

**Jews and Non-Jews in a West Hungarian Township under the Interwar
'Christian Course', with Special Reference to Local Press Reports**

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Abstract

The thesis presents a small Jewish Community that had to live in a gradually growing antisemitic environment in the interwar years in a Western Hungarian town called Kőszeg. It investigates the characteristics and changes of antisemitism in local level, how the gradual exclusion of Jews happened in practice. The main focus is on the analysis of the local weekly called *Kőszeg és Vidéke* in the period between 1909 and 1939, hence we are able to compare pre-war to interwar years and also investigate the question of continuity of antisemitism in a micro level. Although the Jewish Community of Kőszeg fulfilled the requirements of assimilation by the turn of the 20th century, local antisemites did not accept them as true Magyars. The deep examination of the city's society helps us understand better on the one hand, the motivations of antisemites and on the other hand, the reactions of Jews to a changed atmosphere. The thesis deals with the question of assimilation and antisemitism on a local level under the given political, economic and social circumstances, nevertheless can give us an impression about the anti-Jewish atmosphere of interwar Hungary that finally led to the mass destruction of Hungarian Jews.

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Introduction

Picture 1: The deportation of the Jewry of Kőszeg¹



This photograph is one of the few remaining on the process of deportation of Hungarian provincial Jewry in 1944. The photograph shows that on the 18th of June 1944, 103 Jewish persons were deported to Szombathely from the Kőszeg ghetto that had been established on the 11th of May.² As it is quite obvious if we look at this picture, local Hungarian gendarmes in their typical uniform were involved in the process. Ironically, the street on which they are going to the railway station was named after Fülöp Schey (1798-1881), a prominent local Jew who was the founder of the kindergarten, poorhouse and hospital in Kőszeg. We can see the ordinary-looking victims wearing their winter clothes in the middle of the summer

¹ 1944. June 18th The picture was taken from: http://www.holokauszmagyarorszagon.hu/images/photo/kep-4_2_3-a.jpg see this one and more pictures about it in Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide – The Holocaust in Hungary, Volume II*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. pp. 758-762.

² Braham, pp. 756-757.

indicating that they are taking as much of their belongings as they could. Two weeks later they were sent to Auschwitz.

Since the history of the deportation of Kőszeg Jewry and the concentration camp that worked in the city should be a separate thesis,³ I will not deal with this in detail. Memoirs give us different information, whether gas or gas-chambers were being used there or not. In my understanding this is not the major question. The fact that some 2500 corps were found in 1947 in the nearby woods speaks for itself.⁴

The purpose of this thesis is to present the long process which finally led to the destruction of Hungarian Jewry in a city like Kőszeg. It explains that I argue that we should not study the Shoah in Hungary, the deportation of Hungarian Jewry without connecting it to the gradually growing interwar antisemitism, moreover to the political antisemitism and ideology that emerged as early as the 1880s. Although, I do not state that Nazism or in Hungary the deportation of Jewry necessarily followed from pre-World War I antisemitism, I argue that without the emergence of this ideology and its gradual acceptance by the majority society, Hungarian society would not have been as indifferent to the destiny of their fellow citizens as we have experienced.

The emergence of 19th century political antisemitism in Hungary, the general anti-Jewish atmosphere and antisemitic legislations of the interwar period are well-known. What I would like to investigate is the process of the gradual exclusion of Jews from society in a relatively small city like Kőszeg. For this purpose, I started my investigation from the years before World War I. On the one hand, it was necessary to have the opportunity to compare

³ I have not found any study that particularly deal with the camp in Kőszeg. According to Randolph L. Braham (*A Magyarországi holokauszt bibliográfiája* (The Bibliography of the Holocaust in Hungary), Budapest: Park Kiadó, 2000.) some articles were published on the topic, and some works examine it, but no one in detail.

⁴ Löwinger, Avraham Albert (edited), *A vasi zsidók emlékére: a mártírhalt szenvedett vasmegyei zsidóságnak* (For the Memory of Vas County Jews: For Vas County Jews Who Suffered Death), Jaffa: Efrájim Nyomda, 1974. p. 58.

the pre- and the post-World War I periods, on the other hand, to have the possibility of thinking about the question of continuity of anti-Semitism not only in general, but also in specific local terms. What were the main reasons of the indifferent behavior of the majority society against Jews? Is there a continuous anti-Jewish attitude that was deeply embedded into the society and emerged during crisis and was thus the period of emancipation between 1867 and 1914 was only an illusion? Or was it mainly generated by the antisemitic policy that influenced local societies as well?

Through this social historical perspective I expect that we will be able to better understand the tendencies of gradually growing antisemitism in Hungary. Although studies that deal with the political history, the anti-Jewish legislations or the characteristics of Jewry in general in Hungary are very useful and important, they might hide that there were personal actions and motivations. Examining the interwar period on a mezo, sometimes micro level will give us a more detailed picture about the environment in which Jews had to live and hopefully show the reasons of the majority society's anti-Jewish behavior.

At the same time, we should always be careful during these kinds of investigations not to overgeneralize the case of our research. We should also bear in mind that the tendencies and what we find in case of our subject do not necessarily apply to other cities or communities of Hungary, however are comparable with them. In my understanding, it is the essence of the present research to show to what extent the already known tendencies are in line with the situation of Kőszeg. In addition what will be found in Kőszeg will be comparable with other towns, always keeping in mind the different circumstances. Through the phenomena we will find in Kőszeg, we can get a little closer to the tendencies in the country.

The city of Kőszeg and its Jewry should be examined for many reasons. The Jewish Community there was one of the smallest among Hungarian cities'. Hence they did not have a crucial part in the city's everyday life, but at the same time, they were very visible and had

an important role in the city's economic life due to their over-representation in business, trade and also in industry. Additionally, the society there was bilingual, since still in the interwar period there was a considerable German minority in Kőszeg. Although ethnic Germans and Magyars lived together peacefully, local Jews found themselves in a cultural fight between these two nations. According to the 1880 census German was the majority nationality in the city, the Magyar citizens in the period of the so-called magyarization were trying to become the dominant nation and make Magyar the dominant language. While in 1900 the Magyars were still under 50% of the population, in the same year 60.9% of the Kőszeg Jewry admitted Hungarian as their mother tongue.⁵

The Jewry of the city was under double pressure at the end of the 19th century. On the hand as non-Christians, and on the other hand as a mostly German-speaking community. Certainly, it was much easier to change their language than to change their religion. As a sign of the tendencies in the community they changed the language of their Protocols from German to Hungarian on the 17th of October in 1897.⁶ This may suggest, that as in general in the country, they intended to assimilate to the Magyar culture, but I will discuss later in my thesis in more detail their difficulties in this question.

The other unique feature of Kőszeg is that due to the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty it became a border city. While Kőszeg was in the middle of the Habsburg Empire, suddenly it had to accept that it became divided from most of its former economic and social links. Under these circumstances, a relatively small but considerable Jewry, that had 266 members according to the 1910 census, were trying to stay alive economically and socially.

⁵ *Magyar Városok Statisztikai Évkönyve*, (Statistical Yearbook of Hungarian Cities) edited by Gusztáv Thirring, Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros Házinyomdája, 1912. p. 88. and p. 100.

⁶ *A kőszegi congr. izraelita hitközség jegyzőkönyve* (1894. szeptember 11. – 1901. november 17.) (The Protocol of the Neolog Israelite Community of Kőszeg) In Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archive) p. 92.

Certainly, the literature about the situation of Jews between the two world wars in Hungary is huge. At the same time, there are only a few works that try to deal with the everyday relationship between Jews and non-Jews in a small society like Kőszeg in detail and antisemitism in practice in such a small environment. There are existing monographs such as the vitally important *A kőszegi zsidók* (Jewry of Kőszeg) written by László Harsányi in 1974. However, on the one hand it does not concentrate on the interwar years, on the other hand does not focus on or analyze the reasons why and how antisemitism became more and more accepted in an environment that had formerly apparently rejected this ideology. Still, Harsányi's monograph is full of precious information about the community, therefore it will be one of my main secondary sources.

In 2008 Attila Katona completed his PhD dissertation⁷ that provides a very detailed picture of the policy of Vas County in the period, but does not investigate the social relations. In addition the emphasis is on Szombathely, the capital city of the county, rather than on Kőszeg. There is no other serious published work that deals with the Jewry of Kőszeg; even Katona points out that the social history of the county and its cities are not well examined.

To avoid the misleading interpretations of a retrospective point of view, I mostly used contemporary sources to be able to investigate the mentality of the period. Unfortunately, with only one exception, the protocols of the Jewish community of the period between 1894 and 1901 (available in the Jewish Archive Budapest),⁸ there is a huge gap of sources related to the Jewish Community of Kőszeg. Every protocol from the interwar years is lost, even the documents of the Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) or the Israelite Women's Association have not been found yet. Therefore, I basically use three types of primary sources to analyze

⁷ Katona Attila: *Zsidóság és zsidókérdés Vas vármegyében 1920-1938*. (Jewry and Jewish-question in Vas County 1920-1938) PhD dissertation, available at:

<http://www.idi.btk.pte.hu/dokumentumok/disszertaciok/katonaattilaphd.pdf>

⁸ *A kőszegi Congr. izraelita hitközség jegyzőkönyve* (1894. szeptember 11. – 1901. november 17.) (The Protocol of the Neolog Israelite Community of Kőszeg) In Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archive)

the Kőszeg situation. The one noted Protocol from the turn of the century, birth certificates of the 19th century and the articles of the most important local newspaper called *Kőszeg és Vidéke*.

First of all, I will start my thesis with a general, brief introduction of Kőszeg and its Jewry, the main demographical, economic and social characteristics of this small community in addition to the changes in the political atmosphere.

In the first analytical chapter I will analyze the representation of the Kőszeg Jewry in the local press. Since the most important periodical was *Kőszeg és Vidéke* founded in 1881 and maintained until 1939, I collected and analyzed its articles from 1909 to 1939 that were about the Jewish community, its members or dealt with the so-called “Jewish question” locally or in general. I will try to investigate how the main narrative of this weekly journal changed after World War I due to the gradually growing antisemitic atmosphere in Hungary, particularly after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

In the last chapter of my thesis I will present an analysis of the locally found tendencies in the situation of Kőszeg Jewry and the questions of emancipation and assimilation of Jewry. In addition, I will study local antisemitism in the city and the region compared to the general tendencies and theories.

1. Demographic, political and economic circumstances of Kőszeg Jewry

As noted in the introduction, I start my investigation with a chapter that sums up the environment in which Kőszeg Jewry lived; the demographical, social, political and economic circumstances of the city. I compare the characteristics of this population to the country and the county, and most importantly the effect of the 1920 Trianon Treaty that made Kőszeg a border-city, which certainly had a demographic, economic and social influence as well.

First of all, we should bear in mind that Hungarian Jewry, that in 1720 was only around 12.000 people, by 1910 grew to some 910.000. There was also a parallel increase in their percentage of the country's inhabitants from approximately 0.5 to 5 percent.⁹ Originally in the 18th century with some exceptions, the majority of this society lived in villages, as Jews were not allowed to live in cities. With every disadvantage of being excluded as Péter Hanák argues they “enjoyed the specific advantage of exclusion, and were thus able with relative ease to become the pioneers of capitalist economy.”¹⁰ Exclusion did not necessarily mean the lack of interaction, even if it only concentrated on commercial issues. Jews played a middleman-role between the village and the city, since on the one hand, they had very good connections with the urban wholesale merchants, and on the other hand, had knowledge of the needs of rural people, also of magnates and peasants.¹¹

⁹ Yehuda Don – George Magos, “The Demographic Development of Hungarian Jewry” In *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3/4. (Summer – Autumn, 1983), Indiana University Press, 1983. pp. 189-216. p. 189 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4467225> accessed on 10.04.2014.)

¹⁰ Hanák Péter “Jews and the modernization of Commerce in Hungary, 1790-1848” In: *Jews in the Hungarian Economy* (edited by Michael K. Silber), Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1992, pp. 23-39., p. 26.

¹¹ Hanák p. 32 and Walter Pietsch, “A magyar vidéki zsidóság fejlődésirányzatai a 19. század első felében” (The Courses of the Development of Hungarian Rural Jewry in the First Half of the 19th century) In: *Múlt és Jövő* (Past and Future), issue 3/2003, pp. 75-82. (available at www.cceol.com)

Hungarian Jewry, however, not purposely, created a statewide network of merchants who interacted with each other and always knew what was needed in a given region.¹² As Walter Pietsch points out, Hungarian Jewry functioned as modern merchants that were absolutely required by the modernizing economy of the country and more importantly, without rural Jews there would have been a huge gap of these kind of pioneers in the Hungarian economic system.¹³ As he sums up: “Hungary needed such entrepreneurs who managed to buy up the agricultural products and could distribute them all over the country and at the same time were able to collect the necessary capital and invest it again into the circles of production.”¹⁴ In 1840 the legislation guaranteed the right to Jews to settle anywhere in the country. In cities that allowed Jews to settle before the legislation their number had grown increasingly. One example is Miskolc that in the 1830s had less than 2000 Jews, and in only 10 years there was more than a 10% increase of the Jewish population due to migration.¹⁵ This fact clearly shows that the Jewry of Hungary tended to move to cities if there was an opportunity and naturally when they were allowed.

Certainly, the largest Jewish community was in Budapest, but at the same time their proportion by 1890 was 26.2% in Nagyvárad, 16.5% in Szatmár-Németi, 14.7% in Komárom, 12% in Temesvár 12%, and also over 10% in Arad, Baja, Győr, Kassa, Pressburg.¹⁶ The increase of Kőszeg Jewry is in line with this tendency.

¹² Pietsch, p. 80.

¹³ Pietsch, p. 80.

¹⁴ Pietsch, p. 80. (my translation)

¹⁵ Howard N. Lupovitch, *Jews at the Crossroads*, New York – Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007, p. 166.

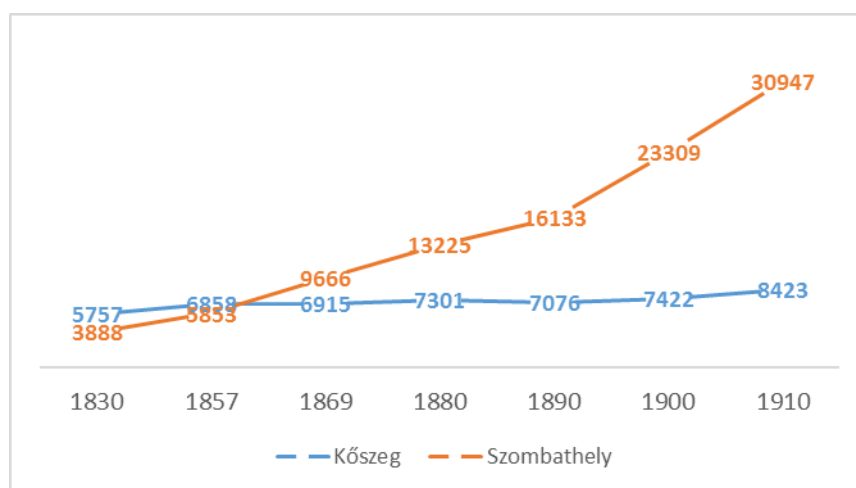
¹⁶ Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996, p. 429.

1.1. Demographic characteristics

I will present the general situation of the city at the beginning of the 20th century and its development from the second half of the 19th century. For this purpose the best source is the *Magyar Városok Statisztikai Évkönyve*, (Statistical Yearbook of Hungarian Cities) edited by the well-known statistician of the era, Gusztáv Thirring in 1912.¹⁷ This huge collection of data presents every city of Hungary in detail and also gives us the opportunity to compare Kőszeg to other cities, most importantly to its major rival in the county, Szombathely.

The Yearbook starts with short monographs of the cities in which Kőszeg appears as a mostly rural city, where most people work in agriculture,¹⁸ however, with a considerable handicraft industry. Compared to its most important rival city in the county, Szombathely, Kőszeg failed to keep up with the increasing growth of Szombathely's population (See Figure 1). While in 80 years the population of Szombathely increased from 3888 to 30947 by 1910, Kőszeg that had 5757 inhabitants in 1830 only grew to 8423.

Figure 1: The population of Kőszeg and Szombathely between 1830 and 1910¹⁹



¹⁷ *Magyar Városok Statisztikai Évkönyve*, (MVSÉ) (Statistical Yearbook of Hungarian Cities) edited by Gusztáv Thirring, Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros Házinyomdája, 1912.

¹⁸ MVSÉ, Monográfiák (Monographs) p. 54.

¹⁹ MVSÉ, Statisztikák (Statistics) p. 53.

From the middle of the 19th century the Jewish population of Kőszeg was gradually growing (Table 1). The members of this small community became a very important part of the city's life, most importantly its economic growth. Although after 1848 the city lost its importance in the region and had huge economic problems, the Jews of Kőszeg were still prosperous, their number reached its peak in 1910 when their population was 266. From that time their number started to decrease surprisingly quickly. Certainly, there was a natural decrease behind this tendency as the population was gradually becoming older, but most probably World War I and the strongly antisemitic post-war atmosphere, particularly after the fall of the Soviet Republic in Hungary motivated many of them to leave the city and the country as well, since Austria a much friendlier environment at that time was very close to them. Although the economic situation was not better in Austria than in Hungary, indeed the political atmosphere was friendlier for Jews.

Table 1: Israelite population of Kőszeg between 1840 and 1946²⁰

Year	Israelite population	Percentage
1840	91	1.4%
1869	177	2.5%
1880	213	2.9%
1890	259	3.7%
1900	243	3.1%
1910	266	3.2%
1920	162	1.9%
1930	131	1.5%
1941	109	1.1%
1946	15	0.1%

Although the Jewish population neither in Kőszeg nor in the county (Table 2) reached the general proportion of Jewry of the country that was approximately 5% in the pre-war years and some 6% in the interwar years, generally the county did not experience such a crucial decrease in their number as the city of Kőszeg (see Table 2).

²⁰ Harsányi, p. 257.

Table 2: The denomination of the population in Vas County²¹

	1910	Percentage	1920	Percentage	1930	Percentage
Roman Catholic	331,269	76.02	216,869	84.12	224,690	81.70
Greek Catholic	151	0.03	181	0.07	186	0.07
Calvinist	12,597	2.89	10,271	3.98	10,786	3.92
Evangelical	82,027	18.82	32,238	12.50	31,886	11.59
Greek Orthodox	71	0.02	85	0.03	113	0.04
Unitarian	19	0.00	34	0.01	0	0.00
Israelite	9649	2.21	8105	3.14	7291	2.65
Other	10	0.00	27	0.01	69	0.03
Total	435,793		257,810		275,021	

Similarly to the nationwide tendencies, by 1910 the Magyar nation became the majority of Vas County with more than half of the population, but at the same time there was a considerable German minority in the county (see Table 3). The situation changed very much as Hungary became a so-called nation-state after the 1920 Peace Treaty. Divided into an Austrian and Hungarian part, the county lost almost all of its German inhabitants and Magyars became the absolute majority of the county.

Table 3: The mother tongue of the population in Vas County²²

Nationality	1910	Percentage	1920	Percentage	1930	Percentage
Magyar	247,985	56.9	246,046	95.44	258,171	93.87
German	117,169	26.89	12,384	4.8	8062	2.93
Slovak	288	0.07	171	0.07	93	0.03
Romanian	14	0.00	28	0.01	12	0.00
Ruthenian	48	0.01	8	0.00	0	0.00
Croatian	16,230	3.72	3975	1.54	3346	1.22
Serb	23	0.01	16	0.01	10	0.00
Other	54,035	12.4	5182	2.01	5327	1.94
Total	435,793		257,810		275,021	

²¹ Katona, p. 31. or MVSÉ Statisztikák (Statistics) p. 69.

²² Katona, p. 28.

According to Table 2 and Table 3, we can say that in Vas county Magyar became the absolute majority nation and Catholicism a more dominant denomination. In Table 4 we can see how the new border influenced the number of Jewish inhabitants in the districts and the two major cities of the county. The decrease was considerable, particularly in the Kőszeg district that had lost almost its entire Jewish population. We will see later in detail how this influenced the district and the economic life of the city of Kőszeg as well. Now it is enough to emphasize that even the city lost one third of its Jewish population. As Attila Katona points out, we should bear in mind that this huge decrease of Jewish population in the county was not only caused by the new border. According to Attila Katona's calculation only some 800 Jews became citizens of Austria due to the new border, the other few hundred people most probably moved to Austria for better opportunities in a much safer political and social environment.²³

Table 4: The Israelite population in the districts of Vas County between 1910 and 1930²⁴

Districts	1910	Isr.	%	1920	Isr.	%	1930	Isr.	%
Celldömölk	40,392	1550	3.83	42,990	1433	3.33	43,313	1281	3
Felsőőr	44,285	324	0.73	0	0	0	0	0	0
Körmend	35,436	808	2.28	33,441	717	2.14	34,200	467	1.37
Kőszeg	25,540	383	1.49	6671	32	0	8552	40	0.47
Muraszombat	48,655	414	0.85	1146	7	0.61	0	0	0
Németújvár	33,829	160	0.47	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sárvár	38,926	1148	2.94	45,869	1102	2.40	44,834	1018	2.27
Szentgotthárd	55,348	530	0.95	23,936	354	1.48	26,229	263	1.00
Szombathely	38,925	298	0.76	36,583	231	0.63	38,646	147	0.38
Vasvár	35,087	643	1.83	33,983	521	1.53	34,952	462	1.32
Cities	1910	Isr.	%	1920	Isr.	%	1930	Isr.	%
<i>Kőszeg</i>	8423	266	3.15	8492	162	1.91	8537	131	1.53
<i>Szombathely</i>	30,947	3125	10.09	34,699	3546	10.22	35,758	3482	9.74
Total	435,793	9649	2.20	345,924	8589	2.48	401,790	8189	2.04

We should also keep in mind the general tendency of natural ageing of the Jewish society that in the interwar period became worse. In Table 5 we can see how the number of births

²³ Katona, pp.31-32.

²⁴ Katona, p. 34.

gradually decreased in the most important towns of the county. In Kőszeg according to the birth certificates of the 1880s and 1890s there were years when no more than eight or ten children were born.²⁵ In the interwar years the average is only one birth per year, moreover, after 1935 in Kőszeg no Jewish child was born at all. In general, the fertility among Jews decreased much more than among Christians in the first decades of the 20th century,²⁶ nevertheless the fact that fertility among Kőszeg Jewry became zero is surprising. Even the rabbi of Kőszeg, Izsák Linkszt complained that local Jews would rather stay “bachelors and spinsters.”²⁷

Table 5: Number of births among Israelites between 1919 and 1944 in Vas County towns²⁸

Year	Szombathely	Sárvár	Kőszeg	Körmend	Jánosháza	Cell	Vasvár	Sum
1919	87	14	1	6	4	4	4	127
1920	74	13	1	7	6	4	4	114
1925	62	12	2	0	12	8	6	106
1930	65	11	2	1	6	4	3	96
1935	53	20	0	1	7	4	2	89
1940	52	12	0	1	4	7	0	77
1944	27	7	0	0	2	1	0	37

As we have noted earlier, until the 1890 census German was the dominant language in the city. In 1880, according to the census there were 1505 people who admitted Magyar and 5460 who had German as their mother tongue. In 1890, interestingly enough, the proportion of people with Magyar and German mother tongues was roughly equal with 3197 and 3679 respectively.²⁹ The fight between languages, or the so-called process of magyarization is

²⁵ *Kőszegi Anyakönyvek 1851-1895* (Certificates of Kőszeg). Magyar Zsidó Levéltár Hungarian Jewish Archive), Microfilm: A3539.

²⁶ Karády Viktor: “A zsidó “túliskolázás” kérdése a történelmi Magyarországon”(The question of Jewish over-schooling in historical Hungary) In *A zsidó iskolaiügy története Magyarországon – Neveléstörténeti füzetek 14.* (The History of Jewish Education in Hungary) (edited by László Balogh), Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, 1996. pp. 7-38. p. 11.

²⁷ Harsányi, p. 196.

²⁸ Based on Attila Katona’s research In Katona, pp. 39-40.

²⁹ MVSE, Statisztikák (Statistics) p. 88.

palpable.³⁰ Why was that important in case of local Jews? Based on my calculations, Israelite became the most Magyar denomination in the city by 1900, as 47% of Catholics, 35.2% of Lutherans and 60.9% of Israelites had Magyar as their mother tongue.³¹ Still in 1920 the situation was the same when 67.3% of the Israelites had Magyar as their mother tongue that was higher than the proportion of Magyar mother tongue among Catholics and Lutherans.³² We will see later in the analysis of the local press that some Jews in Kőszeg were attacked because of not maintaining Magyar language in public, however, as our data show they used Magyar more than the major Christian denominations of the city. Here we should note briefly the small Calvinist community of the city that had a higher percentage than Israelites in Magyar mother tongue,³³ but they were less important in the Christian society of the city.

1.2. Political atmosphere in Kőszeg

By the 1890s it became clear that in Hungarian political life, liberalism as an ideology lost its former hegemony and the different wings of conservatism became more powerful.³⁴ At the same time, parties that basically wanted to question the legitimacy of liberalism, like the Anti-Semite Party (*Országos Antiszemita Párt*) in 1884 managed to get 17 mandates in Parliament, in 1887 it gained only 11 mandates, and by 1896 the party had dissolved itself.³⁵ This shows that antisemitism *per se* as a political program at that time was not popular among those who had the right to vote. However, the opposition between liberal and

³⁰ Not by coincidence in 1932 a book was published by Lajos Méhely entitled *The Magyarized Kőszeg (A megmagyarosodott Kőszeg)* Budapest: Held Nyomda. (*Kőszeg és Vidéke* 1932. April 17.)

³¹ MVSE, Statisztikák (Statistics) p. 88. and p. 100.

³² Harsányi, p. 179.

³³ Harsányi, p. 179.

³⁴ Miklós Szabó, "Középosztály és újkonzervativizmus: Harc a politikai katolicizmus jobbszárnya és a polgári radikalizmus között" (Middle-class and New-Conservatism: Fight between the Right-wing of Political Catholicism and Civil Radicalism) In *Világosság* 1975/Volume 6. p. 322.

³⁵ Komoróczy Géza, *A zsidók története Magyarországon II. – 1849-től a jelenkorig*, (The History of Jews in Hungary II. – From 1849 until Nowadays) Pozsony: Kalligram Kiadó, 2012. p. 235.

conservative thinking reappeared and lived from that time onwards. While liberal politicians thought that the country's well-fare was built on economic development rather than a national basis, the conservative idea was that the country's fundament was the nation, most importantly the Gentry and the peasantry whose fate was to preserve national traditions.³⁶ According to the conservative, nationalistic ideology the main cause of the pauperization of the Gentry was the liberal ideology and most importantly the existence of Hungarian Jewry. As Miklós Szabó rightly states, this is the main argument of every new conservative party and movement, even clerical conservatism.³⁷

From the turn of the century conservative – Christian parties were particularly popular in the county and in the city of Kőszeg. As early as 1903 the local priest called István Kincs had an antisemitic speech at the assembly of the county that at that time was condemned by the local press, however according to the report many representatives liked his speech.³⁸ As Miklós Szabó rightly argues, the younger, mostly provincial clergy was the most important basis of the conservative Christian party, the *Katolikus Néppárt*³⁹ (Catholic People's Party) and later the *Keresztényszocialista Párt* (Christian-Socialist Party).⁴⁰ In the interwar period every election was won by the Christian conservative parties under different names.⁴¹

Beside Kincs, one of the most important right-wing politicians of the region and the city was Albin Lingauer, a journalist, editor and politician. He was a member of Parliament in different conservative parties as a representative of the city of Kőszeg between 1920 and 1936. As in the next chapter I will deal with his career in detail, now it is enough to emphasize that he used to be a liberal politician before the war, but after that he made many

³⁶ Szabó, 1975, p. 324.

³⁷ Szabó, 1975, p. 325.

³⁸ Kőszeg és Vidéke, 1903. October 18.

³⁹ The party was established in 1894 due to the initiative of the infamous anti-Semitic Catholic priest (from 1905 the bishop of Székesfehérvár) Ottokár Prohászka.

⁴⁰ Miklós Szabó, 1975, p. 326.

⁴¹ Hubai Volume I p. 114, 120, 127, 134, 144 and 156. Volume II. p. 107 and 130.

strongly antisemitic statements.⁴² The local communist leader during the few months of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was József Halász, a journalist with a Jewish background, but as Harsányi emphasizes he had no connection with the Jewish community of Kőszeg.⁴³ Interestingly enough, Lingauer and Halász used to edit together the county daily called *Vasvármegye* (Vas County) in 1911,⁴⁴ moreover in 1909 Lingauer was one of the witnesses of Halász's wedding with Katalin Glatzhofer.⁴⁵

In the 1918 revolution and later in the Hungarian Soviet Republic two local persons with Jewish background took major part: József Halász and Rezső Bass. Both of them were punished after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Halász got 12 years in penitentiary, Bass six months in penitentiary and for five years he was not allowed to practice his profession.⁴⁶ As early as the spring of 1920 a memoir was published about the counter-revolution in Vas County.⁴⁷ One of the authors, László Deme himself took part in it, but surprisingly enough neither in his work, nor in the local weekly (*Kőszeg és Vidéke*) was the Jewish background of local communists noted. In general Deme does not emphasize this, only in case of Tibor Szamuely,⁴⁸ but not in case of Béla Kun, or the local leader, József Halász. It seems for local contemporaries their Jewish background was not important. Certainly, from 1920 the Judeo-communist myth is vigorous in the press articles, but not in case of concrete local persons.

As the aim of this thesis is not to analyze the political atmosphere in the city and in the region in the interwar period, it is enough to state that as everywhere in the country, revisionism was the major goal of politics. Additionally, antisemitism became part of

⁴² Even Avraham Löwinger emphasizes his role in local antisemitism. (Löwinger p. 58.)

⁴³ Harsányi, p. 176.

⁴⁴ Katona, p. 59.

⁴⁵ *Kőszeg és Vidéke*, (henceforth KV) 1909. November 28.

⁴⁶ KV. 1920. March 7.

⁴⁷ Deme László – Keleti József: *Az ellenforradalom Vasvármegyében és Szombathelyen*, (The Counter-revolution in Vas County and Szombathely) Szombathely: Martineum Nyomda, 1920.

⁴⁸ Deme – Keleti, p. 105.

everyday life as we will see in the local *Kőszeg* press. In general, local Jews were not in danger, however with the emergence of local far-right associations occasionally they were abused.

1.3. Economic circumstances and the role of local Jews in it

The general modernization and development of Hungary in the period of dualism certainly could not be beneficial for every region. There must have been losers in the industrialization, economic change and the evolving modern infrastructure. Although *Kőszeg* was one of the first cities where a savings bank was established,⁴⁹ later the Austrian-Hungarian Bank did not open an office there. Statistics show that at the beginning of the 20th century, in *Kőszeg* there was no drainage, piped-water, or gas-main.⁵⁰ At the same time, by 1908 the city had as many as 45 streets with electric lighting compared to Szombathely, the capital of the county that had no electric street lighting.⁵¹ In every other indicator, Szombathely was more developed than *Kőszeg*, for instance for the number of coated roads.⁵²

The city of *Kőszeg* in Vas County (after the 1920 Peace Treaty a city next to the Austrian border) was one of the cities to lose their former importance. It could not become part of the new railway lines being developed in the 1850–60s; only as late as 1883 did it have a direct railway line with Szombathely.⁵³ Although, before World War I the city had been connected with Sopron and Sárvár, these lines partly went through Austria after 1920, which meant

⁴⁹ Only in Pest, Pozsony, Sopron, Brassó and Nagyszeben had a savings bank earlier than *Kőszeg*. MVSE, Statistics, pp. 391-396.

⁵⁰ MVSE, Statistics p. 429, p. 431 and p. 436.

⁵¹ MVSE, Statistics, p. 436.

⁵² MVSE, Statistics, p. 414.

⁵³ Söptei, Imre: "Kőszeg szabad királyi város törvényhatóságának utolsó évei (1865-1876)" (The Last Years of *Kőszeg* as a Free Royal City (1865-1876)) in *Kőszeg 2000*, Kőszeg: Kőszeg Város Polgármesteri Hivatala, 2000, pp. 237-286, p. 279.

duty-free transport came to an end. Moreover, the city lost economic connections with 68 out of 85 towns due to the new border.⁵⁴ Still, in 1934 the local Kőszeg press emphasized that while in 1913 27,919 people lived in the city's Hinterland, by 1930 the same population decreased to 6145.⁵⁵ Even Avraham Löwinger underlines in the memory of Vas County Jews this loss of the city.⁵⁶ According to the only available Protocol of the Jewish Community of Kőszeg, they also had very important economic connections with Lakompak and Sopronkeresztúr,⁵⁷ both of which became part of Austria. The city that already had been on the way to becoming less and less important after 1920 became a dead-end city.

The citizens of towns that remained in the Kőszeg district, mostly south of Kőszeg tended to go to Szombathely to buy what they needed. Due to the new border, the general stores of Kőszeg lost 95% of their trade, the clothiers' loss was 90%, the building material stores' also 90%, the pharmacies' 80%.⁵⁸ In accordance with these tendencies, local industry was in the same situation. We could continue to give these kinds of examples, but I think this is enough to present how the new borders influenced the city's economic life that even before the war had been in a bad situation. To illustrate the drop in the city's economy, I add a table of the trade of animals in sales. It clearly shows that the decrease started before the war, but the influence of the war years and the Treaty is obvious.

⁵⁴ Öry, Ferenc: "A trianoni békediktátum hatása Kőszeg gazdasági életére az 1920-as évek első felében" (The Influence of the Trianon Peace Treaty on the Economic Life of Kőszeg in the First Part of the 1920s) In *Kőszeg 2000* edited by István Bariska and Imre Söptei, Kőszeg: Kőszeg Város Polgármesteri Hivatala, 2000. pp. 287-315.

⁵⁵ KV. 1934. July 1.

⁵⁶ Löwinger, p. 58.

⁵⁷ *A kőszegi Congr. izraelita hitközség jegyzőkönyve* (1894. szeptember 11. – 1901. november 17.) (The Protocol of the Neolog Israelite Community of Kőszeg)

⁵⁸ Öry pp. 302-303.

Table 6: The change sales of livestock in Kőszeg⁵⁹

Year	Number of animals sold		
	Horses	Cattles	Pigs
1910	1844	5293	3086
1914	1647	2878	1344
1922	196	361	710
1928	295	419	609

Now we should briefly sum up the role of local Jews in the economic life of the city. As the *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* (Hungarian Jewish Lexicon) reports, in 1910 the Jewish community had three wholesalers, 15 merchants, two artisans, two farmers, one lawyer, one doctor, one engineer, one public officer, four private officers, 47 others (probably staff of the merchants and others).⁶⁰ According to Harsányi's data, in 1920, 32.9% of local merchants were Jewish,⁶¹ in line with the general Jewish over-representation in business in Hungary.

The importance of Jews in the city's economic life must be emphasized. According to the 1912 Statistical Yearbook there were ten considerable producers in the city. One of them was Kamill Eisner's factory (established in 1898) employing 78 people.⁶² Bearing in mind that altogether 328 people worked in these ten factories, the importance of Eisner's industry becomes evident. Additionally it was a gradually growing factory as the Jewish Lexicon reports about 200 workers in 1927.⁶³ It also had contracts with firms from abroad, for instance from London.⁶⁴

The list of taxpayers in 1909, on the one hand shows the importance of local Jewry, on the other hand, their high standard of living. While Roman Catholics paid 44,854 crowns, Lutherans 17,940 crowns, the Israelites 4934 crowns. This means that Israelites paid 7.3%

⁵⁹ Öry, p. 308.

⁶⁰ Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, p. 506.

⁶¹ Harsányi, p. 178.

⁶² MVSE, Statistics, p. 309.

⁶³ Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, p. 507.

⁶⁴ A firm from London ordered 25.000 hats from the factory in 1933. (KV. 1933. February 12.)

of taxes, however their proportion in the city's population was only 3.1%.⁶⁵ Harsányi rightly emphasizes that in 1911 as the highest taxpayers, five persons were in the council of the city who was Jewish, that meant 15% of the council.⁶⁶ These facts underline that the relatively small Jewish community of the city (See Table 4) had a considerable importance in its economic life.

⁶⁵ Harsányi, pp. 148-149.

⁶⁶ Harsányi, p. 149.

2. Kőszeg Jewry in local press, the analysis of *Kőszeg és Vidéke* between 1909 and 1939

Due to the lack of internal sources of the Jewish community of Kőszeg in the interwar period I analyzed the most important press of the city, namely the weekly called *Kőszeg és Vidéke*. To have the opportunity to follow the change of the press from the pre-war period to the interwar years I did the analysis of every issue from the year 1909 to the end of the weekly, 1939. Although László Harsányi in his monograph⁶⁷ on Kőszeg Jewry processed the articles of the weekly and presented them, I found it necessary to reexamine them and not only present the news items chronologically relevant to local Jews but thoroughly analyze them as well in addition with the articles which contain covert antisemitic statements.

I have noted before the antisemitic speech of the local priest, István Kincs in 1903 and the reaction of the journal to it. But, in the examined five years of pre-war period, 1909-1914 even the word 'Jew' or 'Jewish' did not appear in the articles. Naturally, there were many reports about them mostly reduced to birth, marriage, death and scandals (duels), but the fact that they were Jews or Israelite did not seem important in that period, at least for the editors. For example, when there was a marriage or death among Jews, the newspaper mostly wrote approvingly about the Jewish citizens of the city.

Interestingly enough, in 1909 there were two duels with Jewish involvement of which the weekly reported. In one case Lipót Kopfstein was an assistant,⁶⁸ in the other a Jew, namely

⁶⁷ Harsányi László, *A kőszegi zsidók* (The Jews of Kőszeg), Budapest: Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselőte 1974.

⁶⁸ KV 1909. June 6.

the vet of the city Dr. Rezső Bass was one of the duelists.⁶⁹ In 1900 the lawyer Lajos Deutsch also had a duel.⁷⁰ Victor Karady points out that Jews were over-represented among duelers.⁷¹ In our examples, unfortunately we do not know what caused the incidents, but on the one hand, they can be a proof of the high level of assimilation of these Jews to the Gentile society, but on the other hand the manifestation of antisemitism. Due to antisemitism, probably Jews were more frequently attacked by Gentiles, and Jewish victims tended to react to them. For acculturating, assimilating Jews it was very important to prove that they were gentlemen as well as Gentiles. We should notice here that Rezső Bass had another incident with a slaughterer who attacked him, because Dr. Bass confiscated infected meat from the slaughterer.⁷²

I have found only one attack on a Jew because of his Jewishness in the newspaper between 1909 and 1914: a tavern-keeper called Perl who placed information in his shop-window in Hebrew and German, but had forgotten to do so in Hungarian. “It seems he only expects guests from Jerusalem and Germany,”⁷³ as the weekly reports in 1911. In my understanding it seems that most local Gentiles had accepted local Jews, but due to hysteria of magyarization in the period and the inner fight of the city between Germans and Magyars they could not accept a stranger in the city, particularly a Jew who had not written Hungarian words in his shop-window. In this case the most important problem was indeed the lack of Hungarian words, but probably there were ethnic German shop-, or tavern-keepers as well who sometimes forgot to put words in their shop-windows in Hungarian, nevertheless the journal never attacked them, only the Jews for this omission.

⁶⁹ KV 1909. March 21. Issue 12.

⁷⁰ Harsányi, p. 143.

⁷¹ Victor Karady: "Denominational Dimensions of Crime in Early Twentieth Century Hungary", *CEU History Department Yearbook*, 2001-02, pp. 187-197.

⁷² KV 1912. June 9.

⁷³ KV 1911. Dec. 3. Issue 49. p. 2. (my translation)

Something similar had happened in 1884 when the new rabbi, Zsigmond Richter made an inauguration speech in German and for half a year he only had sermons in German.⁷⁴ An article was published in *Kőszeg és Vidéke* entitled “*Liberalizmus és Orthodoxizmus*” (Liberalism and Orthodoxy) criticizing this and also the fact that he taught the Jewish children also in German, rather than Hungarian. Not surprisingly, the local German newspaper, *Günser Anzeiger* defended the rabbi.⁷⁵ Two years later in 1886 *Kőszeg és Vidéke* welcomed that rabbi Richter made the sermon in Hungarian, however, they sadly noted that in the Lutheran Church sermons were made in German. Harsányi rightly underlines, that while the weekly vehemently attacked rabbi Richter for using only German, moreover made generalizations on Orthodoxy, in case of the Lutheran pastor the same did not happen.

In general, local Jews were prosperous and seemingly not only accepted, but also respected citizens of the city. According to the weekly they attended almost every ball or program of every association, the parties of the local kindergarten (that was established by the prominent Jews of the city, Fülöp Schey) even the balls of the Catholic Women’s Association.⁷⁶

There is a noteworthy issue that appeared in the weekly, the case of Jakab Lock, who was an Orthodox member of the Jewish community and a shop-keeper that represents locals’ covert antisemitism. The article in 1913 September 14 emphasizes Lock’s knowledge of the Talmud and admits that he was a good-natured person, but the authorities could not accept his behavior anymore, namely that he had strange guests from outside the city, since this was dangerous, as they claimed, due to the danger of cholera epidemic. The author of the article understands that Lock only wanted to help and support the poor but at the same time underlines that his ‘guests’ usually wear a caftan, a typical Jewish costume. Eventually Lock

⁷⁴ Harsányi, p. 129.

⁷⁵ Harsányi, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁶ KV 1913. July 20. Kohn, Kopfstein, Deutsch and Kamill Eisner also attended.

was punished for the crime of involvement in forbidden begging.⁷⁷ I am quite suspicious about this punishment. In a relatively large center like Kőszeg there must have been other ‘guests’ or beggars to whom local people helped as much as they could, nevertheless according to the weekly only Lock was punished because of that. The article claims that mostly because he had repeated this ‘crime’ the authorities had to do something, but then why was it important to emphasize the outfit of the people he helped? This example may suggest that some local people were afraid of these recognizably Orthodox Jews probably due to their age-old prejudice against Jews.

Surprisingly, between 1914 and 1918 Jews almost absolutely disappeared from the newspaper. Perhaps it was not a special phenomenon since in general local issues became less important for the newspaper than to report from the fronts and present the latest decisions of the governments.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the mostly Jewish refugees from Galicia in 1916 appeared in the newspaper. A few hundred people arrived in the Kőszeg District, exactly 100 to the city of Kőszeg in 1916 August. The city had to pay their cost of living one crown/person/day.⁷⁸ The article notes that formerly Italian refugees arrived in the city and their cost of living was 5000 crowns still not had been compensated for the city by the state. The city was afraid that the same would happen with the refugees of Galicia. A year after their arrival, in 1917 July the weekly supported the idea to send them home.⁷⁹ In October the same year a decision was made on the Galician-question, namely that they had to go home. The widespread stereotype against Galician Jews that they were dirty⁸⁰ appeared in the Kőszeg weekly as well. It reported on them very grossly: “they lived here in deep poverty, although not clean but trustworthily for one year [...] perhaps they take home a little western

⁷⁷ KV 1913. September 13. p. 3.

⁷⁸ KV. 1916. August 13. p. 2.

⁷⁹ KV. 1917. July 8.

⁸⁰ Bihari Péter, *Lövészárkok a hátszágban*, Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2008, p. 150.

culture.”⁸¹ Three weeks later the press still complained that the Galicians had not yet gone home.⁸² By 1918 the problem still not had been solved, hence in April the weekly noted that the Galician refugees had been in the city for two years.⁸³ Finally in 1918 May, 27 out of the 100 refugees went home, but the journal was still not satisfied and asked why only some of them had gone home, claiming that all of them should have left together as they had arrived.⁸⁴ Certainly, it is understandable that the cost of living of the refugees was an extra expense on the city in hard times. But the outrage seems exaggerated partly because the Italian refugees appeared fewer than Galicians, however, admittedly it was also difficult for the city. In addition, the proportion of the Galician refugees was only 1.18% of the city’s population. By comparison, at that time their percentage in Budapest was between 2.2% and 2.6%, and in Vienna between 3.5% and 4.0%.⁸⁵ Thus, the number of refugees in the city of Kőszeg was relatively low.

During the war years two notable and relevant anecdotes were presented in the weekly. The first one is a local story about the atrocities against Jews during the 1848 Revolution. As in almost every revolution, uprising or other actions in Hungary, anti-Jewish atrocities, pogroms emerged. That was the case during the Revolution in the spring of 1848. In Szombathely the mob attacked the synagogue, damaged everything they could and although nobody died, Jews were banned from the city. The government authorities had to come to normalize the situation in Szombathely.⁸⁶ The anti-Jewish wave arrived in Kőszeg on April 9th when the decree about equal rights of the newly organized revolutionary government that contained a paragraph about the Jews who should have been defended, was proclaimed. The members of the national army that had marched into the city just before and local people did

⁸¹ KV. 1917. October 7.

⁸² KV. 1917. October 28.

⁸³ KV. 1918. April 28.

⁸⁴ KV. 1918. May 26.

⁸⁵ Bihari, p. 152.

⁸⁶ Harsányi, p. 112.

not want to accept the proposal, moreover wanted to expel the Jews from the city as it had happened in Szombathely a few days before.⁸⁷ *Kőszeg és Vidéke* reported this story, according to Harsányi also in 1903, but interestingly in 1917 put the emphasis on the local infamous person, József Krötzl, who had a key role in the attacks on local Jews.⁸⁸ Since that time this man had the sobriquet “Judenkrötzl.”⁸⁹ What was the purpose of presenting this local story again? To prove that behavior like Krötzl’s is not accepted, or to show how Jews were attacked undeservedly in the past?

The aim of the other anecdote is even more questionable. The country was close to the end of the war in 1918 September when the legend was written about King George and Mr. Rothschild. When the king occupied Jerusalem he offered the kingdom of David to Rothschild as the Jews of Jerusalem asked him to do. But Rothschild refused the offer and said: “No, my majesty, I would rather be the Jew of kings than the king of the Jews.”⁹⁰ I find the evocation of this legend very ambiguous, since it can be interpreted as a philosemitic story, or on the contrary as oblique antisemitism. We can emphasize the loyalty of Rothschild to his king or interpret his decision as speculation since his contemporary position is even better than being a King of Israel, but most probably the latter was the purpose of the author as the article underlines how powerful was Rothschild, who could say no even to the king.

Meanwhile the press continuously reports on the local soldiers, including Jews which proves that they took their part in the war as much as Gentiles, hence the general accusation of antisemites during but more vehemently after World War I was that Jews of Hungary and the Monarchy in general were trying to and, in most cases, did successfully skip military service or manage to find the less dangerous places in the army. As Bishop Ottokár

⁸⁷ Harsányi, p. 113.

⁸⁸ KV. 1917. January 28.

⁸⁹ Harsányi p. 114. and KV. 1917. January 28.

⁹⁰ KV. 1918. September 1.

Prohászka claimed in 1918 “the closer we go to the fire the more numerous are the Christians and the further away we go the more are the Jews. The former dies, the latter saves his life.”⁹¹

How did the Jews of the Monarchy take part in World War I? The number of Jewish soldiers in the Austrian-Hungarian army was somewhere between 275,000 and 400,000, according to Erwin A. Schmidl, probably around 300,000, however it seems impossible to give the exact number due to the lack of proper documents at that time.⁹² It is easier to examine the officers’ numbers in the army. Schmidl argues that “more than 1000 Jewish officers were killed in action during this war.”⁹³ In addition, 6.78% of the officers killed in action were Jewish. Schmidl also underlines that “half of the Jewish career officers and 7.22% per cent of the Jewish reserve officers were awarded the Order of the Iron Crown 3rd class, or higher decoration.”⁹⁴ These data prove that the theory that Jews did not take their part in the war, or in the battlefields is simply not true.

Now we should briefly sum up how Kőszeg Jewry served in the army during the war. According to the album of Hungarian Jews who served in the war, from Kőszeg and its Hinterland 18 persons served in the army.⁹⁵ There is a discrepancy in the numbers and the names given in this list and the one in the *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon* (Hungarian Jewish Lexicon), and the Jewish soldiers who are noted in *Kőszeg és Vidéke*.⁹⁶ The lexicon reports about 31 (!) persons of the very small community of Kőszeg who served in the army during

⁹¹ Bihari quotes Prohászka, p. 152.

⁹² Erwin A. Schmidl, *Jews in the Habsburg Armed Forces*, Eisenstadt: Österreichisches Jüdisches Museum, 1989. p. 144.

⁹³ Schmidl, p. 145.

⁹⁴ Schmidl, p. 145.

⁹⁵ Hegedűs Márton (edited): *A Magyar hadviselt zsidók aranyalbuma: az 1914-1918-as világháború emlékére* (The Golden Album of the Magyar Veteran Jews: for the Memory of the 1914-1918 World War), (reprint) Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2013. p. 288. namely: Lipót Kopfstein, Ferenc Frankl, Gyula Fried, Jakab Imre Preisler, Hugó Kopfsetin, Jenő Schwarz, Lajos Kohn, Jenő Kürt, Dezső Lengyel, Adolf Schwarz, Mór Kopfstein, Ferenc Nussbaum, Artúr Deutsch, Ernő Kemény, Gyula Löwinger (Nagycsömöte), Jenő Pollák (Gyöngyösfalu), Mór Geiszler (Perenye), Ferenc Goldschmidt (Gyöngyösfalu).

⁹⁶ There are many people who appear in *Kőszeg és Vidéke* but not in the Album, and vice versa.

World War I.⁹⁷ In the fall of 1914 many of Kőszeg Jewry voluntarily applied for service in the Civil Guard.⁹⁸ As in general, Kőszeg Jewry as well wanted to prove that they were ready to defend the Monarchy as their equal citizens and at the same time as true Magyars. Lipót Kopfstein became a first lieutenant in 1915,⁹⁹ and later got the *Signum Laudis* in 1917.¹⁰⁰ Sergeant József Pál was wounded in the battlefield twice, first in 1916,¹⁰¹ second in 1917.¹⁰² Lajos Deutsch also became a lieutenant in 1918.¹⁰³ Dr. Miksa Dukesz became a captain, Ensign Manó Adler got a silver medal for his bravery on the Italian battlefield.¹⁰⁴

The participation of Kőszeg Jewry in the war is very important for our research since the local antisemitic leader, Albin Lingauer later will refer to his own experiences in the war in which, as he claims, Jews were trying to avoid their duties. As he states, that was the time coupled with his personal experience when he realized that the process of assimilation was unsuccessful as Jews were still not true Magyars, and this theory promoted his antisemitism. Most probably he was aware of the commitment of Kőszeg Jewry in the war, and ‘war experiences’ were only a useful tool to confirm his former antisemitism. As it appeared in one of the most popular national newspapers called *Az Est* (‘The Evening’) in 1915: “we only see the villain whether he has a ringlet on his temple or medals on his chest.”¹⁰⁵ From this article we can clearly understand that for antisemites whatever a Jew did, it was not respected. Although the Jews of Kőszeg devotedly served their homeland in the army, local antisemites such as Lingauer do not, or did not want to see this.

⁹⁷ Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, p. 506. (<http://mek.oszk.hu/04000/04093/html/0514.html>)

⁹⁸ According to KV. 1914 September 27. and 1914 October 4. Zsiga Kohn, Miksa Pollák, Gyula Deutsch, Artur Deutsch, Dr. Lajos Deutsch, Géza Popper, Rezső Bass, Miksa Frankl, Mór Kopfstein and Samu Hacker applied.

⁹⁹ KV. 1915. February 21.

¹⁰⁰ KV. 1917. January 14.

¹⁰¹ KV. 1916 October 1.

¹⁰² KV. 1917. August 5.

¹⁰³ KV. 1918. March 10.

¹⁰⁴ Harsányi, p. 168.

¹⁰⁵ Bihari, p. 188. (my translation)

Unfortunately but not surprisingly, many issues of *Kőszeg és Vidéke* of the years of 1918 and 1919 are lost.¹⁰⁶ The available issues still clearly show how much the narration of the journal changed by early 1919. In the short period of the Soviet Republic of Hungary, the communist propaganda had a huge effect on the press, hence *Kőszeg és Vidéke* functioned as a party journal. It was likely to exaggerate almost everything that happened in the country and in the city. For example, when the local communist leader, József Halász had a speech on the main square the weekly reported about five or six thousand people on the square.¹⁰⁷

From 1920 all of the issues are available. From the first issue of the year 1920 almost all of them are full of anti-Semitic statements, although the editor was the same. The death of a member of the Jewish community, Ignác Popper is presented in the newspaper, but now the readers are specifically informed that he was a Jew. It seems it became very important for the editors to emphasize this information, although probably it was quite a well-known fact anyhow as Popper was a prominent member of the community and the city. In addition, the tendency of blaming Jews for everything started. The weekly quotes the opinion of the *Kisgazdapárt* (Smallholders Party) that the Jewish press encouraged the 1914 war,¹⁰⁸ or the speech of Albin Lingauer in which he claimed that we should not work together with Jews, particularly in economy.¹⁰⁹ Briefly, the change of the narrative of the newspaper is clear from that time onwards.

The weekly constantly reports on every event of the local groups of MOVE (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet*)¹¹⁰ and ÉME (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete*),¹¹¹ these two strongly

¹⁰⁶ The missing issues are from the collection of the Hungarian National Library: in 1918 every issue between the 40th and 52nd, in 1919 1-8, 10, 12-13, 15-16, 18-20, 22-23, 26-28, 30-40 issues.

¹⁰⁷ KV. 1919. June 22.

¹⁰⁸ KV. 1920. January 18.

¹⁰⁹ KV. 1920. March 28.

¹¹⁰ Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete (Association of Awakening Hungarians) was a far-right movement established in 1919 January. "Awakening", because they realized the liberal Jewish overwhelming power during the period of dualism that they wanted to stop and react to it with national Christian rejuvenation. In Rudolf Paksa, *A magyar szélsőjobb története* (The History of Hungarian Far-Right), Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2012, p. 45. On the 30th of November 1919 they had their assembly in Budapest where a few days later they

antisemitic associations. We should notice that even the local clergy supported these groups. The director of the local Catholic Gymnasium, Remig Bárdos, the abbot of Pannonhalma from 1920¹¹² in November the same year became the honorary chairman of ÉME.¹¹³ The local antisemitic leader, Albin Lingauer who was a member of the *Keresztényszociális Néppárt* (Christian Socialist Party) and at the same time of the ÉME, but used to be a liberal-conservative journalist and politician,¹¹⁴ in early January made an antisemitic speech in the city. The number of his audience was again probably exaggerated as in the case of the communist leader Halász: probably it was not a coincidence that the weekly reported the very same number, between five and six thousand. The point is that Lingauer had a typical antisemitic speech: “They tricked us for 40 years and we did not realize that Hungary gradually had become Jewish, but not Magyar.”¹¹⁵ He went further and gave the advice to the legislation: “monitor the machination of Jews, exclude them from every field [...] They should not be attacked while they do not want to defeat our honest and serious work, but if they do, then we have to use stricter tools.”¹¹⁶

organized or re-organized the *Országos Antiszemita Párt* (National Antisemite Party) of which leader-, and membership were more or less the same as ÉME. (Paksa, p. 50.) This fact also proves the antisemitic attitude of the original association.

¹¹¹ *Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet* (Hungarian National Defence Association) was a far-right movement that was established in 1919 January. Its first president was Gyula Gömbös (1886-1936) who later became the prime minister of Hungary (1932-1936). In Paksa, p. 45.

Even in *Kőszeg és Vidéke* it was emphasized that only Christians could be members of the associations (KV. 1921. March 13.) that in practice meant non-Jews.

¹¹² Magyar Katolikus Lexikon (Hungarian Catholic Lexicon) available online at:

<http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/B/B%C3%A1rdos.html>

¹¹³ KV. 1920. November 7.

¹¹⁴ Even in the National Assembly Lingauer was attacked by the liberal politician Rezső Rupert because of his turnaround. Rupert emphasized that Lingauer was liberal, moreover, used to be a member of freemasons. (KV. 1920. November 21.)

Later, in 1922 a short paper was published in Budapest on Lingauer entitled *A sokarcú ember* (A Men with many faces) written by László Látó. The author quotes Lingauer's articles that he had written in the press *Vasvármegye* (Vas County) as a proof of his unreliability and duplicity. For example: “Church and home are phenomena with different origins.” (1910.) “I like Jews” (1918. November 20.) “The Jew has two faces, the one is the face of Szamuely who kills the Magyar, the other is Vázsonyi who takes the Magyar under the gallows-tree of Szamuely by sweet talk and smile.” (1919. September) The author argues that these statements were published in *Vasvármegye* word for word. (KV. 1922. May 4.)

¹¹⁵ KV. 1920. January 11. front page (my translation)

¹¹⁶ KV. 1920. January 11. front page (my translation)

During the year of 1920 the weekly is full of antisemitic statements, usually on the front page. The so-called Jewish-question was the key issue for the local far-right who at that time were able to write their articles in the paper. One of the teachers of the local Catholic Gymnasium, Márkus Tihanyi, member of the ÉME, was the leader of antisemitism in *Kőszeg és Vidéke*. In 1920 September he warmly welcomed the board leaders of ÉME who coming to the city. As he claimed: “They are very much needed, to avoid to disregarding the Jewish-question in the changeable waves of politics.”¹¹⁷

Although without any doubt “solving” the Jewish-question was one of the most important and urgent things to do according to the far-right associations, the weekly did not even note the so-called ‘*numerus clausus*’ law that limited the number of Jewish students in universities to 6%.¹¹⁸ In my understanding the local far-right was absolutely unsatisfied with that legislation. However, in 1922 August two articles were published on this question. The first one emphasized the importance of the Christian youth in universities; “book in one hand, weapon in the other, do not let red-Jews to be power again.”¹¹⁹ The other one was written by József Csapodi who emphasizes the advantages of the ‘*numerus clausus*’. As he claims “the *numerus clausus* is the bastion of the supremacy of the Magyar race [...] we should not and will not let those who are devotees of Marx and Engels dictate here, who would destroy the motherland.”¹²⁰ In this issue the “scandal” that the University of Szeged did not keep the ‘*numerus clausus*’ is also noted. We should not leave out of consideration that after István Bethlen had become the prime minister, things were relatively normalized compared to the chaotic years of revolutions. It did not happen by coincidence that in 1920

¹¹⁷ KV. 1920. September 5. front page (my translation)

¹¹⁸ In detail about ‘*numerus clausus*’ see the studies in *Research Reports on Central European History: 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), Budapest: Central European University, 2012; and Mária M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva: a numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1920-1945* (Penalized by Law: the ‘*Numerus Clausus*’ in Hungary, 1920-1945), Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 1992.

¹¹⁹ KV. 1922. August 6. front page

¹²⁰ KV. 1922. August 22. front page (my translation)

when far-right ÉME and MOVE were very powerful in the city and probably had a pressure on local press due to Albin Lingauer, Márkus Tihanyi and others, *Kőszeg és Vidéke* said nothing about the ‘*numerus clausus*’. I noted earlier that for these antisemites the ‘*numerus clausus*’ was definitely not enough, hence they did not even care to note it in the local press.

Still in 1921, Tihanyi emphasized the Jewish-question. In April, Tihanyi referred to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion¹²¹ with his article entitled *Hova lett a zsidókérdés?* (Where is the Jewish-question?):

Even for the stupidest Magyar it has become clear that the agony, humiliation and partition of his homeland is the sin of Jewry. The Jewish-question became the most important thing of our political life [...] Prohászka built the golden bridge between Pannonhalma and Sárospatak, but it was destroyed by Balthazar.¹²²

Only one week later, a very long article reviewed the Protocols. The unknown author refers to the British Museum that once had found the document valid.¹²³ In the next issue, Tihanyi continues his argument and blames the Jews again: “We have to admit that Jewry is master in where and when to put their spies, how to divide Christian denominations.”¹²⁴

I assume that, although it seems controversial, to emphasize the importance of ‘*numerus clausus*’ in 1922 could be the sign of the consolidation of the regime. While the strongly antisemitic politicians did not even note it and wanted to go much further in discrimination against Jews, in 1922 by reporting the importance of the law, and pointing out that it was one of the most important bastions of Christian self-defense, the author also argues that this is enough, and by that legislation the Jewish-question had been solved. Certainly, the

¹²¹ The Protocol of the Elders of Zion is an infamous forgery that presents the Jewish plans how to rule the world. It was first published in Russia 1903. Still nowadays it is one of the most important ‘document’ for antisemites to prove their ideology.

¹²² KV. 1921. April 10. Pannonhalma is a Roman Catholic, Sárospatak is a Calvinist center. The name Balthazar probably was a reference to Daniel in the Old-testament, who was given the name Balthazar. (Dan 1.7.)

¹²³ KV. 1921. April 17.

¹²⁴ KV. 1921. April 24.

weekly still underlines the connection between Jewry and the Communist terror, anti-Jewishness was unquestionably part of the official policy, but did not urge more radical steps against them. At the same time, it is also necessary to note that emphasizing the importance of ‘*numerus clausus*’ and calling it a “bastion of the supremacy of the Magyar race” proves that this law was not only about higher education. As Mária Kovács rightly argues, although it was about the limitation of Jews in higher education, it fundamentally questioned the equal rights of Hungarian Jewry.¹²⁵ Moreover, this example also confirms that from this law onwards all of the governments of interwar Hungary found it necessary to restrict the rights of Jews by legislation, even István Bethlen’s government.¹²⁶ Later the weekly reported about local Jews who graduated in Vienna, most probably due to the ‘*numerus clausus*’. Manó Adler graduated from the University of Vienna in 1925 as an architect,¹²⁷ while in 1928 Béla Krausz as a lawyer,¹²⁸ in 1930 Endre Havas as a doctor.¹²⁹

Within two months two prominent persons moved away from the city, both Jewish: in November 1921 the lawyer Miksa Dukesz moved to Győr,¹³⁰ in January 1922 Kamill Eisner the director of the biggest factory of Kőszeg moved to Vienna.¹³¹ As Harsányi emphasizes, growing antisemitism had an important role in these decisions. I do not doubt that in case of Eisner, who went to Vienna, partly that was his motivation. But I find it questionable whether the situation in Győr was better than in Kőszeg. If it had been the case, we should assume that antisemitism was particularly strong in Kőszeg compared to Győr. It would require further research to decide whether Győr was a friendlier environment for Jews at that time or not.

¹²⁵ Kovács M. Mária “A ‘*numerus clausus*’ és a zsidótörvények” In *A holokauszt Magyarországon európai perspektívában*, (edited by Judit Molnár), Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005, pp.128-139. p. 132.

¹²⁶ Kovács M. Mária, p. 129.

¹²⁷ KV. 1925. December 27.

¹²⁸ KV. 1928. November 18.

¹²⁹ KV. 1930. June 15.

¹³⁰ KV. 1921. November 6.

¹³¹ KV. 1922. January 1.

Naturally, in the period of liberal dualism Jews were not likely to become officials, but there were some cases when it happened, for example here in Kőszeg. Salamon Réti was a sergeant and also the leader of the local gendarme group until his death in 1914.¹³² In 1922 an advertisement appeared in the weekly that encouraged people to apply to the gendarme. To make things clear, the article emphasizes that a letter of baptism is necessary to apply.¹³³ It became officially clear for local Jews as well that in Hungary there were professions from which they were absolutely excluded, not yet by law, but in practice. Although the ‘Numerus Clausus’ was about higher education, other legislations were not necessary for exclusive practices against Jews.

Although from 1922 it seems that some kind of a consolidation started, as Lingauer and Tihanyi and their articles did not appear as much in the press as before, there were also less news items about ÉME or MOVE, still antisemitism was vivid in the weekly. In November 1922 an article recalls what happened four years before, and sums up the events as “the red-Jewish suppression.”¹³⁴ The weekly unquestionably links together Jews and communism, particularly in case of Hungarian communism.

In the following years almost nothing appeared on Jews or the ‘Jewish-question’, but the example of three guys who wanted to cross the border illegally in 1923 presents the atmosphere well. The article emphasizes that all of them were Jews from Budapest.¹³⁵ It seems the weekly still tried to use every opportunity to put Jews into a negative light. Additionally, in 1925 it presents the crime of a person who had to collect money for the Israelite Community of Pest but he stole 10 million crowns from it. The article was published with a title: “Even the tax of the community is scrounged.”¹³⁶ This gives the

¹³² Harsányi, p. 159.

¹³³ KV. 1922. March 3.

¹³⁴ KV. 1922. November 5.

¹³⁵ KV. 1923. December 30.

¹³⁶ KV. 1925. February 22. (“Még a hitközségi adót is elsikkasztják”)

impression that Jews did not hesitate to steal from each other, moreover that misappropriation is something typically Jewish.

In addition, a year later in 1926 the weekly reports on a Magyar person who in Czechoslovakia could not find a job, therefore went to Bratislava where he and some of his fellows were tricked by the intelligence office. They had been offered a job in France in a factory, but they had to work in a cave and later joined the French Foreign Legion from which that person could escape and eventually arrived in Sopron.¹³⁷ The whole story would not be relevant for our topic if the article did not underline that the intelligence officer was Jewish. It seems it was always important to emphasize that there was always a Jew behind these kinds of trickery.

Also in 1926 a very strange tale was published, a memoir of a student about one of his classmates, Tobias Singer who is described as having red hair, sunspots and eyeglasses. Tobias arrived in the city, we do not know which one, to study, but as he was very poor the narrator's family let him sleep and eat with them a couple of times a week. The narrator admits that he felt that Tobias was concealing something. Once he said that he wanted to visit Tobias's family, but Tobias immediately answered: "You cannot come to us!" Later Tobias says: "You are at home with your family, I am only a guest, a stranger." In my understanding this is a reference to the strangeness of Jews in Hungary. Later we arrive at the main problem of this short story that Tobias used have free dinners also with the Berger family where he had to eat with the servants. The narrator underlines: "See, at my family you have dinner with us, we see you as the same as us." This may suggest that he wants to show that his, the Christian family, is much friendlier to poor Jews like Tobias than his own brethren. Later in the story, the narrator had a nightmare: Tobias becomes a lawyer in the

¹³⁷ KV. 1926. February 21.

boulevard and when he visits him Tobias looks at him gloatingly.¹³⁸ In other words, Tobias, a Jew returns the narrator's help and kindness with negligence and gloat.

Although this is a very short story it is full of prejudices and generalizations. On the one hand, the story shows the helpfulness of the most probably Christian narrator, who looks at his Jewish classmate as equal, but on the other hand it presents how wealthy Jews, in this case Berger, behave with the poor and how later Tobias in the 'nightmare' behaves with the narrator. Additionally, the narrator's 'nightmare' depicts a typical Jewish career from a Gentile point of view. Even though it is not pronounced explicitly that Tobias was a Jew, I am quite sure that contemporary readers were able to recognize him as such a Jew. In my opinion, this story is a typical example of how to enhance not necessarily antisemitism, but at least stereotypes about Jews.

In general, we can note that *Kőszeg Jewry* appeared much less in *Kőszeg és Vidéke* in the second part of the 1920s as earlier. Very short notices were naturally written about them: who was engaged, who died, or who became the new rabbi, sometimes about their charity. At the same time in the news items the weekly tried to use the opportunities to put Jews into negative connotations and the paper also published the above story full of stereotypes about Jews.

In February 1928 a surprisingly friendly article was published on Jewry in general. The weekly presents the speech of Jusztiáni Serédi¹³⁹ who states that all Magyars have to be good devotees of their own denominations, Catholics, Protestants and also Jews. The article uses Jew as a denomination instead of Israelite, but still after a long time this was the first article that at least admits that even Jews could be as good Magyars as Christians. "A good Magyar is also a devotee of his religion. Hence the good Catholic, the good Protestant, the

¹³⁸ KV. 1926. April 11. (my translations)

¹³⁹ Jusztiáni Serédi (1884-1945) was the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church from 1927 until his death.

good Jew can be a good Magyar as well.”¹⁴⁰ Compared to the rudeness against Jews in the early 1920s this must be conceived as a positive change.

In the late 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s, it seems *Kőszeg és Vidéke* was much friendlier to Jews, particularly compared to the first half of the 1920s. The weekly uses ‘Israelite’ rather than ‘Jew’ or ‘Jewish’ when it reports about the Women’s Association or members of the Jewish community. In many cases the paper does not note the denomination as it did in the pre-war period. In 1930 July a short article that presents the origins of the names of local streets appreciates Fülöp Schey and his charity in the mid-19th century,¹⁴¹ in the same year an article was published about how beautiful Nussbaum’s new shop-window was.¹⁴² These are indeed very small things, but important in case of the representation of local Jewry in the main newspaper.

In the same year, the postponement of the local fair due to the request of the Jewish shopkeepers evokes anti-Jewish feelings since the fair was put to a Christian holiday. The article vehemently attacks this decision in which Christian artisans or shopkeepers were not included. However, in the decision-making committee there was a Christian majority, the article ignores this fact. The article claims that this is good neither for Jewish, nor for Christian shopkeepers, but the final conclusion is: “Hence the Jew could keep his holiday in peace, the Christian could not!”¹⁴³ The inequality between Jews and Christians appears again, and the article gives the impression as if the authorities preferred Jews over Christians, which was definitely not the case. Nevertheless, this issue was again a good opportunity to attack not only Jewish shopkeepers, but Jewry in general.

¹⁴⁰ KV. 1928. February 19. (the translation is mine)

¹⁴¹ KV. 1930. July 27.

¹⁴² KV. 1930. August 3.

¹⁴³ KV. 1930. May 25. (the translation is mine)

In 1931 and in the first half of 1932 basically nothing noteworthy appears in the weekly. It seems if there were no Jews in the city, however, probably no news items about them was better than an offending article. In April 1932 *Kőszeg és Vidéke* reviews the article of Gusztáv Thirring about the history of the city's population. The article deals with the Jewish population of the city and makes the conclusion: "It is clear that due to the decrease of local business and the stagnation of development their number decreased."¹⁴⁴ This conclusion also appears in József Szeremley's short monograph on the city and he adds that local Jewry "moved to places more profitable."¹⁴⁵ This is quite a misleading statement, since it assumes that Jews tended to leave the city when the economic situation worsened, albeit as I have noted in the previous chapter the Jewish population of the city reached its peak in 1910. On the one hand, there was a natural decrease among Jews, on the other hand the influence of the new border on their population is quite obvious. The case of Rezső Deutsch who had to close his shop in 1930 proves that Jews obviously did not leave the city due to bad economic circumstances.¹⁴⁶ In addition, indeed for Jewish shopkeepers who did not have any other chances than maintain their small shops, sometimes had to leave the city in which they could not have profit anymore. Jacob Katz in his autobiography clearly points out that this was the situation in his own family:

The only career open to a yeshiva student like my father was to take his wife's dowry and invest it in some business. He opened a store in Pápa [major city in the region] – in which my eldest brother was born in 1900 – only to pay dearly for this lesson in finance, for about a year later he had to liquidate his business. For lack of any other choice, he sought out a neighboring village in which he might open a general store with not much capital, depending on the willingness of the city wholesalers to extend credit.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ KV. April 3.

¹⁴⁵ Szeremley József, *Kőszeg, a nyugati végvár* (Kőszeg, the Western Castle) Debrecen, 1942. p. 39. (the translation is mine)

¹⁴⁶ KV. 1930. April 27.

¹⁴⁷ Jacob Katz, *With my Own Eyes*, Hannover and London: Brandeis University Press, published by University Press of New England, 1995. p. 16.

Still, a very strong stereotype against Jews that they were only interested in money is palpable through this review of the weekly. The article gives the impression that Jews of Kőszeg are loyal to the city as long as beneficial for them.

From 1933 there was a popular, almost mandatory movement to magyarize names which the city of Kőszeg also joined, even the mayor Miklós Nagy initiated name-magyarization in October 1933.¹⁴⁸ In the same month an article was published in the weekly entitled: “Magyar Man Must Have Magyar Name!” (*Magyar ember magyar nevet viseljen!*). The article bitterly lists the German nameplates in the city, but surprisingly enough only ethnic Germans not Jews whose majority also had German surnames.¹⁴⁹ My assumption is that the article did not note Jews since it was not expected to magyarize their names, since by that time the strongly nationalistic people behind the movement did not consider Jews as Magyars, whether they magyarized their names or not. Not surprisingly, local Jews did not take part in the movement, but I will examine the issue of name-magyarization among Jews in more detail in the next chapter.

At the same time, we still can have the assumption that at least a group of local people accepted and respected local Jews. For instance the association of those who were in the battlefield in World War I (*Frontharcosok Szövetsége*) in 1934 invited the lawyer Lipót Kopfstein to their meeting to make a speech about their rights. The association in the article calls him comrade Kopfstein.¹⁵⁰

Surprisingly, the year 1935 of the weekly is also not anti-Jewish. It reports on the trial of Mihály Rákosi and notes Béla Kun, but does not underline their Jewish origins. In the same year at the birthday of Governor Horthy the weekly notes that all of the four denominations had sermons for this occasion. Harsányi emphasizes that in this year when poor children

¹⁴⁸ KV. 1933. October 8.

¹⁴⁹ KV. 1933. October 15. (the translation is mine)

¹⁵⁰ KV. 1934. February 4.

came to the city from Vienna, Jews were not allowed to take part in supporting this action.¹⁵¹ Indeed, local Jews are missing from the list of the donors,¹⁵² but this does not necessarily mean that they were excluded from this charity. I suppose Harsányi overemphasizes this case. At the same time, this example shows how much the Jewish community was closed into its own circles, thus they did not deal with these kinds of local happenings anymore.

From 1936 Imre Németh was the deputy of the city in Parliament, however he did not live in the city, but in the capital. Still, the weekly presents his speeches and writings full of antisemitic statements. He admits that violence against Jews could not solve the Jewish-question, but he claims that after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic the antisemitic atmosphere was understandable and reasonable, albeit he admits that sometimes it was only a good opportunity for villains to steal money from Jews.¹⁵³ Németh also claims that still 70 to 80% of the economy is in the hands of Jews, which is a strong antisemitic stereotype and certainly a huge exaggeration. In December the same year his article was published on the front page about antisemitism. He admits the competence and professionalism of Jews in business and condemns the laziness and incompetency of the gentry, but still claims that “Jews do not feel community with Magyars, they did not integrate into the Magyar nation”, in other words, are still strangers.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, a few months later he claims that antisemitism was very vivid all around the country, even in the countryside where agitators had not come. In his interpretation, there are three reasons for growing antisemitism: far-right agitation, the need for reforms, and the current situation and behavior of Hungarian Jewry. As he claims “Jewry attacked with sadistic anger in every forum the helpless Christian-Magyar’s attempts in the economic

¹⁵¹ Harsányi, p. 193.

¹⁵² KV. 1935. August 11. and 18.

¹⁵³ KV. 1936. April 26.

¹⁵⁴ KV. 1936. December 13. (The translation is mine)

fields.” His conclusion is that Jewry as a community should make sacrifices, but as he says, it was not possible due to the experienced behavior of Jews.¹⁵⁵ Here we have a typical antisemitic perception. For our investigation this is very important, because as we have seen, although the deputy of the city lived in Budapest, his ideas also appeared in the *Kőszeg* press. The local rabbi, Izsák Linkszt immediately wrote a letter to Németh, and *Kőszeg és Vidéke* published it “without any comment.”¹⁵⁶ The rabbi refers to the Bible and notes a story from the Old-Testament to argue that we should not be hostile against strangers since we are all children of the Almighty. He also refers to the policies of Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Deák and József Eötvös who promoted the emancipation of Hungarian Jewry.¹⁵⁷ Neither Németh, nor anyone else answered to the old rabbi, which was most probably a very telling sign for him and local Jews as well. This example proved to them that there was no place for the Jewish point of view or any kind of argument in these questions at all.

In 1937 a local Jewish photographer, Izrael Axer died. The obituary emphasizes that he was the only one among local Jews who took part in the counter-revolution, and notes the story that he spat on Halász, the local communist leader on the street. At the same time, the article also underlines that it does not mean that local Jewry was against the counter-revolution.¹⁵⁸ This story is ambiguous. On the hand, it emphasizes that local Jewry was not active in the counter-revolution as a whole, but on the other hand, at least gives an example of a “good Jew” from a rightist point of view, and also underlines that the reader should not suppose that Jews all were against the counter-revolution.

¹⁵⁵ KV. 1937. March 28.

¹⁵⁶ KV. 1937. April 4.

¹⁵⁷ KV. 1937. April 4.

¹⁵⁸ KV. 1937. March 21.

Surprisingly enough, the weekly did not report on the first so-called Jewish-law¹⁵⁹ that maximized the number of Jews in the economic sphere, in intellectual professions and in free professions to 20%.¹⁶⁰ But, it is a vitally important change from the issue of May 22nd 1938, the weekly had a subhead “Christian, National, Political Weekly” (*Keresztény, Nemzeti, Politikai Hetilap*).¹⁶¹ The fact that the paper emphasized that it was a Christian weekly (not Jewish) tells us a lot about its conception.

In the same issue, the paper reports on what happens on the other side of the border, namely that the Jews of Burgenland were deported to Vienna, while the younger ones emigrated to South-America, Mexico and Palestine. The article does not describe the brutality of this action, however underlines that they had to leave behind their properties and emphasizes what kind of banners were displayed at the entrance to the towns in Burgenland: “Jews can only come into the town at their own responsibility.”¹⁶² This definitely made clear for the society of the city and for local Jewry what was happening a few miles from their home.

At the same time, the local far-right was becoming more and more powerful in the city. In June 1938, the Hungarist Movement (*Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Párt Hungarista Mozgalom*) had its statutory meeting.¹⁶³ At the beginning of July they published their program and ideas in the weekly. They stated that the Jewish-question should be solved not to 20, but by to a 100 percent and they claimed that half a million Galician Jews had immigrated to Hungary, while one and a half million Magyars emigrated to America.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ The law of 1938/XV accepted by Parliament on May 29th 1938.

¹⁶⁰ Nathaniel Katzburg, *Zsidópolitika Magyarországon 1919-1943* (Jewish-policy in Hungary 1919-1943), Budapest: Babel Kiadó, 2002. p. 94.

¹⁶¹ KV. 1938. May 22.

¹⁶² KV. 1938. May 22. (The translation is mine)

¹⁶³ KV. 1938. June 26.

¹⁶⁴ KV. 1938. July 3.

However, it was clearly proved even by the antisemitic statistician, Alajos Kovács that the mass immigration from Galicia was only a legend.¹⁶⁵

The change of the atmosphere is palpable in the city. In October 1938 a new photographer bought the shop that used to be Izrael Axer's and in his business introduction, he emphasized: "I am a young, Christian man."¹⁶⁶ Moreover, to put Jews into a negative light as they did in the 1920s, the weekly reports a series of thefts from temples in which the perpetrator was a Christian guy from Kőszeg, but put the emphasis on Samu Fűrberg, who had an antique shop in Szombathely. The paper states that he was behind these crimes as he encouraged that guy to get antique church items for his shop.¹⁶⁷ Although I cannot prove or confute the role of Samu Fűrberg in these deeds, this story with the emphasis on the Jewish businessman who pushed the Christian into sin nicely fits into the age-old antisemitic ideology.

Kőszeg és Vidéke only had eight issues in the year 1939, after that it came to an end. Still, the last article I note clearly shows the tendency of vehemently growing antisemitism also at the local level. In January the local National-Socialistic Party signed every shop with a notice: "Magyar Christian Shop" (*Magyar Keresztény Üzlet*). Moreover the party warns people in the article to do their shopping there, otherwise the party will send them a notice.¹⁶⁸ From that time Jewish shopkeepers and Jews altogether were excluded from the local society and at the same time, the local far-right party started to threaten Christian citizens as well demanding that they keep their commands.

Through the analysis of *Kőszeg és Vidéke* between 1909 and 1938 we have seen on the one hand, the gradual exclusion of Jews from public life and on the other hand the waves of

¹⁶⁵ See Varga László, "Zsidó bevándorlás Magyarországon" (Jewish Immigration in Hungary) In *Zsidóság a dualizmus kori Magyarországon* (Jewry in the Dualist Hungary) (edited by László Varga) Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2005. pp. 11-30.

¹⁶⁶ KV. 1938. October 23. (the translation is mine)

¹⁶⁷ KV. 1938. July 17.

¹⁶⁸ KV. 1939. January 15.

antisemitism in the weekly. Interestingly enough, we cannot say that there is a constantly growing antisemitism in the paper, but rather different periods. There were strongly anti-Jewish eras like the early 1920s and obviously the late 1930s, and relatively friendly ones like the early 1930s. At the same time, we can clearly distinguish the pre-war years from the interwar period, even though the editors were mostly the same persons.¹⁶⁹ Despite the relatively friendly periods against local Jews, anti-Jewishness was permanently palpable from the beginning of 1920 until the weekly came to an end in 1938.

¹⁶⁹ From 12. March 1911: Frigyes Rónai, from 21. September 1913: Lajos Jambrits, from 5. April 1914: Frigyes Rónai, from 12. June 1921: Endre Fuchs, from 1. January 1922: Frigyes Rónai Jr., and Béla Pandúr, from 6. May 1923: Frigyes Rónai, from 5. April 1931: Ferenc Szabadváry, from 28. October 1934: Frigyes Rónai. (<http://www.koszeg-konyvtar.hu/digitalizalas-chnel-kalman-varosi-konyvtarban>)

3. Emancipation and assimilation of Kőszeg Jewry and local antisemitism

In this chapter, I will examine the questions of emancipation and assimilation of Kőszeg Jewry and, at the same time, the variations of local antisemitism and its origins. For this purpose, I use what I have found in Kőszeg in my primary and secondary sources, and the general theories and arguments on the question of emancipation, assimilation and antisemitism, as well as the connection between these phenomena locally and in general.

The process of emancipation of Jewry in Europe is a fairly well-known story. Without going into detail, I present some special characteristics of the Hungarian case. First of all, we should bear in mind that before their 1867 emancipation, the Jews of Hungary were under the protection of nobles. For example, the famous ‘Seven Communities’ (now Burgenland, Austria) next to Kőszeg were under the protection of the Esterházy family. A symbiotic relationship emerged between nobles and magnates. From the early 18th century, Hungarian nobles in the age of national awakening had to realize that the Magyar nation was in minority in the Kingdom of Hungary, although they wanted to be the dominant nation. Some of the liberal noble politicians like Bertalan Szemere or József Eötvös found that Jews were likely to become Magyars. Naturally, during the 1840s there was a huge debate on the question, whether Jews should be emancipated. There were prominent persons on both sides. While Szemere, Eötvös or Aurél Dessewffy promoted the idea, Count István Széchenyi was strongly against it. Dessewffy as early as 1840 argued that Jews had tended to assimilate according to his experiences:

I do not share the fear that the emancipation of the Jews will threaten the interests of our nation, because I have found that isolated peoples assimilate especially easily into the nation in whose midst they live. I know Alföld [the Great Hungarian Plain] Jews who have already become perfect Magyars from a language point of view.¹⁷⁰

Count Széchenyi was of the opinion that Jews cannot be assimilated. He thought, as Jacob Katz summarizes, that Jews were “too deeply imbued by the German spirit, the main obstacle of the Hungarian renaissance. They could not be assimilated into the Hungarian nation, which was, owing to its Asian origin, of a unique oriental character.”¹⁷¹ The revolutionary government in 1849 proclaimed the equal rights of Jews, however, due to the fall of the War of Independence the legislation was not ratified. Finally, in 1867 not long after the Compromise with Austria, the edict of emancipation was proclaimed in which Baron Eötvös had an important role. The process of Jewish assimilation, that had already been started, happened very quickly and apparently successfully.

Viktor Karády calls this period relevantly the “social contract of assimilation” (*asszimilációs társadalmi szerződés*) between liberal nobility and Jewish bourgeoisie.¹⁷² This meant that the liberal nobility promoted Jewry in modernizing the country and, at the same time through their monopolized political power the nobility guaranteed equal rights for Jews and protected these rights from the attacks of antisemites. Additionally, Jews had to be loyal to the liberal state and the Magyar nobility, which meant they had to assimilate to the Magyar nation and through this process increase the proportion of Magyars in the country.¹⁷³ This was an absolutely win-win contract, as the two groups needed each other. As András Kovács rightly points out, for emancipation assimilation was a necessary

¹⁷⁰ Lupovitch, Howard N., *Jews at the Crossroads: Tradition and Accommodation during the Golden Age of the Hungarian Nobility*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006. p. 200.

¹⁷¹ Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction – Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 234.

¹⁷² András Kovács “Az asszimilációs dilemma” (The Dilemma of Assimilation) In *Világosság* 1988/8-9. Budapest, pp. 605-612. p. 606. or Karády Viktor, *Zsidóság, polgárosodás, asszimiláció – Tanulmányok*. (Jewry, Embourgeoisement, Assimilation - Studies) Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1997. p. 120.

¹⁷³ András Kovács, p. 606.

requirement. Bearing in mind that we should not overgeneralize the different groups of Jews in the Hungarian Kingdom, we can argue that Hungarian Jewry fulfilled the requirements of the Magyar nobility.

3.1. Assimilation Tendencies among Kőszeg Jewry

Our question is how far Kőszeg Jewry went in this process in the special environment in which German was the dominant nationality rather than Magyar, however, the same requirement existed for the ethnic Germans of Hungary. We have already examined how Hungarian became the dominant language in Kőszeg, albeit until the 1880s German had been the dominant language of the city. As we have seen in the first chapter, Kőszeg Jewry was the most Hungarian language community in the city.¹⁷⁴ In 1884 when a new rabbi was needed in the city, the community required someone who spoke both German and Hungarian.¹⁷⁵ Finally, as a last step in the magyarization direction the Jewish Community changed the language of their Protocols from German to Hungarian in 1897.¹⁷⁶

The importance of language is clearly seen in a local issue. In 1893 there was a military exercise. For this occasion Emperor Franz Joseph, Emperor William II, many ministers and other prominent persons came to Kőszeg.¹⁷⁷ When Franz Joseph had an audience also rabbis came to greet him. After that, Franz Joseph, as the king welcomed the guests, including the Hungarian rabbis in Hungarian. The rabbi of Eisenstadt, Salamon Kuttna had to admit that he could not speak Hungarian, hence answered in German to the Emperor. The national weekly of the Jewish Community, called *Egyenlőség* (Equality) strongly criticized the rabbi:

¹⁷⁴ MVSÉ, Statisztikák (Statistics) p. 88. and p. 100.

¹⁷⁵ Harsányi, p. 129.

¹⁷⁶ *A kőszegi Congr. izraelita hitközség jegyzőkönyve* (1894. szeptember 11. – 1901. november 17.) (The Protocol of the Neolog Israelite Community of Kőszeg) In Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archive)

¹⁷⁷ Harsányi, p. 137.

“whoever cannot speak Hungarian should go home and learn it, but should not go before the king and put, if not the whole Jewry, but Orthodoxy to shame.” The weekly also notes that after the king realized that rabbi Kuttna could not speak Hungarian, he asked in German: “Orthodoxen?” The paper emphasizes how awkward it was that the king immediately had the idea to connect the lack of Hungarian with Orthodoxy.¹⁷⁸

Here we should emphasize that changing the language to Hungarian was only one step in the process of assimilation and the attempt to become accepted. Jews also had to leave behind Orthodoxy and every sign of it.¹⁷⁹ Although, as Harsányi states, in the 1880s Orthodoxy was dominant among Kőszeg Jewry,¹⁸⁰ their synagogue built in 1859 was made in a reform style as the bema (almemar) was put next to the Ark of the Covenant, not in the center. By the turn of the 20th century the Kőszeg Community mostly became part of the reform movement, however there were families which remained Orthodox, for instance the Rosenstingl family,¹⁸¹ and Jakab Lock, who did not even enter the synagogue since it was built in a reform style.¹⁸² Unable to find ten men to have the *minjan* for a sermon that he held at his own home, Lock invited the poor Jews of nearby villages.¹⁸³ This shows us how Orthodoxy that used to be dominant in the 1880s decreased to a few persons by the end of the 19th century.

But, as András Kovács underlines, this was still not enough to become accepted by the majority society. As he argues, Jews had to make the “impossible step,” namely to “acquire the Magyar national character.”¹⁸⁴ I do not intend to analyze what is, or more importantly,

¹⁷⁸ *Egyenlőség*, 1893. September 29. available online at <http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/> (the translation is mine)

¹⁷⁹ András Kovács, p. 608.

¹⁸⁰ Harsányi, p. 129.

¹⁸¹ Still in 1929 the family was strictly Orthodox according to their advertisement published in *Egyenlőség*: “a strictly Orthodox mistress will get a job in a strictly Orthodox family.” (*Egyenlőség* 1929. May 11. my translation) available online at: <http://www.jpress.nli.org.il/>

¹⁸² Harsányi, p. 159.

¹⁸³ Harsányi, pp. 159-160. Most probably that was the origin of his punishment for “supporting illegal begging” in 1913 (presented in Chapter 2).

¹⁸⁴ András Kovács, p. 608. (my translation)

what was at the turn of the 20th century the Magyar national character. Nor will I analyze if it had been possible for Jews to acquire it or not, but examine what Kőszeg Jewry had done to fulfill these requirements as a community and in some cases personally.

First of all, we should emphasize here that neither the Jewry of Hungary, nor the Jewish community of Kőszeg made decisions together as a community in these questions. We should bear in mind that these were personal choices, although, indeed the pressure on Jews to assimilate was quite strong. Although the Orthodoxy was mostly played down, and Hungarian was more likely in use than German, there were still members of the community who maintained Orthodoxy and German as well. As Harsányi rightly states: “Certainly, the Jewish Community of Kőszeg was not homogeneous. There were the rich and the poor. One who used to duel, hunt and had a membership in the Casino, and another with a long beard, a Talmudist.”¹⁸⁵ But, we should not forget that in Kőszeg there was only one Community of Jews, hence although the families that were Orthodox like Rosenstingl or Lock, took part in community life as well. These Jews, who had different lifestyles and ideas, were on different levels of assimilation, paid taxes, attended the meetings and undertook positions in the same community.¹⁸⁶ Certainly, in most cases members of different wings of Judaism split from each other, we should not forget to emphasize this fact and its importance,¹⁸⁷ but

¹⁸⁵ Harsányi, p. 160. (my translation)

¹⁸⁶ *A kőszegi Congr. izraelita hitközség jegyzőkönyve* (1894. szeptember 11. – 1901. november 17.) (The Protocol of the Neolog Israelite Community of Kőszeg) In Magyar Zsidó Levéltár (Hungarian Jewish Archive)

¹⁸⁷ Gyáni Gábor, *Nép, nemzet, zsidó* (People, Nation, Jew), Pozsony: Kalligram Kiadó, 2013. pp. 220-224.

Importantly enough it also influenced their relations in business, as the rabbi of Nagyvárád (Oradea) Ávrahám Méir Munk remembers in his memoir:

“In the autumn of 1868 I was afraid of losing all of my businesses with the city’s great and prestigious merchants because of the new enmity that had caused huge upset among the Jews who believed in the Almighty and the Torah [...] That was the time of the congress. [...] Day by day when they went to the club of the merchants or to the cafe to trade it always ended in a quarrel. Almost all of the great merchants were on the side of the reformers, while I have always been living in my faith and insisted on my class, on orthodoxy with my whole spirit and capacity. And they all knew my tenets that I never concealed and almost all of them have left me. [...] all of the reformers became enemies and they left the club of the merchants and went to other trading associations, hence my businesses fell off day by day, because the great merchants did not come to the same club with the smaller merchants. [...] From that time my businesses in produce and schnapps decreased, it was not a quarter of what it had been before when all of the merchants had met at the same place.” (In Fenyves Katalin: *Képzelt asszimiláció? – Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe* (Imagined Assimilation? –

in case of very small communities like Kőszeg Jewry strict division was not possible, and apparently was not the case, however most probably they had arguments in religious questions.

Local Orthodox Jews also took part in the city's life, for instance Jakab Rosenstingl, who for many years was a member of the City Council as he had a good position on the virilist list.¹⁸⁸ This is relevant for our investigation, since reform Jews and Orthodoxies did not divid, but both wings appeared in the city's life.

Beside these Orthodox Jews of the city, we should also see the other side. One of the prominent persons of the Kőszeg Jewry, namely Rezső Bass is very important for our research as a great example of over-assimilation. As Viktor Karády argues, Jews used “compensational strategies” due to their exclusion from many fields of society. One part of this was the “over-accomplishment of the demands of assimilation.”¹⁸⁹ Rezső Bass, who was born in Sárvár and in 1904 won a position as a vet in Kőszeg became one of the most interesting persons of the city. In Chapter II we have already noted his dueling in 1909 as typical gentlemanly behavior. In addition, he used to hunt,¹⁹⁰ which was a typical countryside gentry pastime and definitely unusual among Jews. As Harsányi describes him, he was a vivid, funny personality who made many jokes with other citizens.¹⁹¹

The two other steps of assimilation were name-magyarization and possibly baptism as the very final step. I did not find any example of baptism among Kőszeg Jewry, thus it seems this was not an option for them.¹⁹² Name-magyarization is more interesting in their case. Before World War I, I found some examples of local Jews who magyarized their name that

The Self-image of Four Jewish Intellectual Generations) Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2010. pp. 163-164. my translation)

¹⁸⁸ Harsányi, p. 149. Virilism meant that the biggest taxpayers of a given city or town had more rights than others, for instance had a place automatically in the city council.

¹⁸⁹ Karády, 1997, p. 123.

¹⁹⁰ *Kőszeg és Vidéke* 1911. August 6. He is on the list of who bought hunter-ticket.

¹⁹¹ Harsányi, pp. 150-151.

¹⁹² Further research would be necessary in the documents of the local Christian denominations.

mostly appeared in the local press and posteriorly in birth certificates.¹⁹³ Karády rightly emphasizes that name-magyarization was not as effective in case of Jews, as in case of Christian minorities in Hungary such as Germans, Slovaks or Serbs. A Jew still remained a Jew for the Christians.¹⁹⁴

Interestingly enough, in the interwar period, between 1918 and 1939, I did not find any case of name-magyarization among Kőszeg Jews. We should not forget that in this period it was much harder to get permission for name magyarization from the Ministry for Home Affairs than before.¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know whether some of the Jews deported from Kőszeg did attempt to get the permission, or not. But, if we have a look at the list of the deported Jews of Kőszeg in 1944 and the list of men in forced labor,¹⁹⁶ we can see that only a few magyarized their names: according to my calculation, only two out of 28 families magyarized. If we count them not as families, but as individuals, we can find that only two out of the 91 Jewish persons lived with Magyar surnames in Kőszeg in the early 1940s. Viktor Karády and István Kozma were led to the conclusion that among assimilating Jewry every 12th person magyarized his or her name.¹⁹⁷ Although we cannot count the number of assimilating Kőszeg Jewry, it is quite evident that they did not tend to magyarize their names. Most probably in an environment in which German used to be the dominant language and still in the interwar period a considerable minority, a German surname did not sound as alien as in other Magyar dominant towns.

It is not possible to investigate every personal decision among Kőszeg Jewry in the complicated process of assimilation. Even in such a small community we have seen the two

¹⁹³ In 1903 Izidor Kohn to Kemény (Certificates), in 1913 Sándor Weisz magyarized to Szász (Certificates), in 1913 Jenő, Artúr and Jolán Deutsch to Darvas, (KV 1913. September. 7.) in 1914 Sándor, József and Erzsébet Pollák to Pál (KV 1914. October 4.), in 1914 Lipót Kohn to Kürti (Certificates).

¹⁹⁴ Karády, 1997, p. 125.

¹⁹⁵ Karády, 1997, p. 126.

¹⁹⁶ Harsányi, pp. 205-206 and 209-210, or Löwinger, pp. 166-167.

¹⁹⁷ Karády Viktor – Kozma István, *Név és nemzet* (Name and nation), Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2002. p. 53. The authors emphasize that this is only a theoretical number.

very different answers to the assimilation offer. Jakab Lock stayed strictly Orthodox, while Rezső Bass overfulfilled the requirements of assimilation. At the same time, the Jewish Community of Kőszeg left behind Orthodoxy and became a reform community, and also gradually Hungarian language became dominant, rather than German, moreover as we have seen in Chapter I the Israelite Community became the most “Magyar-speaking” denomination of Kőszeg by the turn of the 20th century.

3.2. Antisemitism in Kőszeg

Now we should investigate how local antisemitism emerged in Kőszeg and changed from the beginning of the 20th century to the end of the 1930s. Admittedly, we should differentiate political antisemitism before and after World War I,¹⁹⁸ but it seems that we should not underestimate the connection between them, nor the connection between pre-war and the interwar antisemitism one that eventually led to the mass destruction of Hungarian Jewry. Shulamit Volkov separates the two by saying that “the murderous acts of the Nazis were of a different category and sprang from different sources.”¹⁹⁹ The fact that many members of the Arrow-Cross Party looked up to Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, who had very strong antisemitic statements even before the turn of the 20th century, as their spiritual leader,²⁰⁰ clearly proves the connection between 19th century the interwar antisemitism. The example of the Catholic priest of Kőszeg, István Kincs who made his antisemitic speech in 1903 at the assembly of the county also proves that connection. He claimed the following accusations against Jews: Magyars drink that much schnapps due to the Jewish tavern-

¹⁹⁸ Gyáni, pp. 228-231. and Shulamit Volkov, “The Written Matter and the Spoken Word – On the Gap Between Pre-1914 and Nazi Anti-Semitism” In *Unanswered Questions: The Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (edited by Francois Furet) New York: Schocken Books, 1989. pp. 33-53.

¹⁹⁹ Volkov, p. 52.

²⁰⁰ Krisztián Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege*, (The Bottom Line of the Horthy-system) Budapest: Jelenkor, 2012. p. 241.

keepers, Jews are behind socialism, pay less tax than Christians, do not take their part in the army, they are loyal to the king until it is profitable for them.²⁰¹ Through this example this is also clear that the vivid accusations against Jews after World War I had existed before. The experiences of the war, the revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic only served as a proof for the formerly existed prejudices.

Now I will collect the four forms of antisemitism, or anti-Jewishness that I have found in Kőszeg: clerical anti-Judaism, opportunistic antisemitism, anti-liberal antisemitism and racist antisemitism. István Kincs, the noted local priest still in the interwar period had an important role in the city's political life, he was a respected and prominent figure, the local example of clerical anti-Judaism.

Albin Lingauer was most probably not the only person who drastically changed his political ideology right after World War I. Lingauer used to be a liberal journalist but after the war became a strong antisemite. He claimed that he had been affected by his experiences in World War I as Jews did not take their part in the battlefield, hence his antisemitism gradually developed. In my opinion, he only realized the opportunity that antisemitic statements were particularly popular and useful for a political career in the interwar atmosphere, therefore successfully used it for his own purposes. Thus, I would call this mentality opportunistic antisemitism.

As a reaction to the Trianon Treaty, the depression of the society, the generally bad economic circumstances of the country and the pauperization of society, many politicians thought that all this happened because of the mistaken politics of liberal governments of the pre-war era. They wanted political reforms and strongly criticized liberalism and capitalism, and connected them to Jewry and also to nobility, mostly aristocrats. They thought that emancipating Hungarian Jews and their assimilation only led the country's ruin as they

²⁰¹ KV. 1903. October 18.

exploited Christian Magyars. Imre Németh, who was the representative of Kőszeg in Parliament from 1936, as we have seen, had this kind of ideology. According to his speeches and writings, he does not appear a racist antisemite on the whole, but vehemently attacked Jews altogether for their “economic conquest.” Since he wanted to solve the problem of pauperization of the “historical” middle-class and the poverty in general, although he clearly saw that demagogues connected these problems with Jews, he more or less also accepted this ideology as a solution. That is why I would call this political antisemitism anti-liberal antisemitism.

Certainly, the already noted three types of antisemites wanted to de-emancipate Hungarian Jewry, and narrow their rights, but they did not think about destroying them. But, far-right people and their organizations that appeared from the turn of the 1920s did. These groups like ÉME, as we have seen, attacked Jewry altogether, whenever they had the opportunity and wanted to exclude them from society. They referred to the Protocols of Elders of Zion, accepted accusations like the blood libel, hence in my understanding they were literally racist antisemites.

It seems these types of anti-Jewishness stemmed from different sources. But in most cases these forms of antisemitism were mixed, moreover, in my understanding built on a common source and enhanced each other. Religious anti-Judaism perhaps was not the fundament of political antisemitism *per se*, but had a very important role in supporting it. At local level and everyday relations, the origins of different types of antisemitism are not the key questions. Most probably ordinary people did not think about religious anti-Judaism and political antisemitism. We can imagine how influential it was for the Catholic majority of Kőszeg that the respected priest, István Kincs had been talking against Jews. Certainly, this created a good basis for accepting the local opportunistic antisemite, Albin Lingauer’s and Márkus Tihanyi’s ideology and the general anti-Jewish atmosphere of the interwar.

In line with Miklós Szabó, Gábor Gyáni states that while in the prewar years antisemitism mostly attacked Jews who did not assimilate enough to Magyars, in the interwar period the target of antisemites became the assimilated and acculturated Jewry.²⁰² My research supports this view, but I would emphasize that in many cases not only antisemitic persons were the same in pre-war and post-war periods, but their victims also were the same persons in these two periods. We should cite the example of Jakab Lock again. As it has been shown in Chapter II, he was punished in 1913 for inviting and helping poor Jews who wore caftans, but in the interwar years he could have been attacked simply as a Jewish shopkeeper who, according to the speech and ideology of Imre Németh, did not give a chance to Christian-Magyars in business. I argue that these manifestations were only different justifications of the same mentality.

We have seen how far-right like ÉME attacked local Jews in Kőszeg, but we do not know how the everyday relationship changed between Jews and non-Jews. However, the fact that Jewish members of the City Council did not attend the meetings that they used to²⁰³ gives the impression that they felt they were not welcome.

The other interesting characteristic of local antisemitism that although the Judeo-Bolshevik myth was vivid in the city, in case of local Jews who took part in the revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, at least the local weekly did not emphasize their Jewish background, not even the noted contemporary counter-revolutioner's memoir.²⁰⁴ That was typical of the whole examined period of *Kőszeg és Vidéke*. It seems the Judeo-Bolshevik myth as a strong supporter of interwar anti-Jewishness was not experienced. It was learned from somewhere else, most probably from the antisemitic press of Budapest.

²⁰² Gyáni, p. 216.

²⁰³ Harsányi, p. 180. eight of nine Jewish members did not attend any meetings in 1920, while Kamill Eisner attended only once. The tendency was the same during the whole period.

²⁰⁴ Deme, László – Keleti, József: *Az ellenforradalom Vasvármegyében és Szombathelyen*, (The Counter-revolution in Vas County and Szombathely) Szombathely: Martineum Nyomda, 1920.

The results of elections and the establishments of local associations of far-right organizations (see in Chapter 1) show that there was an affinity in Kőszeg for antisemitic ideas. Albin Lingauer won the election and became the representative of the city in Parliament even in his most antisemitic period. Although the accusations against Jews after World War I, that they did not take their part in the battlefields and exploited Christian Magyars were not experienced by local citizens, they were likely to accept the antisemitic ideology and mentality of the Horthy-regime. Certainly, in general they did not condemn Kopfstein, Lock or Bass, but the idea of a Jew who was behind all of the problems of Hungary and the nation was apparently accepted by the majority society.

Thus, I assume that Jean-Paul Sartre's theory about antisemitism is valid in case of the society of Kőszeg. Sartre argues that on the one hand personal experiences are not needed to become an antisemite, on the other hand former or actual experiences cannot question the mentality that had already been built.²⁰⁵ According to my investigation, something similar happened in the society of Kőszeg.

²⁰⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, "What is an Anti-Semite?" in *The Persisting Question – Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism* (edited by Helen Fein), Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1987. pp. 58-63.

Conclusion

World War I, the 1918 revolution, the short period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 and, most importantly, the outcomes of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty strongly influenced the political mentality in Hungary. These events created an ideal field in which antisemitism could develop. At the same time, as in general in the country, also in Kőszeg we have seen that antisemitism had emerged long before the war started. Certainly, although post-war antisemitism was much more exclusive than the pre-war one, it did not come from nothing. Indeed, it was burdened with the highly disappointing Peace Treaty. However, without the pre-war antisemitic mentality, Jews could not have appeared as a possible scapegoat and responsible for the problems of the Hungarian society.

As we have seen, Kőszeg was in a particularly bad economic position due to the new borders. Moreover, the threat that the city could possibly become part of Austria most probably strengthened local Magyar nationalism. Under these circumstances not only Christian-conservative parties but also the far-right could become more powerful, threatening local Jewry. Although, the majority society apparently did not want to exclude Kőszeg Jewry from the society, it seems on the whole they accepted the general anti-Jewish policy and mentality of the Horthy-era.

Certainly, the situation of Kőszeg Jewry was much better in the pre-war years, particularly compared to the interwar period. Kőszeg Jewry as a community fulfilled the requirements of assimilation; its members were gradually changing their language from German to Hungarian and Neology became the dominant denomination, rather than Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, they had to face local antisemitism and as a reaction, the community locked itself into their own circles, and some even left the city.

According to my sources, interwar antisemitism in Kőszeg did not come from nothing. As we have seen the accusations against Jewry that became much stronger after the war existed even at the turn of the 20th century. At the same time antisemitism was not becoming exponentially stronger. It reached its peaks in the early 1920s and from the mid-1930s to the late 1930s, however occasionally strongly antisemitic sentiments were expressed in *Kőszeg és Vidéke* in between these two periods as well.

Through the present research we have seen not only the general political radicalization of Hungary, but the characteristics of antisemitism in practice. Thus, we can understand better that frustrations, jealousies and political ambitions were typically behind the decisions of local antisemites.

This thesis presents only one example of the environment in which Jews had to live in the interwar period of Hungary. We should not overgeneralize the situation in Hungary based on the phenomena that we have found in *Kőszeg és Vidéke*, however we can have an image about the general tendencies in the country. Certainly, further research would be necessary in the towns of the Western Hungarian region, particularly in border cities which were in a similar situation in the period, to see how far the circumstances and phenomenon were the same.

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