Hungarian show-trials, Mihály Farkas, Minister for Defense, planned to put on trial a (fictitious) group of American-influenced, cosmopolitan, “West-influenced” intellectual Jews to be accused of spying.<sup>481</sup> At this stage Tibor Szőnyi and his “Swiss group” were at the center of the construction.

Szőnyi studied medicine in Vienna in the 1920s and got involved in the labor movement. After his graduation he returned to Hungary and joined the illegal Communist Party in 1930. Following the party’s instructions, he moved to Prague in 1932 and to Vienna again

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<sup>479</sup> Hodos, *Show Trials*, 25.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.* XI.

<sup>481</sup> Tibor Hajdu, “A Rajk-per háttere és fázisai” [The Background and the Phases of the Rajk Trial], *Társadalmi Szemle* 47, no. 11 (1992): 17-36 (19).

in 1936 to work for the party. In the meantime, he did not neglect pursuing his quite successful career, although he subordinated it to his political mission. Thus, in 1939 he took a researcher job in the neurology clinic of the University of Zurich and engaged in the local Communist movement. The Swiss Communist Party was banned in 1940, however, Switzerland's neutrality in the war provided safety for Communists whose very lives were threatened in neighboring Germany. After the war, Szőnyi returned to Hungary and in the late 1940s he was responsible for cadre recruitment. In May 1949 he was arrested on the charge of spying and was forced to name Interior Minister László Rajk as his spymaster. At this point the plot of the show trial gravitated from "the West" to Yugoslavia and from Szőnyi to Rajk. This did not mean that Szőnyi and the "Swiss group" (also referred to as the "Szőnyi gang") were saved. Szőnyi was executed just like Rajk.

Besides Szőnyi there was another former *numerus clausus* refugee among the eight main accused of the Rajk trial, Pál Justus. The poet Justus studied humanities in Bologna and Paris between 1924 and 1927. Upon his return to Hungary in the 1930s, he worked as a clerk and was active in the Social Democratic party. During the war he escaped from the labor service and joined Tito's partisans. This connection to Tito and Yugoslavia was enough to be charged with Titoist conspiracy in 1949. At this time, he was in the Communist party's central leadership, as it had annexed the Social Democratic party. In the summer of 1949 Justus was among the first former Social Democrats within the party leadership to be arrested. Soon his case was inserted in the plot of the Rajk trial. Thus, in the end he was punished for his international and especially Yugoslav relations rather than for originally being a Social Democrat and not a Communist. He was sentenced for lifelong imprisonment and in 1955 set free like other victims of the show trials were, due to the policy changes following Stalin's death in the Soviet Union and its satellites. During his captivity Justus dedicated himself to literary translations which remained his main activity until his death in 1965.

With regard to the Swiss group, their trial was also part of the Rajk trial. Hodos, a member of the Swiss group, described the group as a dozen of idealistic leftist children of good middleclass families who studied in Geneva and Zurich when the war broke out. They were united by a common hatred of fascism and war and growing impatience to fight Hitler. Hence, they were grateful for the three older comrades, Szőnyi, Ferenc Vági, and András Kálmán for taking up the leadership of the group during the war. They began organizing the Hungarians residing in Switzerland, publishing an underground newspaper to inform them about developments in Hungary, and tried to rally them around the anti-fascist cause.<sup>482</sup> Their post-war activity was more efficient and important, however, as – according to Hodos – they “provided the Hungarian communist party and the young People’s Democracy with a handful of dedicated, idealistic functionaries.” And Hodos strikingly continues what they got in exchange:

After four brief years, the grateful party arrested us all and hanged two of our leaders, Szőnyi and Vági. The third, András Kálmán, sentenced to life imprisonment, committed suicide in his cell at the end of 1952, when they intended to drag him into a new show trial – this time on charges of Zionism.<sup>483</sup>

Hodos does not explicitly spell out that besides Kálmán, Szőnyi and Vági were also Jewish. However, he continues his narrative by explaining the genesis of his own Communism in which he gives a central role to being pushed out of interwar Hungary by antisemitism:

My development from the son of a wealthy merchant to a communist was not so large a leap as it may now seem. Being Jewish helped, of course. To the slaps, kicks, curses, and other abuses that I received regularly in school, on the streets, and in the playgrounds from anti-Semitic children and teachers, the logical as well as the emotional response had to be leftist. [...] The only unyielding opposition to Hitler and his Hungarian allies came from the Left. Socialism, it seemed to me, offered the only alternative to an unjust society, to anti-Semitism, poverty, oppression, and war. [...] Hungary’s anti-Semitic laws prohibited me from attending a university in that country, so my family sent me to Switzerland to continue my studies. With Kautsky’s *Basic Principles of Marxism* buried deep in my luggage, I left for Zurich in July 1939.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Hodos, *Show Trials*, 52-54.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

His experience abroad and his excellent level of German predestined Hodos for the kind of above described successful post-1945 career start of intellectuals who had emigrated in the Horthy era, the majority of whom was Jewish, as it has been argued throughout this dissertation. Having studied in Zurich and having been a member in the group of Hungarian Communists in Switzerland, Hodos was a perfect choice to be a correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and other Western newspapers in Budapest at the time of the Communist takeover. All these credentials were turned against him when he was arrested in 1949. He became one of the culprits in the trial against the Swiss group in March 1950.<sup>485</sup> He was sentenced for eight years imprisonment, after four and a half years he was set free, and he emigrated in the beginning for 1957 to Austria where for the first time in his life he used his textile engineering degree earned in Zurich.

Yet his main commitment was for investigative journalism and for writing the history of the show trials which he published in English (1987), German (1988), and Hungarian (1990).<sup>486</sup> His commitment was not only that of a chronicler, he also felt obliged to write a testimony as one of the fortunate survivors of the show trials and as a member of a generation that was passing away.<sup>487</sup> As he noted in the preface of the Hungarian edition, a few years earlier it had seemed impossible that his work could ever be published in his mother tongue in his home country and this publication meant the actual rehabilitation for him.<sup>488</sup>

Besides high-ranking Communist party officials, Jewish engineers and doctors were also endangered by the machinery of show trials. The Communist establishment preferred to nationalize companies without compensating the owners which in the case of large companies

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<sup>485</sup> Some of the accused were not members of the Hungarian Communist group active in Switzerland during the war, but were attached to the group during the trial on account of vaguer contacts to Switzerland or as spouses of members. Hodos, *Show Trials*, 89.

<sup>486</sup> Hodos, *Show Trials*; Georg Hermann Hodos, *Schauprozesse. Stalinistische Säuberungen in Osteuropa 1948-1954* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1988); György Hódos, *Kirakatpercek. Sztálinista tisztogatások Kelet-Európában 1948-1954* (Budapest: Eötvös, 1990).

<sup>487</sup> Hodos, *Show Trials*, XVI.

<sup>488</sup> Hódos, *Kirakatpercek*, 7.

connected to foreign investors led to international tension, most visibly in the case of the Standard Electrical Co. Ltd. This company played a central role in building Hungary's telephone network in the interwar period. It was entirely owned by Americans and belonged to the sphere of interest of the International Telephone and Telegraph group. In order to nationalize this huge company without compensating the owners, the Communist leadership organized a show trial against Standard's (Jewish) director, Imre Geiger, charged with sabotage and spying.<sup>489</sup> Since the stakes were huge and an American and a British citizen employed in Standard were also arrested, the American embassy intervened multiple times which was turned against the culprits as a proof of their being spies of foreign powers.

The factory was in the end indeed nationalized in 1949, yet the show trial was conducted, Geiger and Zoltán Radó (a head of department in the Ministry for Industry) were executed, and several other of the accused were sentenced for over ten years in prison. Radó had been a *numerus clausus* exile before the war and graduated in the German Technical College of Brno. Another graduate of the same institution (and a character of Chapter IV), László Kozma, was sentenced for fifteen years. He was set free after five years due to the thaw following Stalin's death, however, despite his fight for rehabilitation for the rest of his life, he would never be rehabilitated.<sup>490</sup>

Radó was part of the "Brno group," a group of Communist Hungarian Jewish engineering students of the German Technical College of Brno in the 1930s. The group was on the one hand constructed by the infamous ÁVH (State Protection Authority between 1949 and 1956) in 1952 when an anti-Zionist trial was being prepared, on the other hand it can be called

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<sup>489</sup> Attila Szörényi, *A Standard-per előzményei és előkészítése 1948-1950* [The Prelude and Preparation of the Standard Trial 1948-1950] (Doctoral dissertation. Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2012), 5-6. Regarding the details of the trial itself see the two-parts documentary by Anna Mérei: "A Standard-ügy 1." [The Standard Case 1.] and "A Standard-ügy 2." [The Standard Case 2.]: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtENuAntm\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtENuAntm_s); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwAXY8-8iI8> (Both accessed: March 31, 2019).

<sup>490</sup> Correspondence with Ninette Dombrowszky, the granddaughter of László Kozma, March 29, 2019.

a group by virtue of including two dozen people of the same age cohort, of similar background (Hungarian Jewish) with similar interest (engineering) and shared politics (Communism) who studied in a small university in the same years.<sup>491</sup> They were naturally no strangers to each other. In 1952, the ÁVH prepared to identify the former members of the Hungarian Zionist Federation (*MCSZ, Magyar Cionista Szövetség*) – dissolved under Communist pressure in 1949 – and in the folder dedicated to this issue, the Brno group received attention as well. It was accused of Trotskyism and nepotism:

Many among the <Brno students> are placed in significant leadership positions in different spheres of the state apparatus and the economy. Most of them are of high bourgeoisie background who joined the student movement in Brno as a fraction and functioned as a separate Hungarian fraction for a long time. Upon returning to Hungary, they created similar factionist and Trotskyist connections. After the liberation those who were already in Hungary and the returnees achieved significant positions by mutually supporting each other. Several of the Brno students are regarded by the authorities as suspicious for being Trotskyist and potentially guilty in crimes connected to spying, sabotage, and harm. Several of them have been arrested for different issues: Károly Perczel, a head of department in the Ministry for Constructions, Dezső Tamár-Trepper a leading functionary of MÉMOSZ [Magyarországi Építőmunkások Országos Szövetsége / National Federation of Construction Workers in Hungary], radio engineer Miklós Szücs, Zoltán Radó who has been executed for spying and was a head of department in the Ministry for Industry.<sup>492</sup>

This introduction is followed by the short bios of twenty-one engineers, most of whom not only shared a student and Communist activist past in Brno but also a following emigration to the West – France, the United States, but in many cases Latin America. They returned in the late 1940s, which means they had a genuine drive to build socialism in their home country. With regard to Károly Perczel, it must be noted that he went to Brno more as a political than a Jewish exile of the *numerus clausus*, as he studied in Hungary under the Jewish quota, but was arrested as a participant of the 1932 Communist student action in Budapest where Communist

<sup>491</sup> It is worth to note that other Communist foreign Jewish students studied in Brno at the same time as well, such as Valter Roman, a high-profile politician later in Communist Romania. I thank my friend and colleague Adela Híncu for drawing my attention to him.

<sup>492</sup> Feljegyzések a cionistákkal kapcsolatban Bp. 1952.december 3. [Notes on the Zionists, Budapest, December 3, 1952] / *Feljegyzés a "brünniek csoportjáról"* [Notes on the "Brno Group"], Á.V.H. Vizsgálati dosszié. Jacobson. 101890/6/A. VII/13-g. Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of State Security Organs]. I thank András Kovács for drawing my attention to this document.

students distributed leaflets. This is why he left for Brno to finish his studies.<sup>493</sup> It must be noted, at the same time, that Jewishness was an aggravating circumstance for culprits in political crimes during the Horthy-era, thus Perczel had especially meager chances to ever study in Hungary again, which connects his emigration to the fact of his Jewish origin as well.<sup>494</sup> The main historical significance of the small 1932 student action is that many of its protagonists are found in the history of the Rajk trial in 1949, since István Stolte, the main organizer of the 1932 action, was the crown witness against Rajk. Perczel, however, was among the culprits in the Rajk trial.

Kozma was an exception among the famous Brno Technical College graduates, as a member of an older age cohort, as a son of an industrial worker, and for not being a Communist.<sup>495</sup> In the first half of the 1920s he worked for Tungstam and it was thanks to a stipend by the company that in 1925 he went to study engineering in Brno. Originally he gave up on the idea of university studies because of the numerus clausus.<sup>496</sup> After his studies he returned to Tungstam which through its (earlier mentioned) connection to Standard sent Kozma due to his professional achievements (over thirty patents including an electromechanic computer) to Antwerp to work for another European factory of the International Telephone and Telegraph group, the Bell Labor.

The outbreak of WWII and the Nazi occupation caught him in Belgium where he and his family hid for a while, but in 1942 it seemed safer to return to Hungary from where Jews were not deported yet. In 1944 Kozma survived a death march and several concentration camps in Austria. Upon his return to Budapest in 1945 he found that his wife, her family, and his own

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<sup>493</sup> András Kristóf Kósa-Grimm, “Schmidt, a rendőrspicli? Stolte István és az 1932-es kommunista szervezkedés a Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetemen” [Schmidt, the Spy of the Police? István Stolte and the 1932 Communist Organization at the Pázmány Péter University], *Múltunk* LXIV 1 (2019): 120-150 (134).

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.* 141-142.

<sup>495</sup> Correspondence with Ninette Dombrovsky, the granddaughter of László Kozma, March 29, 2019.

<sup>496</sup> Kozma, *Emlékezni csak pontosan...*, 15-17.

family had entirely perished, only he and his two daughters survived. He started to work in Standard and to teach at the Technical University of Budapest. As his daughter, Vera Kozma, remembered in the afterword she wrote to Kozma's memoir:

My father started to rebuild his life step by step. He became the technical director of the Standard factory in Budapest. On March 15, 1948, he was among the first to be awarded with the Kossuth Prize for his excellent work for rebuilding the country's telephone network which had almost been annihilated in the war. It was absolutely unexpected for him that he was arrested one and a half year later, in November 1949.<sup>497</sup>

After his imprisonment between 1949 and 1954, Kozma could continue his career as a professor in communications technology and an appraised engineer as the developer of Hungary's first programmable computer.<sup>498</sup> His 50th anniversary in the engineering profession was celebrated by the university with a golden degree. This was issued by the same Technical University of Budapest where in 1921 Kozma's application for enrollment was rejected due to the *numerus clausus*.<sup>499</sup>

While engineers were easily caught in show trials based on fictitious charges of sabotage and spying, Jewish doctors were targeted by other conspiracy theories, more connected to antisemitism. On the model of the Stalinist "doctors' plot" in the Soviet Union, in 1952 a Hungarian equivalent was being prepared as well. Thirty high-profile Jewish doctors were arrested and accused to be "Zionist agents," including the infamous ÁVH chief doctor, the army's chief surgeon, and heads of elite hospitals where the political elite was treated.<sup>500</sup> This shortly followed the arrest of István Szirmai, a member of the Communist party's central leadership and numerous public figures of Jewish origin, against whom an anti-Zionist trial was being prepared which did not materialize in the end due to Stalin's death in 1953 and the

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<sup>497</sup> Vera Kozma, "Utóirat (Afterword)," in László Kozma: *Emlékezni csak pontosan...*, 249.

<sup>498</sup> Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 171-172.

<sup>499</sup> Vera Kozma, "Utóirat," 250; Hargittai, "Unaccounted for," 171.

<sup>500</sup> Hódos, *Kirakatpercek*, 97.

following uncertainty throughout the Eastern bloc with regard to the continuation of Stalin's so called anti-Zionist (in fact anti-Jewish) policy.

The culprits of the Hungarian doctors' plot in preparation were not *numerus clausus* exiles, but Jews who studied in Hungary in the age of the *numerus clausus* (1920-1945). Does it mean that *numerus clausus* exiles – thus Jews with past abroad – had not received these most high-profile medical positions which became so dangerous during the show trials? Or should it be attributed to coincidence merely? It is impossible to know. One might risk the hypothesis that former *numerus clausus* exiles typically got caught up in show trials for their past abroad rather than for their Jewishness.

Other *numerus clausus* exiles, including Communist ones, suffered repression in the Stalinist years because of insisting on certain concepts as professionals even after the party dismissed them or because of joining the 1956 revolution. Mérei is a good example for both. He was disillusioned by his above-mentioned 1951 exclusion from the party and in 1956 he took the leadership of a revolutionary committee at the University of Budapest. He was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison in 1958.<sup>501</sup> In 1963 he was set free in the framework of the general amnesty for the political prisoners who were in jail due to participating in the 1956 uprising. This amnesty marked the end of retaliations for 1956 and the start of the Kádár-regime's consolidation. The victims of the post-1956 repression, however, were still deprived of various channels of professional fulfillment, including the possibility to teach at university. Such was the case of Mérei who – with the help of Kun – got to lead the psychology laboratory of the Lipótmező mental asylum which was the most important center of psychotherapy of

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<sup>501</sup> Although the precise accusations against him and the whole so-called Mérei-Fekete group (consisting of Mérei, Sándor Fekete journalist, András Hegedüs economist, and former prime minister and the historian György Litván) were the illegal distribution of a publication and financially helping the families of uprisers.

Hungary in the 1960s.<sup>502</sup> Kun recruited him not only as an act of solidarity, but as part of his policy to employ the best experts for his institution.

In the next two decades Kun and Mérei indeed made Lipótmező the vanguard of group therapy in Hungary. Mérei founded one of the two important Hungarian schools of this new trend, while the competing school was organized by György Hidas. Hidas was also a Holocaust survivor, but of a younger generation and as such he studied at a Hungarian university after 1945. Kun's and Mérei's pre-WWII studies abroad had a role in their pioneering work. Especially Kun could even use his foreign contacts from that time to keep himself up to date about the international state of psychiatry and psychology and he had the possibility to travel to conferences because he was favored by the Kádár-regime. Although he declined the position of deputy health care minister in 1957 and he refused to report on Mérei and other dissident friends to the secret police, for which he got a party warning for "lack of alertness," he could always rely on the protection of György Aczél, the leader of cultural politics, since Aczél looked up to Kun as the psychotherapist of his teenage years.<sup>503</sup>

At the same time, the Hidas-school of group therapy was much more in line with the Western norms and standards of group therapy thanks to Hidas's insistence on abstinence (the strict ruling out of psychotherapists' involvement in the therapy of their own relatives or friends). The Mérei-school, on the contrary, was based on the intimacy of relations within the therapeutic groups. The intertwining of the therapeutic context and the world outside was taken as a given. The disciples were basically united by the adoration of Mérei who with his past in prison assumed an aura of the rebelling dissident intellectual. It must also be added, however, that Mérei did not only pioneer in group therapy, but he also led the Hungarian standardization

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<sup>502</sup> Kovai, *Lélektan és politika*, 356.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.* 351-356.

of the new psychodynamic tests of the time imported from the West and he established the first psychodrama group (*Műhely / Workshop*) of Hungary as well.<sup>504</sup>

László Farádi, similarly to his fellow former *clausus* refugees, survived labor service and made a late blooming and spectacular career after 1945, but especially in the 1960s. In 1945 he returned from the concentration camps as the only survivor of his family. His autobiography<sup>505</sup> testifies to the break in his relationship to his Jewishness observed among numerous Holocaust survivors who became enthusiastic Communists and believed if they would leave behind their Jewish identity, their environment would forget it. As it was detailed in Chapter IV, Farádi when writing his life story in the 1980s, downplayed the significance of his Jewish origin when writing about his emigration as a student. Since it is a quite detailed writing, he nevertheless did not skip mentioning that upon his return to Hungary he became the president of the organization of Jewish students,<sup>506</sup> even though this contradicts his claim that being Jewish was indifferent to him.

Farádi's political identity comes through as less ambivalent than his Jewish one, since he laconically describes his pre-war left-wing mentality and sympathies as being “without the slightest activism” and admits that he joined the labor movement as late as 1945. In the 1950s he was a doctor in the army, a workplace reserved for those deemed politically trustworthy, but did not fill any particularly high position until 1968 when he became deputy health care minister. Another alumnus of the Viennese alma mater and member of my sample, Vilmos Ság, got as close to the government as Farádi just three years later as deputy of the minister of domestic trade.

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid. 425-434.

<sup>505</sup> Farádi, *Diagnózis*.

<sup>506</sup> *Magyar Izraelita Egyetemi és Főiskolai Hallgatók Országos Egyesülete* (Association of Hungarian Israelite University and College Students) known by its acronym, MIEFHOE.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning a few other *numerus clausus* exiles who made spectacular careers in Socialist Hungary but did not feature in my sample of interwar migrant students or among the memoir authors. Among the engineers László Heller, a graduate of the prestigious Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), founded the department of energy studies at the Technical University of Budapest. In the field of medicine several alumni of the prestigious Viennese medical school introduced important innovations in Hungary. Emmi Pikler revolutionized childcare and she founded a center for baby care in 1946 which in 1965 became a national center for methodological training under her leadership. György Gottsegen established the country's cardiology institute which is named after him. According to the medical historian Alexander Emed, Gottsegen was "the one who in 1957, under miserable circumstances, founded Hungarian cardiology on an international level."<sup>507</sup> Zsuzsa Leichner has already been mentioned as the heir to Tivadar Bársony in continuing the Hungarian school of radiology emerging around Bársony in the interwar period.

It is noteworthy that obituaries and lexicon entries published during socialism usually mentioned the biographic fact of someone studying abroad in their youth in the interwar period as a dry fact without any explanation. Jewishness was a taboo topic in public discourse. Hence a narrative connecting interwar student emigration with antisemitism had no place in official biographies. Yet most probably readers of the generation who were university students in the Horthy-era could read this missing information between the lines. In the mid-1980s, when the Kádár-regime's control softened, it could even be explicitly mentioned in a leading medical publication, *Orvosi hetilap* (*Medical Weekly*), that Zsuzsa Leichner "since due to the *numerus clausus* she was not accepted at any university in Hungary, had to go to Vienna to study."<sup>508</sup> The continuation of the biography also implied that Leichner was Jewish, since upon her return

<sup>507</sup> Emed, *Zsidó származású magyar orvosok*, 154.

<sup>508</sup> György Csákány, "Dr. Weilné Dr. Leichner Zsuzsa (1902-1984)," *Orvosi hetilap* 126, no. 8 (1985): 435-436.

she found a job in the Jewish Hospital in Budapest, like so many other famous doctors who joined Bársony's radiology school.

#### V.6. Conclusion

Concluding thus this collective biographical last chapter, we can say that on the one hand quite a few exiles of the *numerus clausus* became prominent figures of the history of science, this group typically left Hungary in the 1920s for Germany and left Germany for the United States in the 1930s. On the other hand, the majority returned to Hungary in the 1930s because there was less and less space for foreign Jews in most European countries, especially after 1938. Before 1938, returning home was not a particularly appealing option due to the difficulty of having foreign university degrees accepted and of finding proper jobs matching the level of education of the migrant students.

After 1938, Hungary's new antisemitic laws further narrowed the professional space of maneuver for Jews. At the same time, compared to Nazi occupied Europe, Hungary remained a relatively safe country for Jews compared with the period between 1939 and 1944. Yet tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews perished in forced labor service on the front, an experience many subjects of this dissertation went through, since their majority was male and belonged to the age cohort (18-42 years old) sent to the front. The genocide of Hungarian Jewry, the last but the fastest episode of the Shoah, took the lives of many former *numerus clausus* exiles as well, yet it is impossible to estimate the proportion of the victims and the survivors among them. Since the present dissertation is intentionally a social history of non-famous intellectuals, this was to be expected.

Finally, this chapter outlined the typical post-1945 trajectories of Shoah survivor *numerus clausus* exiles who stayed in Hungary. Most of them started late blooming careers due to the demand for intellectuals who had not been compromised by the pre-1945 Horthy and Arrow Cross regimes. At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, however, former émigré students

within the Communist elite were easily caught up in Stalinist show trials because of their past abroad, especially if in territories that in the late 1940s were on the Western side of the Iron Curtain (Switzerland, Latin America). Interestingly, two groups of *numerus clausus* exiles were especially targeted by the ÁVH: the Swiss group and the Brno group whose majority came from an upper middleclass background, unlike the average Hungarian Jewish medical and engineering students of interwar Vienna, Prague, Berlin, and Bologna, who hailed from the *petit bourgeoisie*.

Communist *numerus clausus* exiles received special attention in this chapter because of the variety of their responses to the turns of Communist politics which clashed with the ideal of socialism. Some joined the movement before it came to dominate Hungary (Károly Perczel, Miklós Kun, Ferenc Mérei, György Hódos, Tibor Szőnyi), others invested their trust in the new regime after the liberation like many Jews because they saw no other guarantee for the final defeat of fascism and antisemitism (László Farádi), while others had nothing to do with Communism except for living under state socialism (György Gottsegen).

The last section of the present chapter dedicated special attention to those who were Communists and achieved high profile positions after 1945 and yet suffered persecution during the years of Stalinism (1949-1956) or the early Kádár regime, because their life and career trajectories are the most revealing with regard to the special difficulty of existing as Jews and intellectuals invested in the Socialist ideal of justice and a left-wing intellectual sense of duty to amend the world via science and scholarship. From Jews who came of age in the period of the *numerus clausus*, achieving university education required exceptional commitment for studies because it entailed emigration. Then, this generation faced the Holocaust and when their time seemingly came to redeem the world (or at least Hungary) from capitalism and its injustices, they were also age-wise in a good stage for professional self-fulfillment. Yet soon they had to face the immense discrepancy between the ideal of socialism and the reality of

Soviet-style Communism which persecuted Jews and intellectuals with a past abroad, for which numerous *clausus* exiles were likely to become targets.

A few numerous *clausus* exiles fell victims to the most atrocious show trials (Zoltán Radó, Tibor Szőnyi), others were imprisoned for a long time (György Hódos, László Kozma), while yet again others were marginalized because their professional concepts did not fit the party line (Ferenc Mérei). The turns in the history of Communism were numerous (1949-1953 show trials, 1956 revolution, 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968-1972 new economic mechanism) and provoked numerous reactions. Disillusionment with the Communist regime convinced Hódos that socialism could not be built under the leadership of the Soviet Union despite the post-Stalinist thaw and he left the Eastern bloc but remained invested in the ideal of socialism.

Mérei, however, participated in the 1956 revolution and was imprisoned and remained a dissident throughout the Kádár-period. Connected to this was his becoming a cult figure of an oppositionist “second society” (as opposed to the official one of the party state), while his friend Kun became part of the establishment as a leader of the Lipótmező mental asylum, the center of therapeutic innovations in Hungary. Other former numerous *clausus* exiles even became parts of the government as deputy ministers (Vilmos Ság, László Farádi).

A common pattern among the numerous *clausus* exiles who made prominent careers abroad or in Hungary, as scientists, academics, doctors or engineers, whether liberals, Zionists, social democrats or Communists, is a shared sense of duty to utilize knowledge for the sake of humanity.

## VI. Final conclusions

We can only say farewell to this uplifting, beautiful chapter of recent Hungarian Jewish history with some degree of sentimentalism and with the deep conviction that this struggle of ours and of the students has not been in vain.<sup>509</sup>

Thus parted *Egyenlőség* from the era of the “wandering students” in August 1938 when Italian universities closed their gates to foreign Jewish students. The same article noted that

The Italian universities have been closed to foreign Jews, just as the Viennese [universities] were closed [earlier] this year. And slowly but surely, the strange, interesting Hungarian Jewish life form, which was born during the past two decades – the wandering Jew – is coming to an end.<sup>510</sup>

The author (probably editor-in-chief Lajos Szabolcsi) identified this moment as the end of an era, since it followed the exclusion of Jews from Austrian universities (March) by a few months. Even though the wandering students could still go to Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, and Switzerland, it was justified to assume that student migration would diminish with the closing down of the most important target countries: Germany already in 1933, Austria and Italy in 1938. The Munich Pact took place one month after this article’s publication and its consequences terminated Czechoslovak universities’ receptiveness towards foreign as well as local Jewish students. France, Belgium and Switzerland were too far away and too expensive, thus they were available for fewer numerous *clausus* exiles – such as George Hodos. Hence the disappearance of Germany, Austria, Italy and soon Czechoslovakia from the options indeed greatly decreased the impetus of Jewish students’ peregrination.

While I agree with Mária M. Kovács that the age of the numerous *clausus* lasted until 1945, with regard to the *exiles* of the numerous *clausus*, 1938 is a more important cesura and the years between 1938 and 1945 are its aftermath rather than part of it. The year 1938 also brought

<sup>509</sup> “Nincs többé bujdosó diák...” *Egyenlőség*, August 25, 1938, 3-4. For the argument why bujdosó diák is translated as wandering student see Chapter I.2.

<sup>510</sup> This paragraph was already published in English translation by Michael L. Miller, hence I quote it in his translation. See Miller, “From white terror to red Vienna,” 323.

about the introduction of the so called “First (anti-)Jewish Law” (Law XV of 1938) in Hungary, stipulating that maximum 20% of liberal professional jobs could be filled by Jews. The official name of the law recalled the logic of the *numerus clausus*, disguising discrimination as affirmative action: “law on the more efficient securing of the balance of social and economic life”.<sup>511</sup> For this principle’s sake all intellectual professions were to be organized in chambers on the model of the chamber of doctors and chamber of lawyers and only members of these bodies could work in the professions. This law hit a much higher proportion of Hungarian Jews than the *numerus clausus*, since it concerned older age cohorts including those who managed to finish university before the *numerus clausus* was introduced in 1920. Yet, from the aspect of the (would-be) *émigrés* an era ended in this year first and foremost because of the narrowing of possibilities to study even abroad.

The above cited article where *Egyenlőség* said farewell to the age of the wandering students in 1938 lucidly demonstrates that the *numerus clausus* related exile was not only a social reality, but also a construct consciously built by the older generation of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals and community leaders who supported the Jewish youth excluded from universities. As a phenomenon, the westward peregrination of East Central European Jewish youth concerned all of Europe (especially if also considering the emigration of Russian Jewish students between 1880 and 1914). The support mechanism set up for Polish Jewish students for instance, was similar to the one set up for Hungarian Jewish students. The Hungarian *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* had a Polish equivalent, the *Auxiliarium Judaicum*. Yet the Hungarian committee fashioned the construct of the wandering students as if it was a specifically Hungarian Jewish matter. This was the case not only in retrospective summaries

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<sup>511</sup> 1938. évi XV. Törvénycikk a társadalmi és a gazdasági élet egyensúlyának hatályosabb biztosításáról [Law 1938:XV On The More Efficient Securing of the Balance of Social and Economic life] <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=93800015.TV> (Last accessed: July 22, 2019).

of the nearly two decades of the wandering students' era, but since the introduction of the numerus clausus and the beginning of the emigration.

It is true that there was something unique in Hungarian academic antisemitism in the interwar period. Hungary was namely the only country where the state legislatively approved antisemitic discrimination and obliged universities to apply a restrictive Jewish quota. Moreover, the Hungarian numerus clausus was contagious. It inspired antisemitic students and professors all over Central Europe in the interwar period to require the application of a similar quota. Although they did not achieve a *de iure* Jewish quota, some Austrian and numerous Polish and Romanian universities also applied restrictive quotas *de facto*.<sup>512</sup> German and Czech students' similar (but rejected) requests in November 1929 were also inspired by a series of antisemitic student demonstrations in Hungary in that autumn.<sup>513</sup>

Yet while the Hungarian numerus clausus law had some impact on the antisemitic students' movement elsewhere, it was not their cause. Antisemites' focus on pushing out Jews from universities was a general Central European phenomenon in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and also occurred in the United States).<sup>514</sup> In addition, due to the larger size of Poland and Romania and their respective Jewish population, Romanian and Polish Jewish émigré students escaping the unofficial but existing harsh anti-Jewish discrimination and violence of their countries' universities in fact outnumbered their Hungarian peers.<sup>515</sup>

Thus, the protectors of the Hungarian numerus clausus exiles focused on Hungarian Jewish students' plight so much because of the patriotism of the *Central Jewish Student Aid*

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<sup>512</sup> Juliane Mikoletzky and Paulus Ebner, *The Technische Hochschule in Vienna 1914-1955. Hidden Growth between War and Crisis (1914-1937)*, Vol. 1. (Wien: Böhlau, 2016); Rabinowicz, "The Battle of the Ghetto Benches"; Lucian Nastasă, "Anti-semitism at universities in Romania (1919-1939)," in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary*, edited by Karady and Nagy, 219-243.

<sup>513</sup> Havránek, "Anti-Semitism at Prague universities in November 1929."

<sup>514</sup> Karabel, *The chosen*.

<sup>515</sup> Signori, "Una 'Peregrinatio Academica' in Età Contemporanea. Gli Studenti Ebrei Stranieri Nelle Università Italiane Tra Le Due Guerre"; Miller, "From White Terror to Red Vienna"; Havránek, "Anti-Semitism at Prague Universities in November 1929".

*Committee* and *Egyenlőség* which was tightly connected to the committee through editor-in-chief Lajos Szabolcsi. As was detailed in Chapter II, the committee's agenda was to help Jews to study abroad so that they would use their knowledge for Hungary's sake and prove the patriotism of Hungarian Jewry against all odds (the *numerus clausus*). Hungarian Jewish leaders, first of all the Neolog ones, framed the *numerus clausus* and its consequences as Hungarian Jews' problems rather than placing it in the transnational Jewish context. This dissertation also focused on the exiles of the Hungarian *numerus clausus* and used Hungarian Jews studying at Hungarian universities in the interwar period as a control group for comparison rather than Romanian and Polish Jews who studied in Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany and Italy where this dissertation's protagonists did.

This work was meant to be the basis of a monograph dedicated to the Jewish émigré students who left interwar Hungary as a consequence of Hungary's *numerus clausus*. The law itself is infamous as 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe's first antisemitic law. So much so that Horthy proudly told Hitler in 1943 that "Hungary takes pride in being the first country in the world to openly profess antisemitism" by excluding the Jews from the universities as early as 1920.<sup>516</sup> Indeed, Hungary was the first country where anti-Jewish legislation was set up after Jews' emancipation. Although Horthy exaggerated a little bit since the *numerus clausus* did not exclude Jews entirely from Hungarian universities, he was right that Hungary played a pioneering role in antisemitic legislation in the interwar period and justifiably took the dubious glory for it. Even though the *numerus clausus* concerned a numerically small proportion of Hungarian Jewry since it was about university admission, its significance went beyond higher education and the history of universities. Not only historians,<sup>517</sup> but contemporaries were aware

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<sup>516</sup> György Ránki (Ed.), *Hitler hatvannyolc tárgyalása, 1939-1944*. II. kötet: *Hitler Adolf tárgyalásai kelet-európai államférfiakkal* [Hitler's sixty-eight diplomatic meetings, 1939-1944. 2<sup>nd</sup> volume: Adolf Hitler's meetings with East European statesmen] (Budapest: Magvető, 1983), 63.

<sup>517</sup> For a literature review on the historiography of the *numerus clausus* itself, see Chapter I.

as well that the numerus clausus law set in motion a process of de-emancipation.<sup>518</sup> It was a precedent showing that it is possible to turn history back, emancipation can be withdrawn. This is a sad but more importantly consequential lesson for every emancipatory movement of other minorities in any historical period (for instance feminism). It is not enough to achieve legal emancipation, one needs social and legal emancipation to go hand in hand. Thus, the idea of equality has to be embedded in society so that legal emancipation cannot be reversed after changes of regimes. Jacob Katz who appeared in this dissertation as a subject and memoir author, in his historical analysis differentiated between legal and social emancipation.<sup>519</sup>

Turning to the recapitulation of the main arguments, findings and possible future directions of the research presented in this work, the first chapter placed this dissertation in the context of the debate about the continuity of Hungary's post-1938 antisemitic legislation and the Holocaust with the numerus clausus. Even though the genocide was perpetrated all over Nazi occupied Europe with local collaboration, not only in countries where antisemitism in general and anti-Jewish hostility in academia in particular were rampant in the pre-WWII decades, the Holocaust in Hungary as the last chapter of the genocide of European Jewry stands out for the quickness of the mass murder and the extent of the state organs' and civilians' willingness to assist the stigmatization, ghettoization and deportation of the Jews in 1944. This was connected to the fact that by then the de-emancipation of Jews, the notion that they were "others" rather than Hungarians had been normalized for two and a half decades. A whole generation grew up in interwar Hungary that was used to antisemitic discrimination as "normal". The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and after are of course more direct precedents of the genocidal persecution in 1944 than the numerus clausus of 1920. Yet, those

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<sup>518</sup> Miron, *The Waning of Emancipation*, 157.

<sup>519</sup> Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

laws were also requested, voted and executed by members of a generation that had been socialized by the numerus clausus as an ideology and as a social fact.

Chapter II began with two quotes that suggested that Jewish student emigration was so large that it counterbalanced the numerus clausus. Both an antisemitic politician (István Friedrich) and the main promoter of Jewish peregrination, Lajos Szabolcsi, believed so. They were wrong in terms of quantities. Although the Jewish quota did not diminish the number of Jewish university graduates in Hungary to the extent antisemites wished for, far from all Jews could escape the quota by emigrating.<sup>520</sup> Nevertheless, enough students emigrated for the Hungarian public to notice that peregrination was tied to the numerus clausus and to acknowledge this emigration as one of the most important consequences of the law. Thus, in terms of quality, Friedrich and Szabolcsi were right. The emigration of Jewish students made a difference because it was conspicuous enough to regularly become a topic not only in Jewish, but in general media as well.

Consequently, while the numerus clausus normalized antisemitic discourse and attitude, different (pro-Horthy, conservative, liberal, Social-Democratic) media joined a parallel and basically opposite discourse about the students pushed out from the country by the law. In this discourse the numerus clausus was often criticized either for matters of practicality or of principles. The discourse among assimilated Jews was dominated by the negative version of the exile narrative, while Zionists promoted a positive version of it in which the exile was a remedy for the false consciousness of assimilation. Either way, the numerus clausus exiles needed financial and moral aid. This aid was ultimately a cause around which a new Hungarian Jewish community of fate and identity was built – an identity greatly demanded after the shocks

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<sup>520</sup> While presumably approximately 3,500 Jews wished to enrol in a university each year (this was the number of enrolled Jews in the last pre-WWI peace years), in a period of twelve years (1920-1932) only three thousand Hungarian Jews graduated abroad. “Százkét magyar zsidó diplomáját nosztrifikálták tizenkét év alatt (During twelve years one hundred and two Jews had their degrees naturalized)”, *Egyenlőség*, July 29, 1933, 15.

of Trianon which territorially separated half of Hungarian Jewry from the core country and the *numerus clausus* which excluded Jews from the Hungarian nation by attributing the notion of “nationality” to the denominational label of “Israelites”.

Following the discourses about the migrant students, in Chapter III their sociological profile was reconstructed through analyzing a sample of over a thousand Hungarian medical and engineering students enrolled in universities abroad between 1920 and 1938. Four cohorts enrolled in the most popular universities of the most popular target countries of the migratory movement were examined: the medical faculties of the University of Vienna, the German University of Prague, the Friedrich-Wilhelm University of Berlin, the medical and engineering faculties of the University of Bologna; the Technische Hochschule of Vienna and of Berlin, and the German Technische Hochschule of Prague. The students’ sociological profile was set up by analyzing their data found in enrollment forms (place and date of birth, gender, religion, place of residence, father’s name and occupation, mother tongue, nationality, previous place of study, father’s residence and citizenship). The hypothesis of a large Jewish majority (81%) was confirmed and even its extent matched the contemporary expectation (80%), four out of five Hungarian students abroad were *numerus clausus* exiles, both among women and men.

If one intends to describe the ‘idealtyp’ of the *numerus clausus émigré*, the upwardly mobile son of a Jewish merchant from central Hungary holding on to the idea of “Hungarians of the Israelite faith” rather than a Zionist emerges from the university documents, who however, does not distance himself from the idea that Jewish could mean a national, not only a religious identity. Such a profile confirms the chapter’s motto by Stefan Zweig according to whom there was a massive drive in Jewish merchants’ children to leave commerce behind and become intellectuals in general, and liberal professionals in particular. More than four in ten Jewish migrant students (42%) in the sample came from retailer families. By comparing their social background with that of Jewish students enrolled in Hungarian universities in the same

period I falsified contemporary assumptions that privileged Jewish youth evaded the numerus clausus by emigration<sup>521</sup> and verified Viktor Karády's hypothesis<sup>522</sup> that in fact the opposite was true. Among Jewish medical students enrolled in Hungary, 31% stemmed from the middleclass or the upper middleclass, while among the émigrés only 21%.

After having looked at the émigré students in the mirror of discourses about them by outsiders in Chapter II (journalists, public intellectuals, politicians), and in Chapter III in the mirror of somewhat dry data found in university documents, Chapter IV gave the floor to the students themselves. Here the analysis was based on ego documents written and edited (and usually even published) by the subjects of the study. Their recollections were organized around the topics of their interpretation of their peregrination, their student life abroad, women's situation, the students' relationship to Hungary and the host countries, and how they reacted to the rise and spread of Nazism.

The main challenge of using ego documents by Jews who were migrant students in the interwar period was that most of such writings are memoirs written after the Shoah dedicated to the experience of survival. In this perspective the experience of forced peregrination before the war is naturally often reduced to a mere prelude to the horrors of antisemitic persecution confronted afterwards. Such difficulty notwithstanding, some shared experiences unfold from the retrospective recollections and from contemporary letters: the students' poverty abroad, the mostly friendly atmosphere towards them in Italy and Czechoslovakia, the intense simultaneous presence of antisemitic and Socialist and Zionist student movements in Red Vienna, and the intellectually stimulating but politically stressful atmosphere of Weimar

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<sup>521</sup> "Eltörölni! [Abolish it!]," *Népszava*, February 10, 1928, February 1.

<sup>522</sup> Viktor Karády, "A numerus clausus és a zsidó értelmiség. [The Numerus Clausus and the Jewish Intelligentsia]," in *Vázsonyi Vilmos emlékezete. Konferencia Vázsonyi Vilmos életművéről* [The Memory of Vilmos Vázsonyi. Conference about the Work of Vilmos Vázsonyi], edited by Ferenc Kőszeg (Budapest: AB-Beszélő Kiadó, 1995), 77-95 (87).

Germany. The authors tend to retrospectively blame themselves for not acknowledging the signs of the darkness that was incipient in the international spread of antisemitism and Nazism.

An overview of the career and life trajectories after studies abroad was provided in Chapter V alongside with an epilogue to the stories of the concrete 1,131 individuals told throughout the dissertation. The source base for discovering what happened to them after their studies in Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Bologna was constituted of several digital databases. This collective biographical chapter revealed that those who played important roles in the history of science typically participated in the step migration from Hungary to the United States through Germany, however, the majority was forced to return to Hungary in the late 1930s due to increasing hostility against foreign Jews in the countries where they had studied and settled. Some returned earlier and tried to work as doctors and engineers in Hungary where the acceptance of their foreign university degrees was severely hindered. The Jewish hospital in Budapest (in fact a conglomerate of four hospitals) and the research laboratories of Tungsram and Standard were typical workplaces for repatriate *numerus clausus* refugees.

Up to the Nazi invasion in March 1944, Hungary was safe for the majority of the civilian Jewish population, in contrast to the Nazi occupied territories. In the meantime, however, sixty thousand Hungarian Jewish men died on the front in forced labor service, an experience many former *émigré* students shared since their majority was male and belonged to the age cohort (18-42 years old) sent to the Eastern front. Moreover, Hungarian antisemites were particularly keen on sending intellectual Jews to the front, especially the antisemites in the medical professional associations. Yet it is impossible to establish exactly how many of the dissertation's subjects perished in the Shoah.

The post-university trajectories of about one third of the over one thousand students were reconstructed. The destiny of the two thirds remaining obscure was a consequence of the intentional research focus on not-famous intellectuals. In the end, the typical post-war

trajectories were also analyzed. They started with late blooming careers, since the degrees of many were only accepted in Hungary after the liberation. In the following few years Jewish intellectuals in general and former émigrés in particular had good opportunities for progress in their careers since there was a demand for educated work force not compromised by the previous Horthy- and Arrow Cross regimes.

Many high-ranking Communists among numerus clausus exiles, however, were put on show trials at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s due to their past abroad, particularly if in the West (most notably Switzerland). We find them among the victims (Tibor Szőnyi) and survivors (Pál Justus, George Hodos, László Kozma) of the Rajk-trial and the Standard-trial. Other Communists among them who did not reach such high positions in the Stalinist period (1949-1956), had more peaceful lives and eventually made political career in the Kádár-regime (László Farádi, Vilmos Ság). A dozen of others became acclaimed university professors, and directors of hospitals (Andor Glauber, László Meczner, Pál Schwarzmann). The chapter dedicated particular attention to Communist numerus clausus exiles whose professional ambition was strongly tied to a left-wing commitment for a redemption of their ambience from injustice – one may call it a secular variation of an engagement with *tikkun olam*, even though most subjects of this dissertation would not have used a Hebrew term to describe their life goals. They had high hopes in 1945 that the end of inequalities (both ethnic and social) had come and were soon disappointed by the discrepancy of the ideal of Communism and the reality of State Socialism.

In short, this dissertation investigated both the construct and the social reality behind the term “numerus clausus exiles” from four aspects represented in four different types of sources: journal articles, university documents, ego documents and digital databases. Thereby it provided a starting point for a monograph dedicated to the social history of interwar Hungarian Jewish migrant students which, however, should be completed with a sample and

social profile of students in French, Swiss and Belgian universities. In addition, for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Jewish westward peregrination due to East Central European academic antisemitism in the interwar period, this research should be continued and extended to the Romanian, Polish, German and eventually Baltic Jewish peers<sup>523</sup> of the Hungarian “wandering students” at the universities of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Weimar Germany, Fascist Italy and Western Europe.<sup>524</sup> The importance of German Jewish students lies in the fact that although the German “exodus of the mind” after Hitler seized power has a rich literature, it focuses on already prominent academics and not on students. Such investigation should also contain the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where European (most notably Polish) Jewish students constituted the majority of the student body between 1928 – the first academic year when courses were taught – and 1946.<sup>525</sup>

Another topic touched upon but not explored in depth in this dissertation is the specific experience of female émigré students who escaped both gender and racial restrictions. This topic is part of an ongoing research project “*The numerus clausus in Hungary: Antisemitism, gender and exile a hundred years on*” led by Judith Szapor. Female exiles of the numerus clausus are potentially going to play an important role in new research on the history Hungarian Jewish women doctors as well. Such endeavor is promoted by medical historian Judit Forrai who is currently editing a new publication of the lexicon of Hungarian Jewish doctors by the late Péter Kiss.<sup>526</sup>

Various other long-term social impacts of the numerus-clausus related emigration need to be emphasized as well, with regard to Hungarian intelligentsia and to the relationship of

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<sup>523</sup> Jewish students from the Baltic countries had a significant presence in the universities of Fascist Italy. Signori, “Una ‘peregrinatio academica’ in età contemporanea.”

<sup>524</sup> The history of East European Jewish female students in interwar Belgium has already been dealt with: Falek, *A Precarious Life*.

<sup>525</sup> *Yearbook of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1957), 165.

<sup>526</sup> Péter Kiss, *Magyar zsidó orvosok. Életrajzok gyűjteménye* [Hungarian Jewish Doctors. A Collection of Biographies] (Budapest: Ab Ovo, 2016).

Jews and non-Jews. The *numerus clausus* pushed out the educationally most mobile part of Jewish youth from interwar Hungary. Educational mobility is to be understood as the potential for gaining a higher level of education than ones' parents and it is not as much determined by a family's wealth than influenced by a conglomerate of factors such as a family's willingness to dedicate resources (not only money but attention and time for their children, potentially resulting in consciously aiming at having less children than other families of the same socio-economic status) to their children's studies, the individual's ambition and talent (including talent to learn foreign languages) and willingness to take risks such as emigration and poverty abroad. This does not mean at all that poor families have equal chances to raise future migrant students as more well-off families. This means that educational mobility is not a privilege of the wealthy, but it is a more subtle privilege than wealth represented by owning capital or a stable income, since it involves so many factors that are interconnected with family background, cultural background and individual inclinations. To operationalize this complex phenomenon, Viktor Karády uses the term "intergenerational mobility potential".<sup>527</sup>

The importance of learning as a value in Judaism is often emphasized as a cultural reason of Jewish individuals' emotional investment in education. At the same time, the aspect of getting higher education as a survivor strategy or at least a preparation for unforeseeable situations, is just as important. Situations when Jews need to be more mobile than the majority population – either geographically, or in switching languages or professions – historically repeat themselves. Theodor Herzl famously claimed that two generations could be enough time for Jewish assimilation, however, this amount of time is never given to them, because at least every second generation faces antisemitic persecution. It is still the case. Even though usually

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<sup>527</sup> Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők*, 159.

it is not physical annihilation that Jews need to escape, situations where Jewish origin matters and may hinder advancement or is used against someone, are common.<sup>528</sup>

As this dissertation argued, the numerus clausus related emigration was not a one-way road. Thus, Jewish youth with not enough social capital to enroll in a Hungarian university (or with too much left-wing political commitment or thirst for adventure) in the age of the numerus clausus who at the same time possessed intergenerational mobility potential, left either temporarily or for good. Those who left for good, typically left before 1939, because those who survived the Shoah in Hungary, were likely to stay due to the increasing value of their new capital: political reliability. At the same time, both groups, the ones who stayed abroad and the ones who returned, gained an advantage in possessing international professional and personal relationships when compared to (both Jewish and non-Jewish) Hungarian peers who did not move abroad to study.

The Shoah broke the “community of fate” between non-Jewish and Jewish Hungarians, simply by virtue of imposing a different fate on Jews and a trauma on survivors and descendants that runs transgenerationally. It is important to stress, however, that in Hungary this process started with the numerus clausus or was at least greatly quickened by it – since the law’s pre-history should not be ignored. Particularly within the intelligentsia, the fact of the Jewish quota and its centrality in the discourse about Jews and about the labor market (whether the discourse was about the law’s amendment or about complains that in reality faculties had more than 6% Jews in their student body) harmed trust between Jews and non-Jews. It also introduced the notion that the “Christian” (mostly used in the sense of non-Jewish) middleclasses can and ought to receive what is taken away from Jews. Until 1938 it was mostly enrollment in

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<sup>528</sup> Note for example the antisemitic attacks in Hungary against the EU green politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros in the 2010s.

universities, thereafter intellectual jobs and (especially after the deportations in 1944) properties.

The large majority of Jews among Hungarians studying in foreign universities in the interwar period created a situation in which graduates of the more prestigious degrees (among doctors they were the graduates of the medical faculties of Vienna and the German University of Prague, among engineers the alumni of Berlin's technical college) largely coincided with Jews as opposed to non-Jews trained in the less prestigious Hungarian universities. This professional advantage of Jews gained significance especially after 1945 when Jews were not excluded from or marginalized in the labor market any longer. This educational advantage provided them with an extra benefit even when competing with another group possessing the capital of political reliability: the “popular cadres”, the protégées of Communist politics who came from peasant or worker families. Such obvious difference did not help the disappearance of the notion of Jews being different and “others”.

Tragically, the historical experience of the *numerus clausus* did not end either antisemitism or discrimination. The idea of taking away (intellectual) possession and the ability to acquire it from someone – rather than broadening access to it for everyone – seems to be too attractive for decision makers. While in the interwar period the Hungarian state excluded Jews from the universities to make place for “Christians” to enroll, from 1949 to 1963 it excluded “class enemies” (the bourgeoisie and the nobility) to destroy “the cultural monopoly of the wealthy classes”. Both admission systems harmed the valorization of talent by favoring other features of an individual – ones they have no control over: being born in a religious group or a class – to decide whether or not they were fit for university studies. It is noteworthy nevertheless that in the 1940s the left-wing parties made efforts to provide the lower classes with possibilities to make up for their lack of schooling and worked for enabling talented youth to perform educational mobility, as the example of NÉKOSZ showed in Chapter V. Needless

to say, there were Jews among the bourgeois youth excluded from higher education between 1949 and 1963, while the previous generation of the same families were excluded as Jews. It is noteworthy, that even the 1928 amendment of the *numerus clausus* basically reframed Jewish exclusion in class terms rather than racial terms. After WWII the exclusion of bourgeois Jews was rather a side-effect of the persecution of the bourgeoisie.

A less grim conclusion of this dissertation may be that human agency, first of all collective agency based on solidarity is able to challenge structural constraints. The emigration of young Jewish intelligentsia started with cases of individuals taking up the “wandering stick” for the sake of studies, but was soon recognized as an important endeavor to be broadened up and supported both morally and financially. In addition, even though it was not a conscious intention of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* to especially support underprivileged youth, the children of lower middleclass retailers were at the forefront of this peregrination. This migratory movement contributed to the upward social mobility of thousands and thus it worked against the *numerus clausus*, even if it could not counterbalance it in quantitative terms.

Furthermore, after all at least several dozen *numerus clausus* exiles left Europe and found themselves in safe countries by the time of the Shoah because they had left Central Europe (out of coercion or their own will) early enough in view of their political alertness taken from 1920 Hungary (like Leo Szilard) and had the opportunity to do so due to their studies and careers pursued in emigration. Besides alertness, Hungarian Jews imported to Germany solidarity and agility to act upon it, as the success of Philipp Schwartz’s endeavor, the *Notgemeinschaft* shows. Another few dozen eventually made careers in State Socialist Hungary and greatly helped the development of their respective fields in their home country (for instance Emmi Pikler and Zuzsa Leichner).

The best conclusion, nevertheless, will be an ironic one, even though it does not fit all the case studies of the dissertation. The *numerus clausus* and the emigration of intellectuals it

provoked, was Hungary's gift to Weimar Germany in the same way as the German "exodus of the mind" provoked by Nazi persecution was Hitler's gift<sup>529</sup> to the United States. In addition, the latter gift's arrival was greatly facilitated by Philipp Schwartz, a Hungarian *numerus clausus* refugee. The Hungarian state greatly contributed to talented intellectuals making it into the international history of science and scholarship by pushing them out from their home country at a young age.

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<sup>529</sup> Jean Medawar and David Pyke, *Hitler's Gift: The True Story of the Scientists Expelled by the Nazi Regime* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001).

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