

**Leaving an Antisemitic Regime for a Fascist Country:  
The Hungarian Numerus Clausus Refugees in Italy**

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## Abstract

The thesis contributes to the research on the consequences of the Hungarian antisemitic *numerus clausus* law of 1920 by investigating the following peregrination of Hungarian Jewish students to fascist Italy. The novelty of this work lies in the fact that Italy as a target country of such peregrination has not been previously researched. The paradox of fascist Italy's receptivity towards the students haunted by the antisemitic politics of Italy's ally, Hungary, is discussed in addition to the Hungarian and Italian historical contexts. A wide range of primary sources, archival documents, statistics and journal articles are investigated enabling the analysis of the *numerus clausus* peregrination from multiple perspectives, including that of the students, of a Hungarian diplomat, of Hungarian and Italian public administrators, and correspondence of individuals with Mussolini's office. As a principal focus, a sample of Hungarian Jewish students of the University of Bologna (where they were present in the highest number) in the fascist period is investigated. On the basis of their admission documents, it is evident that they were not the best students but their lower graded Hungarian maturity exams were sufficient for enrolling in Italian universities. In addition, it is concluded that Italy provided more opportunities for assimilation even for foreign Jews, than their home country did for its own citizens. Furthermore, during the war *numerus clausus* refugees in German-occupied Northern Italy had a higher chance of surviving the Shoah than Jews in Hungary, even though both countries were allied to Nazi Germany.

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## Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to those Hungarian Jews who left their home country in the interwar period as intellectual refugees of an antisemitic regime and during their peregrination studied at the universities of fascist Italy. They are the “*numerus clausus* refugees”.<sup>1</sup> Italy was an attractive target country of their peregrination between the Italian educational reform of 1923 and the antisemitic legislation of 1938, because – unlike in East Central European countries – there was no antisemitic discrimination in higher education and tuition fees were discounted for foreign students.

Since I will examine a group created by antisemitic legislation, “the exiles of the *numerus clausus*”, for the purposes of this thesis all the students will be considered Jewish whose denomination was “Israelite” according to their documents. Religion was an anagraphic data mentioned in all Hungarian personal documents of the interwar period, therefore university administrators and other authorities knew from these sources who was Jewish.

As the title of the thesis suggests, with my work I aim to draw attention to a curious facet of interwar Italian-Hungarian connections: Jewish students could escape Hungarian academic antisemitism in a fascist country. They left one right-wing authoritarian political establishment for another. Due to the horrors of the subsequent history of fascism, retrospectively it is hard to disassociate antisemitism and fascism. However, up until 1938 fascist Italy was a hospitable environment for foreign (including Hungarian) Jews and their expulsion in 1938 was a shocking, unexpected calamity. For a decade and a half, it was a natural decision for Jews to settle in fascist Italy for the purposes of studies.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a debate whether antisemitism should be written in the traditional form with a hyphen (anti-Semitism) or as one word. I will use the second option consistently, since I agree with the argument that the hyphenised version suggests that “Semitism” exists. Therefore I prefer to use “antisemitism” to indicate anti-Jewish hostility.

Scholarly literature has often confronted the issue of the numerus clausus law of 1920 and its various consequences. The law has been always looked at as a milestone in Hungarian history, as an antisemitic statement of purpose of the Horthy regime. The volume containing the lectures of a conference organized for the infamous law's ninetieth anniversary in 2011 offers multiple perspectives on the causes of the law's introduction, on the exiles of the numerus clausus, on the reactions given to the numerus clausus and even on the international context of Central European academic antisemitism of the interwar period.<sup>2</sup> Even the original misogynist intentions behind the numerus clausus were highlighted both in this book in a chapter by Katalin Fenyves and by Katalin Szegvári earlier.<sup>3</sup> The volume of studies about the numerus clausus edited by Victor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy in 2012 emphasized the international character of academic antisemitism of the period.<sup>4</sup> In the same year a monograph on the numerus clausus and especially its continuity throughout the Horthy era was published by Mária Kovács.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the emigration of the numerus clausus exiles, Victor Karády provided an overview focusing especially on Hungarian Jewish presence in the student body in Prague, Brno and Vienna, based on his research in the university archives concerned.<sup>6</sup> Michael Miller

<sup>2</sup> Judit Molnár (ed.), *Jogfosztás - 90 éve: tanulmányok a numerus claususról (Deprivation of Rights - 90 Years Ago: Studies about the Numerus Clausus.)* (Budapest: Nonprofit Társadalomkutató Egyesület, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Katalin Fenyves, "» Se nő, se zsidó «? Diplomáseleit-felfogások és a numerus clausus (Neither woman, nor Jew? Concepts of Educated Elite and the Numerus Clausus)", in *Jogfosztás - 90 éve. Tanulmányok a numerus claususról.*, 215–30.; Katalin Szegvári, *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon: a zsidó és nőhallgatók főiskolai felvételéről (Numerus Clausus Regulations in Counter-Revolutionary Hungary: On the Admission of Female and Jewish Students to Higher Education)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988);

<sup>4</sup> Viktor Karády and Peter Tibor Nagy (Eds.), *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*, Research Reports on Central European History 1. (Budapest: Pasts Inc. Centre for Historical Research, History Department of the Central European University, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Mária Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva: a numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1920-1945. (Down by Law. The Numerus Clausus in Hungary, 1920–1945.)* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Victor Karády, "Egyetemi antiszemitizmus és értelmiségi kényszerpályák. Magyar-zsidó diákság a nyugat-európai főiskolákon a numerus clausus alatt. (Academic Antisemitism and Intellectual Constraint Careers. Hungarian Jewish Students at Western-European Colleges In The Age of The Numerus Clausus)", *Levéltári Szemle* Vol. 42., N. 3. (1992): 21–40.

conducted research on the Hungarian Jewish student population of interwar Berlin.<sup>7</sup> However, the peregrination of *numerus clausus* refugees to Italy has not yet been researched. I wish to fill this gap, synthesizing the findings of Hungarian scholarly literature on the *numerus clausus* exiles and Italian literature on fascist Italy's hospitality towards foreign Jewish students, while also using sources found first of all in the Hungarian National Archives, in the Central State Archives of Rome, and in the archives of the University of Bologna.

In this thesis the peregrination of the “exiles of the *numerus clausus*” in Italy will be analyzed as a result of the curious interplay of two opposite concepts of national educational politics introduced in two countries that during the period concerned were progressively strengthening both their cultural and their political ties. Both the Hungarian and the Italian higher educational systems were reshaped in the early 1920s. However, the same Jewish students played two opposite roles in the two systems: in Hungary they were regarded as outsiders, to be removed, whereas in Italy they became instruments of internationalizing the universities, and thereby contributing to the realization of the educational reform of Minister Giovanni Gentile (1923).

Most historians who deal with the internationalization of Italian universities during fascism hold that Jews were not special targets of Italian propaganda which aimed to attract foreign students, and for a long time it was not clear that so many of the foreign students were Jewish.<sup>8</sup> At the same time Renzo De Felice – the major monographer of Mussolini and of Italian Jewish history under fascism – argues that it was a well-known fact already in the 1920s.

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Miller, "Numerus Clausus Exiles: Hungarian Jewish Students in Inter-War Berlin." in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe*, Eds. Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, 206–18.

<sup>8</sup> Elisa Signori, "Contro gli studenti. La persecuzione antiebraica negli atenei italiani e le comunità studentesche. (Against the Students. The Anti-Jewish Persecution in the Italian Universities and the Student Communities.)", in *Per la difesa della razza – L'applicazione delle leggi antiebraiche nelle università italiane. (For the Defense of the Race – The Implementation of the Anti-Jewish Laws in the Italian Universities.)*, Eds. Giovanna Procacci and Valeria Galimi (Milano: Unicopli, 2009), 204.



According to him, the reduction of university tuition fees for foreigners was itself a gesture on Mussolini's part addressed to the Italian Jewish community for the sake of mutually trustful relations between the government and the community.<sup>9</sup> This argument makes sense, since the Trieste-based "Italian Committee for Assisting Jewish Emigrants" proposed as early as 1924 to attract foreign Jews to Italy. The Committee argued in a report that it would be very advantageous for the circulation of Italian language and culture, if Jews emigrating because of antisemitism would migrate to Italy instead of other countries.<sup>10</sup> Yet it has not been demonstrated yet, whether Mussolini accepted this argument or foreign Jewish students benefitted simply from a neutrality of fascist administration towards migrant students' ethnic and religious background. In fact in 1923 Italian universities were instructed by the government to exempt foreign students from tuition fees for two years.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the report of the Trieste-Committee might have been preceded by previous suggestions, or the Committee might have reacted to a previous idea concerning the internationalization of Italian universities.

While the friendly relationship between Hungary led by Horthy and fascist Italy is a beloved topic in historiography,<sup>12</sup> the influx of Hungarian students in Italy as a consequence of the *numerus clausus* is often overlooked. There is a tendency in Hungarian historiography to treat friendly Italian-Hungarian relations overlooking that right-wing authoritarianism was at the heart of such an alliance.

My thesis, covering the years between the *numerus clausus* (1920) and the Hungarian

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<sup>9</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (History of the Italian Jews under Fascism) (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 80.

<sup>10</sup> "Relazione al R. Commissariato Gen. Dell'Emigrazione (Report to the Royal General Board of Trustees of Emigration)", 1924. I found reference to this report in De Felice 2008 (De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 85–86.)

<sup>11</sup> Michael Ledeen, "The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism", *Jewish Social Studies* Vol. 37, No. 1 (1975): 3–17.

<sup>12</sup> Among others Hungarian artists and scholars getting scholarships for research trips, and the establishment of the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome are such popular topics.

Holocaust (1944), is dedicated to those young Jews who were not supported by their home country at all, but exiled from its intelligentsia and were courageous enough to choose the challenges of a migratory life instead of resigning themselves to the decision of the Hungarian political elite to exclude them from the liberal professions. Their integration in the Italian academic sphere was a result of the fascist educational policy's drive for taking in foreign students and it occurred *despite* Hungarian educational politics and not *because of* cordial Hungarian-Italian relations.

At the same time my research is a contribution in the context of scholarly literature on the internationalization of Italian universities during fascism as well. A basic work in this research field is a detailed study by Elisa Signori on the foreign Jewish migrant students settling in fascist Italy.<sup>13</sup> The field is characterized furthermore by studies analyzing the impact of the anti-Jewish legislation of 1938 on Jewish students, including foreigners, in Italian academia<sup>14</sup> or in specific universities, such as Gian Paolo Brizzi's study and his book "*Silence and Remembering*" on the foreign Jews expelled from Bologna in 1938.<sup>15</sup>

I outline in the first chapter several social historical phenomena to contextualize Hungarian Jewish migration to Italy after the *numerus clausus* law. In the three chapters following this, I confront three controversial historiographic issues strongly connected to the *numerus clausus* exiles migrating to Italy. Presenting the dynamics of *numerus clausus*-

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<sup>13</sup> Elisa Signori, "*Una peregrinatio academica in età contemporanea: gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre. (An Academic Peregrination In Contemporary Age: The Foreign Jewish Students at the Italian Universities between the Two Wars.)*", *Annali di storia delle università italiane*. 4 (2000): 139–62.

<sup>14</sup> Signori, "*Contro gli studenti. La persecuzione antiebraica negli atenei italiani e le comunità studentesche. (Against the students. The anti-Jewish persecution in the Italian universities and the student communities.)*".

<sup>15</sup> Gian Paolo Brizzi, "*Il rientro impossibile. Studenti stranieri ebrei a Bologna 1938-45. (The Impossible Return. Foreign Jewish Students in Bologna 1938-1945.)*", In *Il difficile rientro. Il ritorno dei docenti ebrei nell'università del dopoguerra. (The Difficult Return. The Return of Jewish Professors to the University of Bologna After the Second World War.)*, Ed. by Dianella Gagliani (Bologna: CLUEB, 2004), 165–77.; Gian Paolo Brizzi, *Bologna 1938: Silence and Remembering: The Racial Laws and the Foreign Jewish Students at the University of Bologna* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002). Francesca Pelini and Ilaria Pavan, *La doppia epurazione. L'Università di Pisa e le leggi razziali tra guerra e dopoguerra. (The Double Purge. The University of Pisa and the Racial Laws Between War and Post-War Period.)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

provoked migration I argue in the second chapter that anti-Jewish discrimination was continuous in Hungarian higher education throughout the Horthy-era despite the amendment of the infamous *numerus clausus* law in 1928, showing that the number of migrant students leaving Hungary for Italy and other countries did not significantly decrease in the years following the amendment.

In the third chapter I investigate the relationship of Italian fascism and antisemitism, since while fascism was not antisemitic, it possessed a potential to turn antisemitic. As I demonstrate, fascist Jewish policies were for the whole period more controversial towards Italian Jews than towards foreign Jews. In the fourth chapter I present the manifestation of fascist Jewish policies in higher education, which made the influx of foreign Jewish students possible. I reconstruct in this chapter the information on the everyday life of *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy as well. Memoirs and journalistic accounts of different students are used as sources. Furthermore, I analyze the social background of a sample of Hungarian Jewish students of the University of Bologna (for this university had the most Hungarian students in the period) on the basis of their documents preserved in the university's archives.

In the fifth chapter I analyze other original archival sources in order to reconstruct a part of the history of these peculiar intellectual refugees, the “*numerus clausus exiles*” during the Italian racist legislation. By analyzing the letters written on behalf of Hungarian Jewish students and professionals for the sake of exemption from the Italian anti-Jewish laws of 1938 and the documentation of the Hungarian hunt after them in the summer of 1944,<sup>16</sup> it is possible to reconstruct the history of those who achieved the highest level of integration into Italian society (others did not manage to stay in Italy after 1938). Their high level of integration was most often marked by their mixed marriage to a non-Jewish Italian and employment in their profession.

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<sup>16</sup> In 1944 only Northern Italy was under fascist control, in form of the Republic of Salò, Germany's puppet state.

I researched for the traces of the persons concerned in earlier documents as well, and I found quite a few of them in other types of documents. Therefore I can present some individual fates shaped by the intellectual migratory movement that I study, and reconstruct one pattern of integration of the *numerus clausus* exiles in Italy. To establish the number of Hungarian Jews who studied in fascist Italy, thus the proportion of Jews among Hungarian students in Italy is beyond the scope of this thesis. I aim to provide a qualitative analysis of individual fates, rather than a quantitative research.

Those Hungarian Jews present in Italy still during the Second World War – as exempted from the anti-Jewish laws or as interned foreign Jews, or from 1943 as partisans – constituted merely a minority among the *numerus clausus* refugees, the majority being expelled in 1938 due to Italian anti-Jewish legislation. Thus, the majority was re-exiled to Hungary and shared the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust. Still I believe that my contribution to the knowledge on a part of the *numerus clausus* refugees will be valuable, since it will be based on a voluminous body of documents that were not thus far referred to in scholarly literature.

## I. The Social Historical Context of the Numerus Clausus –Migration

The first chapter aims to contextualize the numerus clausus law and the following peregrination abroad in Hungarian history, applying the theoretical framework of the *assimilationist social contract* of Victor Karády. The numerus clausus law was a historical turning point because it expressed the political elite's rejection of Jewish assimilation which was promoted by the previous political establishment from 1867 (Jewish Emancipation) to the First World War.

Jewish assimilation in Hungary was a story of fast transformation of Hungary's Jewish population into a group of 'Hungarians belonging to the Israelite faith', joining the Hungarian nation with a spectacular velocity by acculturation, on the basis of a *social assimilationist contract* with a receiving environment that withdrew from the contract in the end of the First World War.<sup>17</sup> Assimilation was mutually promoted by the Hungarian liberal political establishment of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the Jewish community leadership at the same time.<sup>18</sup> Emphasizing the mutuality of assimilation from both sides Karády suggests the notion of *assimilationist social contract*, which means that Jewry was expected to perform linguistic-

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<sup>17</sup> The velocity of Jews becoming Hungarian is demonstrated by data on the increasing number of Jews speaking Hungarian as a mother tongue from one generation to the other, the increasing number of mixed marriages to non-Jews, and by the mass phenomenon of taking up Hungarian family names. For instance, while in 1880 56,3% of Jews spoke Hungarian as a mother tongue, in 1910 it was 76,9% of the Jewish population. In Budapest the proportion was always higher, in 1880 59,1% and in 1910 90,1% (François Fejtő, *Magyarság, zsidóság. (Hungarians, Jews.)* Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2000, 98.) Another telling data in this respect is that whereas between 1895 and 1900 5,5% of marriages involving at least one Jew were mixed, between 1911 and 1915 as many as 11% of them were mixed (Ibid., 128.)

<sup>18</sup> The latter was divided between *Neolog* (a special Hungarian stream of Reform Judaism), *Orthodox* and *Status Quo Ante* communities, and although Neologue leaders were the most active in promoting assimilation, the other two streams did not hinder it either. During the Dualist period most of the Orthodox Jews were linguistically Magyarised as well (Anikó Prepuk, *A Zsidóság Közép és Kelet-Európában a 19-20. században (History of East Central European Jewry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)* (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1997), 103).

cultural “Magyarisation” besides fostering the modernization process of Hungary, and in return Jews could hope for social acceptance.<sup>19</sup>

However, after the First World War the new Hungarian political establishment unilaterally cancelled the *assimilationist social contract* for a number of reasons. First of all, antisemitism gained impetus in Hungary during the First World War. In the press accusations against Jews for not fighting and dying for the homeland in the same proportions as other Hungarians were raised as early as 1915, together with xenophobic attacks against the Galician Jewish refugees escaping the Russian army and arriving in Budapest.<sup>20</sup> The “Jewish question” was raised not only by antisemites, but by the editors of a leftist journal, *Huszadik Század* (“Twentieth Century”), quite a few of whom were apostates or children of apostates of Jewish origin, such as Oszkár Jászi. Yet the discussion – which involved detailed essays of prominent Hungarian intellectuals – in this organ challenged the notion of ‘Hungarians of the Israelite faith’ and legitimized a discourse on Jews as different from Hungarians. Lajos Szabolcsi, editor in Chief of *Egyenlőség* (“Equality”), the leading organ of the Jewish denominational press, therefore accused Jászi and his colleagues of framing the “Jewish question” and by raising it as Jews which provided it with legitimacy.<sup>21</sup> Instead of sharing such a grave accusation, I only want to point out that the raising of the “Jewish question” by leftist intellectuals, and by persons of Jewish origin (without Jewish self-identification though), indicates that in the decades of Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Karády, “Antisemitism in Twentieth-Century Hungary”, *Patterns of Prejudice* 27., No 1. (1993): 71–92; Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő (Two generations)* (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993), 173. The rumor on “too few” Jewish soldiers dying could be justified in the eyes of prejudiced people by the visibility of many Jews as army officers (educated men were drafted as officers, and among Jews a higher proportion had high school and university education than in the general population) who were less likely to die in the front than rankers. However, everyday people were probably more concerned with the influx of Jewish refugees from Galicia who were very visible in Budapest due to their speaking Yiddish and often wearing traditional Orthodox Jewish clothing, as opposed to native Budapest Jews.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 203–204.

assimilation the process of integration was not yet fulfilled.<sup>22</sup> Due to acculturation and assimilation Jews did become Hungarians in their language and culture, their world similar to that of non-Jewish Hungarians, but they still constituted an easily distinguishable cluster. The circumstances created by the First World War abruptly stopped the process of integration and the new political establishment after 1919 deliberately prevented its continuation.

Apart from the rise of antisemitism during the war, also the impact of the Trianon Treaty on Hungarian society and politics should be taken into account. The loss of most of the non-Hungarian population meant also that there was no more need for Jews as Hungarians in the demographic balance, which was a major drive for the elite of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal Hungary to acculturate Jews, since the proportion of nationalities during Dualism was counted on the basis of data on mother tongue. Without Jews claiming to be Hungarians, the proportion of Hungarians could have not achieved the fifty percent of the pre-Trianon “Greater Hungary’s” population. In 1920, due to the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost all her territories which had significant non-Hungarian population. However, since the political leadership regarded the territorial arrangement of the Trianon treaty only temporary and its revision was at the center of Hungarian politics for the whole interwar period, the regime’s antisemitism had a much more important role in the cancellation of the assimilationist contract than the demographic changes.

By 1920 after a series of changes of guard, Admiral Horthy succeeded in establishing the so-called “Christian Course” that was based on illiberal, exclusive nationalism as opposed to the liberal inclusive nationalism of the Age of Dualism. Due to expanding antisemitism, radical rightist movements were able to convince public opinion about their vision of Jews invading the

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<sup>22</sup> As Tibor Frank put it: “It was certainly not the White Terror that created the “Jewish question” in 1919: it was already there, deeply embedded in early twentieth-century Hungarian society.” Tibor Frank, *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 97. For further detailed analysis of the so called Jewish question see János Gyurgyák: *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon: politikai eszméletörténet* (*The Jewish Question in Hungary: Political-Intellectual History*) (Budapest: Osiris, 2001).

intellectual professions as the only reason of universities' oversubscription. To accept such an oversimplification was in the interest of not only radical rightists, but also of the mainstream (whom I would not call "moderate") rightist political leaders. In fact, because many young people had to postpone their university studies due to conscription to the army during the war, in the immediate post-war years there was multiple oversubscription to universities. Until 1920 the only criteria for enrollment to university was high school graduation. Meanwhile numerous Hungarian intellectuals and employees of public administration moved from the territories annexed to Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, increasing the oversupply of intellectuals and civil servants in the labor market of a territorially reduced Hungary, which did not need as many civil servants and lawyers as before. Consequently, while the number of applicants for universities grew, the labor market of liberal professions was reduced. This was indeed a challenge for educational politics to solve.<sup>23</sup> Therefore to restrict the number of admissible students to university faculties was a reasonable proposition. The expression "numerus clausus" in word by word translation indeed means "closed number". However, this expression from its very origin, from the introduction of such a law in the Russian Empire in 1886, means anti-Jewish discrimination, the reduction of the proportion of Jews in the student body.

The Hungarian numerus clausus law, infamous and highly significant for being the first 20<sup>th</sup> century anti-Jewish law, was not merely an antisemitic response to the challenge of oversubscription to universities and to the crisis of university degrees. Similarly to its Russian precedent, this law was an antisemitic political response to the social historical phenomenon of Jewish "over-schooling". Of course from an antisemitic point-of-view, if the number of university students needs to be restricted, it should be done at the expense of Jews, just like

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<sup>23</sup> The "crisis of the university degree" was an international problem of the period. However, in Hungary the aforementioned historical facts aggravated it. (Frank, *Double Exile*, 98.)



anything else. However, higher education became the central battle field of antisemitism in post-Trianon Hungary precisely because of Jewish over-schooling. By Jewish over-schooling I mean that Jewish families invested more in the education of their children (sons first of all, but also pioneered in the schooling of girls) than non-Jewish counterparts in the same socio-economic status, and as a result Jews were present in the intelligentsia in much higher proportions than in the whole population.<sup>24</sup> A higher proportion of Jewish youth than Christian youth graduated in high school and a higher proportion of Jewish high school graduates enrolled in universities than that of non-Jewish high school graduates.<sup>25</sup> Of course this was also a consequence of the higher level of urbanization; three quarters of Hungarian Jewry lived in urban areas,<sup>26</sup> whereas the majority of non-Jews lived in the countryside.<sup>27</sup>

Jews in pre-war Hungary successfully and *en masse* utilized higher education as a means of upwards social mobility and as a vehicle of assimilation. Such an observation was true for most of the European countries as well, and can be attributed both to Jewish traditions and to the circumstances usually created after emancipation, as Karády has demonstrated in several of his works.<sup>28</sup> A telling data is that in Hungary between 1900 and the First World War around twenty-three or twenty-four percent of the university students were Jewish, in contrast to six percent of

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<sup>24</sup> Victor Karády, "Jewish Over-Schooling Revisited: The Case of Hungarian Secondary Education in the Old Regime (1900-1941)", *Yearbook of the Jewish Studies Programme (CEU)*, (1999): 75–91.

<sup>25</sup> Viktor Karády, *Iskolarendszer és felekezeti egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon, 1867-1945: történeti szociológiai tanulmányok. (Educational System and Denominational Inequalities in Hungary, 1867-1945: Historical - Sociological Studies.)* (Budapest: Replika Kör, 1997), 251.

<sup>26</sup> In 1920, 344 234 Jews lived in towns and 129 121 Jews lived in the countryside. Alajos Kovács, *A csonkamagyarországi zsidóság a statisztika tükrében (Jewry of Truncated Hungary in the Mirror of Statistics)* (Budapest: Egyesült Nemzeti Keresztény Liga, 1938), 61.

<sup>27</sup> Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 35.; Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig (Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the Second World War)* (Budapest: Osiris, 2006)., 215.

<sup>28</sup> Viktor Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás. (Jewry, Modernization, Embourgeoisement)* (Pécs: Cserépfalvy, 1997).; Victor Karady, *Ethnic and Denominational Inequalities and Conflicts in Elites and Elite Training in Modern Central-Europe: Négalité Et Conflits Ethniques Et Religieux Dans Les Étites Et Leur Formation En Europe Centrale Moderne* (Budapest: John Wesley Theological Seminary, 2012).

the general population.<sup>29</sup> Péter Tibor Nagy argued that due to these social historical facts, the implementers of the discriminatory law, a coalition of different (religious, anti-capitalist and anti-socialist) antisemites identified higher education as the field in which Jewish emancipation could be the most efficiently stopped – and they identified it as such on a rational basis.<sup>30</sup> Thus, paradoxically, the same vehicle which Jewish middle classes consciously or unconsciously regarded as the field of integration:<sup>31</sup> the university; became the central hotbed of antisemitism.

But why did the high proportion of Jews in the student body become a subject of such a serious conflict after the First World War, if it was not before? Before the war there was a more or less well-functioning division of labor between Gentile and Jewish middle classes. Employment in civil service and public administration was – not *de iure*, but *de facto* – a privilege of Gentiles, of the so-called “historical” middle classes, a euphemism for *déclassé*, impoverished nobles. At the same time the children of the Jewish middle class could enter the liberal professions without restriction – they could work as doctors, lawyers, engineers. In fact the idea of restricting the number of students in legal faculties was raised as early as 1901 because of the oversupply of law graduates. The restriction was proposed without any antisemitic intention, by a Jewish lawyer, Illés Pollák. However, Vilmos Vázsonyi, Jewish lawyer and politician, warned his colleagues that in Hungary a numerus clausus cannot result in any other restriction than anti-Jewish. He argued that the oversupply of law graduates was clearly a result of Jewish emancipation, before 1867 only the sons of the Gentile middle classes enrolled in the

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<sup>29</sup> Andor Ladányi, “On the 1928 Amendment to the Hungarian Numerus Clausus Act.”, in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*, Eds. Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, 70.

<sup>30</sup> Péter Tibor Nagy, “The Numerus Clausus Law in Inter-War Hungary. Pioneering European Antisemitism”, *East European Jewish Affairs* Vol. 35, No. 1 (2005): 13–22.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, in 1910 out of 6743 Hungarian lawyers 3049 were Jewish. Mária Kovács, *Liberalizmus, radikalizmus, antiszemitizmus: a magyar orvosi, ügyvédi, és mérnöki kar politikája 1867 és 1945 között.* (Liberalism, Radicalism, Antisemitism: The Policy of The Hungarian Doctors’, Lawyers’ and Engineers’ Associations Between 1867 and 1945.) (Budapest: Helikon, 2001), 54.

faculties of law, thus, the oversupply occurred because of the multitudinous enrollment of Jews.<sup>32</sup> His prophetic intuition was rare among his Jewish colleagues at the turn of the century.

As the labor market in the Hungarian civil service and public administration was reduced in 1920 due to the loss of territories, the pre-war Gentile-Jewish middle class division of labor could no longer work. The opinion leaders of the “historical” middle class wanted to exclude Jewish competitors from the liberal professions not solely because of antisemitism, but it was also a necessity to ensure the labor market of liberal professions for the young middle class Gentiles who could no more hope for a career in civil service or public administration.

The above detailed reasons together – besides violent demonstrations of radical rightist youth movements – led to the introduction of Act No. 25 of 1920 (“On Regulation of Enrollment to University, Polytechnics, Faculty of Economics at the University of Budapest and Law Academies”), thus the *numerus clausus*. It provided the right to the Minister of Religion and Education to define the number of admissible students to each faculty, and ruled that when issuing the permission of enrollment, the faculties had to regard “above loyalty to the nation and moral reliability, also the intellectual capacity and that the proportion of youngsters – belonging to certain racial and national groups living in Hungary – in the student body would possibly achieve the countrywide proportion of the racial or national group concerned, or would achieve at least the nine tenths of it”.<sup>33</sup> It was not the text of the law, but an executive ordinance that made clear the actual anti-Jewish political aim – which was widely emphasized in the press – the reduction of Jewish presence in the student body.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 52–54. Mária M. Kovács refers to the documentation of the lawyers’ assembly held in Budapest between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1901.

<sup>33</sup> Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 8–9.

This executive ordinance listed the percentage of the recognized nationalities in the population of Hungary according to census data based on mother tongue.<sup>34</sup> The “Jewish nationality” constituted the only exception. Citizens declaring themselves as Israelites (a group almost entirely constituted by Hungarian native speakers) were defined as Jews by nationality. Thus, a denominational group was converted into a national group, the cluster calling itself the “Hungarians of Israelite faith” was suddenly excluded from the Hungarian nation and labeled as Jews “by race”. This dramatic change meant the unilateral cancellation of the assimilationist social contract by the Hungarian parliament.

Although Hungary was the only country in the 1920s to elevate academic antisemitism to the level of legislation, it was not the only country to discriminate against Jews in higher education. Academic antisemitism was an East Central European phenomenon of the interwar period, the most strongly present in Hungary, Romania and Poland. Jews were viewed as strangers to be removed also in Romania and Poland. Romanian and Polish universities reduced the proportion of Jews in the student body with informal, albeit efficient measures.<sup>35</sup> Not by chance the title of the most recent volume of studies on the Hungarian numerus clausus was entitled “*The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*”.<sup>36</sup> In fact the Hungarian numerus clausus law inspired Polish nationalist antisemites and in 1923 the Polish Minister of Public Worship and Education announced legislation allowing universities to limit the admission of Jewish students. Romanian

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 16.; *Executive ordinance of the numerus clausus law, Orders of the Ministry for Religion and Public Education. In Collection of Hungarian Decrees*, 1920.

<sup>35</sup> István Kovács, “A lengyel zsidóság helyzete a két világháború között. (The Status of Polish Jewry between the Two World Wars.)”, in *Jogfosztás - 90 éve. Tanulmányok a numerus claususról. (Deprivation of rights - 90 years ago. Studies on the numerus clausus.)*, 292–99; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Lucian Nastasă, “Anti-Semitism at Universities in Romania (1919-1939)”, in *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*, Eds. Viktor Karády and Peter Tibor Nagy, 219–43.

<sup>36</sup> *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.* Edited by Viktor Karády and Peter Tibor Nagy.

universities were also often the fields of antisemitic demonstrations. However, since Romania and Poland were states that benefitted from the Versailles Peace Treaty system, their Jewish communities could successfully turn to the League of Nations to pressure their governments not to introduce discriminatory legislation. It was not the case with the Hungarian Jewish organizations. Nevertheless, forcing Jewish students to ghetto-benches, organizing “Jew-free” days in campuses and preventing them from attending lectures were widespread practices in Romania and Poland.<sup>37</sup> The comparison with these East Central European countries is significant with regard to the Hungarian *numerus clausus*, because Poland and Romania sent the bulk of Italy’s foreign Jewish populations, of which Hungarians constituted only another subgroup.

Due to the *numerus clausus* law, young Jews who planned to enroll in universities needed to modify their career strategies. Now they needed to fit into the quota of six percent in order to be able to enroll. Even though not all the faculties applied the law in the strictest way, and there were several ambiguities around the application, being enrolled in a Hungarian university was not the end of the struggles for a Jewish student. During the 1920s, verbal and physical aggression against Jewish students in universities was regularly on the agenda. For those who did not get into the *numerus clausus* imposed on Jewish students or did not even apply for enrollment because of the law, a possible option was to choose a profession that did not require a university degree. Thus, being excluded from the liberal professions led many young Jews to turn to professions which had been traditionally open for Jews, such as commerce and entrepreneurship.

However, emigration was also a very characteristic Jewish reaction. Victor Karády argues in his article dedicated to the Hungarian Jews who studied at Western European

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<sup>37</sup> Nastasă "Anti-Semitism at Universities in Romania (1919-1939)"; Felicia Waldman, "A *numerus clausus* rögeszméje a 20. századi Romániában és az ezzel kapcsolatos törvényhozás. (The Obsession with Numerus Clausus in 20th Century Romania and the Connected Legislation.)", in *Jogfosztás - 90 éve. Tanulmányok a numerus claususról*, 327–44; I. Kovács "A lengyel zsidóság helyzete a két világháború között. (The status of Polish Jewry between the two World Wars.)".

universities due to their exclusion from Hungarian universities, that among those Jewish families who were able to support their children, it was the most typical choice.<sup>38</sup> The number of émigré Jewish students can be estimated at more than five thousand during the 1920s, if we count one thousand four hundred and fifty new enrollments each academic year, which is the number of Hungarian Jews graduating abroad with the financial support of the *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* until 1928.<sup>39</sup> The *Central Jewish Student Aid Committee* was set up in 1922 with the aim of fundraising to support the émigré students. Counting those supported by this organization, we make sure that only those émigrés are counted who had to leave because of the anti-Jewish *numerus clausus*. However, we exclude a part of the Jewish émigrés who were not financed by the Committee, whose families could maintain them abroad.

We can find data in the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* of the period regarding the number of Hungarians enrolled in universities in different countries, listed by faculty. Although due to the earlier mentioned development of Hungarian higher education it is very reasonable to assume that the majority of the émigré students were Jewish, from the data of the *Statistical Yearbooks* we cannot know how many of the emigrants were exiles of the *numerus clausus*. We do not know either how many of the enrolled students actually graduated abroad. Alajos Kovács, in his statistics about Hungarian Jewish students in Hungarian and in foreign higher education, estimated that eighty percent of Hungarian students who studied at foreign universities were

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<sup>38</sup> Victor Karády, *"Egyetemi antiszemitizmus és értelmiségi kényszerpályák. Magyar-zsidó diákság a nyugat-európai főiskolákon a numerus clausus alatt. (Academic Anti-Semitism and Intellectual Constraint Careers. Hungarian Jewish Students at Western-European Colleges In The Age of The Numerus Clausus.)"*

<sup>39</sup> Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*, 164.; "Szabolcsi Lajos jelentése a Központi Zsidó Diákbizottság működéséről. Jelentés a Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Irodájának 1929. évi működéséről. (Report by Lajos Szabolcsi on the activity of the Central Jewish Student Aid Committee to the Office of Israelites of Hungary. Report on the activities of the Office of Israelites of Hungary in 1929.)", 1929, K28 (Department of Nationalities and Minorities), 14/53rd item, Hungarian National Archives.

Jewish (not counting those receiving a state-funded stipend).<sup>40</sup> He argued that even earlier to the *numerus clausus*, most of the Hungarian emigrant students were Jewish, a proportion which grew due to the *numerus clausus* law after the war, and the huge proportion of Hungarian students leaving Germany in 1933 suggested the preponderance of Jews among them.<sup>41</sup>

The first waves of the *numerus clausus* refugees went to study in the German-speaking universities of Czechoslovakia, to Austria and to Germany. Graduates of such institutions justifiably hoped for their degrees to be naturalized in Hungary. However, of course if all the degrees would have been naturalized, the *numerus clausus* law would have lost sense, therefore the regulation of naturalizing foreign university degrees was modified later on. Only few Italian degrees were naturalized, either because of the difficulties to achieve it, or because only few graduate from Italy applied for naturalization.

Naturalization was regulated by a law of 1876 (1876:XIV) as a quite complicated procedure. An ordinance of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education of 1928 updated the regulation in order to prevent Jews from using the naturalization of foreign degrees as a loophole in the *numerus clausus* law. According to the ordinance, those who enrolled in a foreign university “with the purpose of get around the *numerus clausus*” had to enroll in a Hungarian university for four semesters in order to have their foreign degree naturalized by the university.<sup>42</sup> In this way the *numerus clausus* was imposed again on those who returned to Hungary after their studies.

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<sup>40</sup> Alajos Kovács, *"Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon. (Hungarian Jewish Students at Hungarian and Foreign Universities)"*, *Magyar Statisztikai Szemle* Vol. 16, No. 9. (1938): 898.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Alajos Kovács was a statistician well-known for his antisemitism. He never wrote about *Hungarian Jews*, only about “Jews from Hungary”.

<sup>42</sup> Zsuzsanna Orosz, *"A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között. (The Hungarian students of the universities of Padua and Bologna between the two world wars.)"*, in *Tanulmányok az újkori külföldi magyar egyetemjárás történetéhez. (Studies on the Hungarian Peregrination Abroad in Modern Age.)*, Ed. Ákos Horváth (Budapest: ELTE, 1997), 231.

Comparing the number of naturalized degrees from different countries at the four Hungarian universities in the 1920s and early 1930s, we find how low the proportion of Italian degrees was, especially if taken into account the proportion of Hungarian students among these countries in the years concerned on the basis of the Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks.

**Table 1: Naturalized foreign university degrees at the Hungarian universities<sup>43</sup>**

University	Period	Austrian degrees	German degrees	Swiss degrees	Czechoslovak degrees	Italian degrees
<b>Budapest</b>	1918-33	11	7	3	2	1
<b>Szeged</b>	1920-33	100	125	35	15	6
<b>Pécs</b>	1920-34	14	7	4	2	1
<b>Debrecen</b>	1918-1934	4	3	1	-	-
<b>Sum</b>		129	142	43	19	8

This low number of naturalized Italian degrees is noteworthy in the light of the Italian-Hungarian “contract of friendship” of 1927. It also suggests that most of the Hungarians did not return after graduation “to spread Italian culture” as aimed by fascist educational politics, but remained in Italian labor market to compete with Italians. A Hungarian officer in 1937, referring to negotiations about mutual recognition of degrees argued that Hungarians graduating in Italy were very likely to be Jewish, thus undesired in Hungary.<sup>44</sup> However, this was the case with all the other countries as well. An even more astonishing conclusion is that in Italy foreign immigrant professionals were not seen as dangerous competitors, but were accepted.

The emigration of *numerus clausus* refugees to Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany, due to these countries’ being the primary target countries of *numerus clausus*-provoked emigration has already been studied by historians. Karády – after investigating the registration

<sup>43</sup> Source of data included in the table: Ibid., 232. To demonstrate the low proportion of Italian degrees among the naturalized foreign degrees one can also refer to the official statistics of degrees naturalized between 1920 and 1930 to see that out of two hundred three naturalized degrees only three were earned in Italy, despite Italy being a target country of *numerus clausus* emigration from 1923 onwards. (Gyula Jánik,(Ed.), *A magyar főiskolai hallgatók statisztikája az 1931/32. tanévben* (Statistics of Hungarian University Students in the Academic Year 1931/32.) (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Central Royal Hungarian Office for Statistics), 1933.

<sup>44</sup> "Egyetemi oklevelek kölcsönös elismerése (Mutual recognition of university degrees)", 1937, K69 Department of Economic Politics. 717/16th item, Hungarian National Archives.



books of the Viennese University and the German technical universities of Brno and Prague – found that after 1920 almost all the Hungarian students (between 91% and 98%) enrolled in the Viennese medical faculty and these technical universities were Jewish by denomination. Without having a particular reason to assume that it was significantly different at Western European universities, Karády concludes that more than 90% of Hungarian students who enrolled in foreign universities throughout the 1920s and 1930s were Jewish.<sup>45</sup>

Tibor Frank conducted extensive research on the Hungarian Jewish migrants who after being exiled once more, due to the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933, went to the United States and made it to the first line of international intelligentsia, among others Leó Szilárd, the conceiver of the nuclear chain reaction.<sup>46</sup> Frank's book, *"Double Exile"* points out that we should look on the student migration provoked by the numerus clausus in the context of a more general intellectual migration. Numerous leftist intellectuals had to leave Hungary after the failure of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, because of having been compromised in it in some way. The high number of Jews among the leaders and supporters of the Soviet Republic has already been pointed out too often in historiography. Therefore I limit myself to note – quoting Frank – that "several of those émigré Hungarians were not Jewish, but the overall nature of emigration from Hungary in the interwar period was Jewish".<sup>47</sup>

Frank is first and foremost interested in the geniuses, the exceptionally talented, whereas my focus of interest is exactly the "simple folk", the ordinary young people who simply wanted to become professionals (doctors in most cases) despite what the Hungarian political elite prescribed for them. Michael M. Miller's study on Hungarian Jewish students in interwar Berlin

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<sup>45</sup> Karády, *"Egyetemi antiszemitizmus és értelmiségi kényszerpályák. Magyar-zsidó diákság a nyugat-európai főiskolákon a numerus clausus alatt. (Academic Anti-Semitism and Intellectual Constraint Careers. Hungarian Jewish Students at Western-European Colleges in the Age of the Numerus Clausus.)"*

<sup>46</sup> Frank, *Double Exile*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 13.

has a focus more similar to mine.<sup>48</sup> Miller presents the continuous migration of Hungarian Jewish students between Vienna, the different German-speaking universities of Czechoslovakia and Germany due to the quick changes of circumstances. In the first few years of the *numerus clausus* the German universities of Czechoslovakia were the most popular institutions besides Vienna. However, after the Czechoslovak currency crashed, many of the *numerus clausus* refugees went to Germany, which by 1923 became a hostile environment for foreign Jews, provoking a new migration towards Italy, France, Switzerland and elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 the remaining Hungarian Jewish colony of Berlin also left for the above mentioned countries.

Since Italian universities (at least since the early modern age) had not belonged to the typical targets of academic peregrination from Hungary, it is reasonable to assume that the proportion of Jews among Hungarian students was similarly high in Italy to that in Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany. However, due to the strengthening of Italian-Hungarian political and cultural ties, manifested in bilateral contracts, the number of non-Jewish Hungarian guest students could increase during the interwar period. Unlike Italian documents, Hungarian personal documents, including birth certificates and high school degrees, indicated the individual's denomination. Thus, one needs to turn to Hungarian sources to find out who were Jewish among Hungarians in Italy. Since students needed to present their high school degrees for enrollment, it would be possible to find out the proportion of Jews among Hungarian migrant students if one would review all the files of all the Hungarian students in all the Italian universities' archives that preserve the students' files from the fascist period. The

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Miller, *Numerus Clausus Exiles: Hungarian Jewish Students in Inter-War Berlin*

<sup>49</sup> Antisemitic hostility towards foreign students was not a brand new phenomenon in Germany, since anti-Jewish hostility against Russian Jewish foreign students was framed by student associations already before the First World War as the so-called "Ausländerfrage". Jack Wertheimer, *"The »Unwanted Element«. East European Jews in Imperial Germany."* *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 26 (1981): 23–46.

students' dossiers typically contain all the documents connected to the given student, including birth certificate, high school degree, application, and eventually her/his thesis. I studied forty-six Hungarian students' files in the archives of the University of Bologna, I chose such students for my study about whom I had information from other types of sources as well, from which I knew they were numerous *clausus exiles*.

What is so far known is that during the interwar period seven hundred and forty-four Hungarian students enrolled in Italian universities.<sup>50</sup> A general prosopography of Hungarian students in interwar Italian higher education already exists in the dissertation of Beáta Szlavikovszki,<sup>51</sup> even though it is not complete, as quite a few people are missing about whom we know that they studied in Italy.<sup>52</sup> Apparently in some university archives it was not possible to find all the students of the period. Regarding the impact of Hungarian antisemitic legislation on the emigration to Italy Szlavikovszki limits herself to noting that among the students not receiving a stipend probably the "representation of Jewry was multiple when compared to the proportion of Jewry in Hungary's denominational relations".<sup>53</sup> She refers to an earlier prosopographical study on Hungarian students' influx to the universities of Bologna (1923-1942) and Padua (1920-1935) by Zsuzsanna Orosz, which includes also details on the students'

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<sup>50</sup> Beáta Szlavikovszki, *"Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the History of Hungarian-Italian Cultural Relations between 1880 and 1945.)"* (Doctoral dissertation, Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem (Pázmány Péter Catholic University), 2009), 134.

<sup>51</sup> Szlavikovszki, *"Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the History of Hungarian-Italian Cultural Relations between 1880 and 1945.)"*

<sup>52</sup> Simon Teich in the University of Turin (Simone Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza: i luoghi, gli incontri, le scelte (A Doctor of the Resistance: The Places, The Encounters, The Choices)* (Torino: Seb27, 2010).; Aladár Hábermann in Rome (Anna Maria Hábermann, *Il labirinto di carta. (The Labyrinth of Papers.)* (Milano: Proedi Editore, 2010).; Livia Fleischmann (who Magyarised her name to Fenyő) in Florence who published her memoirs: Lili Fenyő, *Pillanatfelvételek a külföldön élő magyar diákság életéből (Snapshots from the Life of Hungarian Students Abroad)* (Budapest: Jupiter Nyomda, 1929).

<sup>53</sup> Beáta Szlavikovszki, *"Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the History of Hungarian-Italian Cultural Relations between 1880 and 1945.)"* , 143

studies (date of enrollment, faculty, graduation).<sup>54</sup> Orosz, although she reflects on the impact of the *numerus clausus* on this migration in her aforementioned study, did not examine whether the individuals she found among the enrolled students were Jewish or not. As I unfold in the following chapters, I found information on quite a few of the students present in the prosopographies of Orosz and Szlavikovszki, in alternative sources. I concentrate on the students whom I find in multiple types of sources, who were additionally definitely exiles of the *numerus clausus*. In this way one pattern of integration of Hungarian Jewish students can be reconstructed.

The University of Bologna being the most popular among foreign students had two hundred and ninety-nine Hungarian students in this period. At the University of Padua, two hundred and eighty-one Hungarians were enrolled, however, migration between the two was not a rare phenomenon.

Summing up the first chapter, we can state that the *numerus clausus* was an antisemitic response to multiple oversubscriptions to Hungarian universities after the First World War and a “weapon” against Jewish over-schooling identified, justifiably, as the reason of the upwards social mobility of Jews. And indeed, Hungarian Jewry reacted to the *numerus clausus* with massive peregrination abroad, even to Italy (previously an insignificant target country). The next chapter presents the dynamics of the *numerus clausus* provoked migration to Italy during the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>54</sup>See the lists of students in the prosopography of Zsuzsna Orosz. (*Orosz, "A padovai és a bolognai egyetem magyarországi hallgatói a két világháború között. [The Hungarian Students of the Universities of Padua and Bologna between the Two World Wars.]"*). The number of Hungarian students in Bologna was three hundred and two according to Orosz, however, three people, Imre Klein, László Klein and György Kardos seem to be doubly counted.

## II. The Dynamics of Hungarian Jewish Peregrination to Italy in the Age of the Numerus Clausus

This chapter provides a picture of the dynamics of peregrination from Hungary to Italy in the age of the numerus clausus, outlining the trends of this migration chronologically in quantitative terms. The factors attracting Hungarian Jews to Italy are presented on the basis of qualitative sources, first of all reports written with the purpose of informing Hungarian youth about the possibilities to be found in Italy and the preponderance of Jews among Hungarians is argued on the basis of a confidential diplomatic report and an overview of the migratory movement from 1938 by Alajos Kovács.

It is important to emphasize that the duration of the numerus clausus lasted from 1920 to the end of the Second World War and not until 1928, when the numerus clausus law was amended and the explicit Jewish quota changed for a quota based on the profession of the applicants' father. This emphasis is necessary, since in Hungarian public discourse a narrative downplaying the significance and the gravity of the numerus clausus law is still held, and backed up by cotemporary political efforts to construct a positive image of the Horthy-regime. This current narrative of the numerus clausus states that in the amended version of the law (1928: XIV.) the Jewish quota of the original law (1920: XXV) was abolished.

*“Down by Law. The numerus clausus in Hungary, 1920–1945”* by Mária Kovács combats this interpretation.<sup>55</sup> The author argues that the alleged abolition in 1928 was only a phony amendment which led to a slight increase in the number of accepted Jewish students at Hungarian universities. The author accepts the interpretation that the direct consequences of the

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<sup>55</sup> Mária Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva: a numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1920-1945.* ( *Down by Law. The Numerus Clausus in Hungary, 1920–1945.* )

numerus clausus did not affect masses of Hungarian Jews (approximately five thousand), however she turns this data against the apologists of the Horthy regime and the numerus clausus by arguing that the major aim of the antisemitic law was not a marginalization of Jews from the intelligentsia in quantitative terms, but a political demonstration in the international arena that Jewish emancipation can be withdrawn and the Hungarian state cannot be forced to adhere to liberalism.

The hypocrisy of the amendment was clear to contemporaries as well. Both the *Joint Foreign Committee* and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, the two international Jewish organizations which dealt with the issue at the *League of Nations*, recognized that the amendment was unsatisfactory.<sup>56</sup> The incriminating paragraph ruling the consideration of applicants' ethnic origin was changed for a professional quota, thus the applicant's father's profession had to be taken into account. Due to the occupational structure of Hungarian society it was predictable which occupations should be advantaged (civil servants) for the sake of admitting preferably non-Jewish students, and the law indicated the professions keeping the professional statistics in mind. Also the protest letter against the numerus clausus written by Hungarians studying in Vienna to the Minister of Religion and Education in 1932 indicated that they did not notice any significant change in the implementation of the Jewish quota in Hungarian higher education.<sup>57</sup> They protested against the regulation making money transfers from Hungary very difficult, arguing among others that

*Since we did not come to study abroad for our own choice, but we were forced to do so due to the numerus clausus law – which is especially detrimental for the poor and is still operative – we find our wish that we should be able to receive enough currency for the*

<sup>56</sup> Nathaniel Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews: Policy and Legislation, 1920-1943* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), 77.

<sup>57</sup> "Bécsi magyar diákság állásfoglalása. Deviza és numerus clausus. (Resolution of Hungarian Students in Vienna. Currency transfers to abroad and numerus clausus.)", 1932, Ministry of Religion and Education, K-636/ box 671./ 65./65-61, Hungarian National Archives.

*purposes of our study most justified.*<sup>58</sup>

Besides “*Down by law*” Mária Kovács argued that there was continuity in the implementation of the Jewish quota in Hungarian universities throughout the interwar period in her further works as well. Her study, in the volume edited by Victor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy on the numerus clausus, “*The Hungarian Numerus Clausus: Ideology, Apology and History, 1919-1945*”, suggests already with the title that the history of the law did not end in 1928.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the sociological phenomena of the time are discussed in this writing, which made it possible to speak about “proportionality”, while in fact implementing discrimination. Andor Ladányi in two of his studies focusing on the amendment in 1928 suggests the same as Kovács, namely that the amendment did not abolish anti-Jewish discrimination at all.<sup>60</sup>

The statistics of Hungarians studying in higher education abroad reveal that student migration did not decrease significantly after 1928, only oscillated around the same number of migrant students. Since the new regulation based on the amended law came into force in October 1929, it is worth comparing the data on émigré students for the academic year 1928-29 with subsequent academic years.

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<sup>58</sup> „Minthogy mi nem saját akaratunkból jöttünk külföldre tanulni, hanem erre minket a szegénydiákságra különösen sérelmes és még most is érvényben lévő numerus clausus-törvény kényszerített, jogosnak érezzük azt a kívánságunkat, hogy bocsássanak rendelkezésünkre a tanulmányaink zavartalan folytatására szükséges valutát.” Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Mária Kovács, “*The Hungarian Numerus Clausus: Ideology, Apology and History, 1919-1945.*”, In *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*, Eds. Victor Karády and Peter Tibor Nagy, 27–55.

<sup>60</sup> Andor Ladányi, “*A numerus clausus törvény 1928. évi módosításáról. (On the Amendment of the Numerus Clausus Law in 1928.)*”, *Századok* Vol. 128, No. 6 (1994): 1117–48.; Andor Ladányi, “*On the 1928 Amendment to the Hungarian Numerus Clausus Act.*”, In *The Numerus Clausus in Hungary. Studies on the First Anti-Jewish Law and Academic Anti-Semitism in Modern Central Europe.*, Eds. Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, 69–111.

**Table 2: Hungarian émigré students before and after the amendment of the numerus clausus<sup>61</sup>**

Academic year	Number of Hungarian students abroad (first semester)	Number of Hungarian students in Italy (first semester)
1928-1929	1882	213
1929-1930	1773	215
1930-1931	1887	287

Although we must not take the number of émigré students simply as the number of numerus clausus exiles, it is certain that Jews had the most reasons to enroll in foreign universities, as was already argued in the previous chapter. By the late-20s there were more than enough places for students in Hungarian higher education. Thanks to the educational politics of Minister Kunó Klebelsberg, the Hungarian state invested heavily in the development of education and scholarship.<sup>62</sup> On the one hand Klebelsberg argued that Hungary must demonstrate her cultural superiority over the neighboring countries in order to convince the great powers that the Treaty of Trianon – expanding the neighboring countries at the expense of Hungary – was a mistake and should be revised. On the other hand, the same Treaty of Trianon restricted the military investments of Hungary, providing an opportunity to channel more spending into the sphere of education and the finance of culture.

It was especially true for Italian universities, that unless one had a reason to study there, because of studying in a specific field (such as marine biology or art history), for the sake of the most general liberal professions (medicine, law, engineering) it was not worth emigrating there, if

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<sup>61</sup> Data for the years concerned in the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*: "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1926/27-től 1928/29-ig (Hungarian citizens studying in higher education abroad from 1926/27 to 1928/29)", *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks)* 37 (1929): 272. "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1928/29-től 1930/31-ig. (Hungarian citizens studying in higher education abroad from 1928/29 to 1930/31.)", *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks)* 39 (1931): 285.; "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1929/30-tól 1931/32-ig (Hungarian citizens studying in higher education abroad from 1929/30 to 1930/31.)", *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks)* 40 (1932): 293.

<sup>62</sup> We must remember that the only Hungarian Noble-laureate who brought off the research for which being awarded in Hungary and not abroad, is Albert Szentgyörgyi, who fulfilled his experiments in the 1930s and received the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1937.



one could easily enroll in a Hungarian university. This was the case because the difficulties taken up by enrolling in an Italian university, thus studying in a foreign language and earning a living in a foreign country were not proportional to the advantages of an Italian degree. Due to history, Hungarian higher education was close to the German university system, therefore a German degree made integration in the Hungarian labor market easier, it was more positively evaluated internationally as well, than an Italian degree. Therefore non-Jewish students and scholars granted Hungary's famous Klebelsberg-grant usually did not graduate in Italy, but went for shorter research trips and specific courses.<sup>63</sup>

Yet during the interwar period Italy became the third most often chosen country by Hungarian migrant students after Austria and Germany.<sup>64</sup> Before 1923 only few Hungarians enrolled in Italian universities. In 1923 Mussolini's government decided to offer free tuition for qualified foreigners to study in Italian higher education for two years, which attracted two to three hundred foreign students. According to the Florentine Jewish community's observation the majority of them were Jewish.<sup>65</sup> It is not known how many of them were Hungarians, since the statistics of the Hungarian Statistical Office about Hungarians studying abroad does not specify data regarding Italy before the academic year 1925-26. Nevertheless, 1923 was clearly seen as the beginning of the influx of the *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy. An article titled "*Thanks to Mussolini*" in *Egyenlőség* in December 1923 reported that the Mussolini government's minister, Giovanni Gentile, instructed Italian universities to wave the tuition and exam fees for "Hungarian Jewish students".<sup>66</sup> Lajos Szabolcsi when presenting the activity of the *Central Student Aid Committee* to the *Office of Israelites of Hungary* in 1929, interpreted the law again as if it had

<sup>63</sup> Beáta Szlavikovszki, "*Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the History of Hungarian-Italian Cultural Relations between 1880 and 1945.)*", 138-139.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Ledeen, "*The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism*", 5.

<sup>66</sup> "*Köszönet Mussolininek (Thanks to Mussolini)*", *Egyenlőség*, Vol. 42. No. 48., December 1, 1923., 2.

been relevant only for Hungarian Jews.<sup>67</sup> This interpretation was slightly misleading, because the law was about foreigners in general, not specifically about Hungarians, and probably Mussolini and Gentile did not intend to invite only Jews. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of Lajos Szabolcsi, the greatest protector of the *numerus clausus* refugees, is understandable.

Furthermore, 1923 saw the comprehensive reform of the Italian educational system introduced by the Minister of Public Education, Giovanni Gentile, (well-known as a philosopher). After this reform the international prestige of Italian higher education and the internationalization of the student body were major concerns of the leaders of the educational system. Both of these aims served a further aim of Italian politics, namely the expansion of Italian culture and influence beyond the borders. In order to attract foreign students, numerous universities discounted the tuition fees for foreigners, and in 1926 halved tuition fees for foreign students were introduced on the national level, while the application procedure was simplified as well.<sup>68</sup> For Jews who left Hungary due to the *numerus clausus*, the lack of antisemitism must have been just as important a factor in choosing Italy as the relatively low costs.

Hungarian Jews could follow the developments of Italian policy through their denominational press, first of all if reading *Egyenlőség*. Since Hungarian Jewry reacted to the *numerus clausus* immediately with a wave of student emigration, the Jewish tradition of philanthropy was quickly set in motion, the *Central Committee for Student Aid* was established. The Committee's activity was not restricted to fundraising, but included the collection of information from students already studying abroad and correspondence with prospective students

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<sup>67</sup> "Szabolcsi Lajos jelentése a Központi Zsidó Diákbizottság működéséről. Jelentés a Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Irodájának 1929. Évi működéséről. (Report by Lajos Szabolcsi on the activity of the Central Jewish Student Aid Committee to the Office of Israelites of Hungary. Report on the activities of the Office of Israelites of Hungary in 1929.)", 1929.

<sup>68</sup> Francesca Pelini and Ilaria Pavan, *La doppia epurazione. L'Università di Pisa e le leggi razziali tra guerra e dopoguerra. (The Double Purge. The University of Pisa and the Racial Laws Between War and Post-War Period.)*, 43.

requiring information. The editor in Chief of *Egyenlőség*, Lajos Szabolcsi, was one of the founders of the *Committee*, an enthusiastic organizer of Hungarian Jewish peregrination. He remarked in his memoir written in 1940-42: “we saved a whole Hungarian Jewish generation for life, work and culture.”<sup>69</sup> The Committee and Szabolcsi’s Jewish weekly, *Egyenlőség*, played an essential role indeed in the support of the numerous clausus refugees and in informing Hungarian Jewish public opinion about the possibilities of peregrination. *Egyenlőség* published letters of students from Italy as well, reporting on the difficulties of finding employment there and financial support from the Italian Jewish communities on the one hand, and on a generous philanthropist on the other hand, Elena Jaffe, who supported the students with money, accommodation and helped them in finding employment.<sup>70</sup> As we learn from *Egyenlőség* and from the “*Almanach of Hungarian Jewry*”, Elena Jaffe was a Hungarian lady living in Padua with her Italian husband and was most active in the intervention on behalf of her compatriots.<sup>71</sup> This *Almanach*, written with the purpose of convincing public opinion that the numerus clausus should be abolished, detailed other difficulties as well, which were faced by the numerus clausus refugees, such as the lack of student canteens in Milan, Florence, Padua and Rome. However, the most highlighted aspect of studying in Italy is the courtesy and kindness of Italians, manifested even in professors letting students to take exams in German.<sup>72</sup> Since this book was published three times between 1925 and 1940, there was probably a demand for it among Jews considering studying abroad who read it as a source of useful information.

The amendment of the numerus clausus in 1928 did not significantly influence the

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<sup>69</sup> Szabolcsi Lajos, *Két emberöltő* (*Two generations*), 328.

<sup>70</sup> “Mibe kerül egy magyar zsidó diák megélhetése a külföldi egyetemi városokban (*How much does it cost to live in a university town abroad for a Hungarian Jewish student*)”, *Egyenlőség* vol. 44, No. 31 (August 1, 1925): 8. “Elena Jaffe, olasz bujdosók megmentője (*Elena Jaffe, savior of the exiles in Italy*)”, *Egyenlőség* vol.42, No. 48 (December 1, 1923): 2–3.

<sup>71</sup> Pál Bethlen (Ed.), *Numerus clausus. A magyar zsidóság almanachja* (*Numerus clausus. Almanach of Hungarian Jewry*), 3. ed (Budapest, 1940), 145.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

number of émigré Hungarian students either generally or specifically in Italy and as argued above, this does not mean that the majority was not Jewish. One would expect that the economic crisis of 1929-1933 made the economic situation of Hungarian families so difficult that it could have led to the decrease in the number of émigré students. However, this effect is demonstrated only after 1932. The academic year of 1931-32 actually saw a peak of Hungarian students' presence in Italy with two hundred and ninety-seven individuals enrolled.<sup>73</sup>

An intuitive hypothesis is that after 1933 numerous Hungarian Jewish students left Germany for Italy due to the Nazi seizure of power. Quantitative data show that the number of Hungarian students in Germany decreased from one hundred and ninety-five to one hundred and twenty-four between the two semesters of the academic year 1932-1933.<sup>74</sup> Thus, more than one quarter (seventy-five) left Germany exactly around January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor. In Italy, however, there were no more students in the second than in the first semester (two hundred and forty-two). Although in the next academic year we see further decrease in the number of Hungarians in Germany (ninety-eight) and increase in Italy (two hundred and eighty-nine),<sup>75</sup> we cannot identify who chose Italy in 1933-1934 over Germany to continue studies and who preferred France, Switzerland or Belgium and who were those who returned to Hungary, until the full prosopography of the *numerus clausus* exiles in all the target countries concerned will be prepared.

Later in the 1930s Hungarian students' presence in Italy somewhat decreased due to a

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<sup>73</sup> "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1929/30-tól 1931/32-ig (Hungarian citizens studying in higher education abroad from 1929/30 to 1930/31.". *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek* (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks) 40 (1932), 293.

<sup>74</sup> "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1930/31-től 1932/33-ig (Hungarian citizens enrolled in higher education abroad from 1930/31 to 1932/33)", *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek* (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks) 41 (1933): 318.

<sup>75</sup> "A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1931/32-től 1933/34-ig (Hungarian citizens enrolled in higher education abroad from 1932/32 to 1933/34)", *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek* (Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks) 42 (1934): 321.

new law of 1935 which made it difficult for foreign citizens to work in Italy as doctors, veterinarians or pharmacists.<sup>76</sup> Apparently, by the mid 1930-s Italian professional associations demanded that the internationalization of the universities should not lead to the permanent settling of so many foreign competitors in the country. However, the final stop to the influx of foreign (including Hungarian) Jewish students occurred with the introduction of antisemitic legislation in 1938, which meant a drastic decrease in the number of foreigners in general.

The introduction of the anti-Jewish legislation in Italy was utilized as an *apropos* by Alajos Kovács, antisemitic Hungarian statistician, a vehement supporter of the *numerus clausus*, to publish his overview of the “results” of the *numerus clausus*. In his introduction to his article we can read that:

*The decision of the Italian government to ban foreign Jews from universities will hardly hit Hungarian Jewry as well, since it often sent its sons to Italian universities after the numerus clausus law. Therefore it might be a matter of interest how many Jews from Hungary were present at Italian universities.*<sup>77</sup>

Kovács remarked that from the data of foreign universities the religion of enrolled students was not always known. He estimated the proportion of Jews among Hungarians studying abroad at eighty percent, arguing that “it is clear from the names and is common knowledge anyway.”<sup>78</sup>

An interesting dynamics of Hungarian peregrination can be observed within Italy as well. While in the 1920s the University of Padua was the most frequented Italian university, later on the *numerus clausus* exiles discovered more and more universities as the years passed. In the

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<sup>76</sup> This law (Royal Decree Law No. 184/1935 of March 5, 1935) prescribed membership in the respective professional associations for the practice of these professions, and membership in these organizations was normally granted only to Italian citizens. Signori, “Una peregrinatio academica in età contemporanea: gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre. (An Academic Peregrination In Contemporary Age: The Foreign Jewish Students at the Italian Universities between The Two Wars.)”, 157–158.

<sup>77</sup> „Az olasz kormánynak az az elhatározása, hogy a külföldi zsidókat eltiltotta az olasz egyetemek látogatásától, érzékenyen érinti a magyarországi zsidóságot is, amely a *numerus clausus* törvény óta elég sűrűn küldte fiait az olasz egyetemekre.” Alajos Kovács, “Magyarországi zsidó hallgatók a hazai és külföldi főiskolákon. (Hungarian Jewish Students at Hungarian and Foreign Universities.)”: 897.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 898.

1930s Bologna took on the primacy from Padua.<sup>79</sup> Studying the reports of *Egyenlőség* which had a major role in informing Hungarian Jewish public opinion, we can reconstruct the reasons of the inter-university mobility in Italy. *Egyenlőség* informed its readers on the comparative costs of maintaining a student in different university towns of different countries. While Italy was unambiguously the cheapest country to live among the typical destinations (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France), there were significant differences in the living standards of Italian cities. Thus, although travelling between Hungary and Northern Italy was cheaper than between Southern Italy and Hungary, this could be counterbalanced by the generally lower living standard of Southern cities. Therefore some students decided to leave the North for Naples, Palermo or Catania.

**Table 3: Living standard in Italian university towns (in Hungarian crowns)<sup>80</sup>**

City	Monthly accommodation	Daily food
Bologna	100 000	25 000
Catania	80 000	25 000
Florence	100 000	25 000
Milan	150 000	25 000
Modena	80 000	25 000
Naples	150 000	25 000
Padua	100 000	25 000
Palermo	80 000	25 000

Not only the most taken for granted factors shaped the dynamics of peregrination within Italy. It was discovered soon that the disproportionate influx to Padua might have backlashes, since by 1925 the University of Padua got into a very difficult financial situation due to the presence of

<sup>79</sup> Szlavikovszki, "Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the history of Hungarian-Italian cultural relations between 1880 and 1945.)", 134.

<sup>80</sup> The data in the table is based on the following report: "Mibe kerül egy magyar diák megélhetése a külföldi egyetemi városokban (How much does it cost to live for a Hungarian Jewish student to live in the university towns abroad)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No.31 (August 1,1925): 8.

hundreds of foreign students studying for free or for reduced tuition fee. Therefore Professor Guido Mazzoni on behalf of the *Italian Committee for the Foreign Jewish Students* asked Hungarian Jewish youth through *Egyenlőség* to make sure that not all of them will be concentrated in one university.<sup>81</sup> Maybe to further emphasize the importance of this message, in the same issue of *Egyenlőség* an article of András Fenyves, medical student in Catania, was published. Fenyves detailed the beauty of living and studying in Sicily, mentioning that he had left Padua for Sicily with four friends because Padua had become too crowded.<sup>82</sup>

In 1923-1924 seven Hungarian Jewish students were enrolled in Padua according to a report, and then *numerus clausus* exiles leaving Germany arrived in groups of twenty and thirty persons. Regarding the number of foreign students in general, it reached more than five hundred by 1925.<sup>83</sup> Therefore a Hungarian Jewish medical student, Béla Herczog, sent a an article to *Egyenlőség* to inform his peers, that in Padua there were already too many foreign students, therefore the community of *numerus clausus* exiles should consciously spread more proportionately among the universities of Italy, not to provoke the withdrawal of the favorable regulation of tuition fees for foreigners.<sup>84</sup>

The preponderance of Jews among Hungarian migrant students in Italy was acknowledged several times by Hungarian clerks during the 1920s and 1930s. An interesting report written in 1928 by István Pözel, Hungarian consul in Milan, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that the vast majority of Hungarian students in Northern Italy<sup>85</sup> were not those who were meant to benefit from Hungarian-Italian friendship. I present this report in detail

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<sup>81</sup> "A *numerus clausus* hatodik éve előtt (*Before the sixth year of the numerus clausus*)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No. 34 (August 22, 1925.): 2.

<sup>82</sup> András Fenyves, "Így élünk Szicíliában (*This is how we lived in Sicily*)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No. 34 (August 22, 1925.): 12.

<sup>83</sup> Béla Herczog, "Ne menjünk Páduába! Az Itáliába készülő diákokhoz (*Let's not go to Padua! To the students preparing to come to Italy*)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No. 36 (September 5, 1925.): 2.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ten out of the nineteen Italian universities were in Northern Italy.

for its valuable prosopographical data which provides a detailed cross-section of one academic year of the history of Hungarian peregrination to fascist Italy.

Pözel introduced his report by noting that previously to the Great War only a few Hungarians went to study in Italy, however, after the “collapse and especially after the numerus clausus” the number of Hungarian students arriving in Italy started to increase. Besides Austrian, Czech and German universities, Northern Italian institutions of higher learning were chosen by many Jewish emigrants to pursue their studies.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Pözel connected the presence of Hungarian students in Italy to the numerus clausus from the outset. Later on he detailed the hospitality of Italian universities towards these students. Students were allowed to postpone exams in order to have time to improve their Italian knowledge. Most of the universities waived the tuition fees of those enrolled in 1924-25 and halved the tuition fees for those enrolling later.

Pözel still in the same letter commented on the data he attached to it. The majority of Hungarian students at Northern Italian universities enrolled in medical faculties and the vast majority was Jewish, although in some cases it was not possible to ascertain the religion of the individual. Pözel did not identify the sources of his information, but presumably he asked for the data on Hungarians from the universities, since he uses the type of data administered when enrolling students. Additionally, he mentioned interesting details on the financial circumstances of the students. Most of them had financial difficulties, were provided only with meager support from their families and from Jewish organizations. Therefore they were eager to find part-time employment while studying. How difficult it was, we know from the reports of *Egyenlőség*.

The most striking remark made by Pözel is that the behavior of these mostly Jewish Hungarian students was decent in terms of “loyalty to the nation”. Although in the immediate

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<sup>86</sup> István Pözel, "Milánói Magyar Királyi Főkonzulátus levele. (Letter of the Hungarian Royal Consulate of Milan.)", April 15, 1928., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, K-60-1928. 20. I/6. item: Italy, Hungarian National Archives.



aftermath of the numerus clausus and the franc counterfeit scandal of 1925<sup>87</sup> some of the students in Milan and Turin expressed certain opinions about Hungarian politics which required the intervention of the consulate, later on the student colonies behaved loyally. The Padua-based “*Circle of Hungarian Students*” even received a special commendation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its patriotic attitude. From the earlier quoted report of Lajos Szabolcsi about the *Student Aid Committee*’s activity we can reconstruct that this commendation was expressed by Lajos Walkó Foreign Minister on behalf of the Hungarian government in the summer of 1926.<sup>88</sup>

In terms of data, Pözel provided to this letter a table displaying the number of Hungarian students enrolled in Italian universities in the academic year 1927-28, faculty by faculty and the list of Hungarians at each university adding all the available data on the students’ address, parents’ names, place of birth, faculty of enrollment and religion. He listed two hundred and three Hungarians, out of which forty-four were indicated as “Israelites”, thus he could not support with his prosopography the statement that the majority was Jewish. The reason was that not all the universities provided him with data on the students’ religion. Interestingly, even different faculties of the same universities had different policies in this respect: for instance, at the Royal University of Milan the medical faculty provided this data for Pözel, while the faculty of engineering did not. The universities of Padua and Bologna, accounting for the majority (one hundred and eighteen) of Hungarian students (eighty and thirty-eight respectively) did not record religion, nor did the universities of Pisa, Florence and Genoa, whereas the universities of Modena, Turin, and Pavia did. Nevertheless, Pözel reasonably assumed a preponderance of Jews

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<sup>87</sup> In 1925 two Hungarian citizens were arrested in the Netherlands for having manufactured false French francs to the value of ten million francs, partly in order to take revenge on France as a creator of the Treaty of Trianon and partly for the purposes of irredentist organizations. As the investigations revealed, the false bank notes were produced in the Hungarian State Cartographical Office.

<sup>88</sup> "Report by Lajos Szabolcsi on the activity of the Central Student Aid Committee".

among Hungarian students, since the lists of those universities which indicated religion, demonstrate fully “Jewish lists”, with maximum one exception.<sup>89</sup>

The official statistics of Hungarians enrolled in Italian higher education provided for the same academic year in the *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* (*Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek*) is different, there are two hundred and thirty-one students indicated.<sup>90</sup> It is necessary to note first of all, that Pözel’s list was about Hungarians in terms of *nationality*, including Romanian, Czechoslovak and Yugoslavian citizens who came from the territories annexed to these countries in 1920. The Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal), the publisher of *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*, collected data on Hungarian *citizens*. For this reason one would expect the latter statistics to indicate a lower number than the former, however, probably the difference can be explained with the official statistics’ counting Hungarians enrolled in Southern Italian universities, such as the “Stazione Zoologica” of Naples – with which the Hungarian State maintained official partnership from as early as 1883 sending Hungarian students with stipends – and theology students of the Lateran and the Gregorian Universities. Obviously, the two latter institutions attracted typically Catholic Hungarians and not the exiles of the *numerus clausus*. Additionally, the University of Rome was also an important institution not included in Pözel’s report because it was not in Northern Italy. Consequently, he neglected the twenty-five Hungarian students of Rome’s state university as well.<sup>91</sup>

Turning to the prosopographical data provided by Pözel’s letter, it introduces four individuals whose life will be followed in the chapters to come (among other individuals): Gyula

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<sup>89</sup> At the medical faculty in Milan five out of six Hungarians were Jewish, at the medical faculty in Modena all the fourteen Hungarians, in Turin twenty-three out of twenty-four Hungarians, and also in Pavia the only one Hungarian happened to be Jewish.

<sup>90</sup> “A magyar honosságú hallgatók a külföldi főiskolákon 1925/26-tól 1927/28-ig (Hungarian citizens enrolled in higher education abroad from 1925/26 to 1927/28)”, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyvek* (*Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks*) 36 (1928): 278.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Fogel, György Ney, György Sándor, and Imre Lukács, on the basis of the documents found in the archives of the University of Bologna and in the Central State Archives of Rome. Gyula Fogel and György Ney studied engineering in Milan, both of them lived in Italy as engineers even during the Second World War. György Sándor was studying medicine in Bologna at this time. Later he became a dentist in the same city. He was exempted from the Italian anti-Jewish laws in 1939 and we find him in Bologna even in 1944 as a dentist living with his Italian family. Imre Lukács was studying in Padua in 1927-1928, where he was the founder of a student group of *“Foreigners who support fascism”*. Later he converted and married into a respected fascist family. In 1938 both his wife and his father-in-law intervened on his behalf to prevent his expulsion from Italy as a foreign Jew.

Summing up, the significance of Italy as a target country of Hungarian peregrination increased considerably in the age of the *numerus clausus*. This Hungarian academic migratory movement was characterized by a preponderance of Jews (as both non-Jews and Jews emphasized), in addition by an inter-university mobility in Italy, promoted by students' reports in *Egyenlőség*. As a result, by the 1930s the University of Bologna took over Padua's primacy in attracting Hungarian students. Having said all this about the dynamics of Hungarian Jewish migration, the next chapter moves the focus to the Italian perspective, outlining the debated relationship between Italian fascism and antisemitism and the controversial fascist policies towards Italian Jewry with implications for the attitude towards foreign Jews as well.

### III. Fascist Italy as a Target Country of Jewish Peregrination

After having analyzed in the previous chapters why hundreds of Hungarian Jewish students left Hungary in the interwar period for Italy and the dynamics of the *numerus clausus* provoked peregrination towards Italy and inter-university migration inside Italy, this chapter poses the question why fascist Italy provided a receptive environment for their immigration.

The relation of Italian fascism with antisemitism is treated in detail in the first section, explaining the multiple Jewish policies of the fascist regime. For Italian fascism did not possess a comprehensive Jewish policy, but practiced every possible policy towards Jews throughout its history ranging from neutrality through benevolence and favoring Zionism to antisemitism. Such controversial policies were occasionally even implemented simultaneously. The second section focuses on the relationship of fascism and Italian Jewry, presenting how the contradictory Jewish policies were applied simultaneously during fascism previously to the antisemitic turn in 1938. So we can move on in the next chapter to the manifestation of fascist attitude towards foreign Jews in the academic sphere.

#### III. 1. The Development of Antisemitism within Italian Fascism

The kinship of Italian fascism and German Nazism and the involvement of fascist Italy in the Second World War as an ally of the Nazi Third Reich compels scholars to pose the question whether Italian fascism was predetermined to turn antisemitic or whether this was a contingent development linked to the community of interests with Nazi Germany. I argue that antisemitism was not a *sine qua non* of Italian fascism, however the fascist doctrine and the regime was compatible with antisemitism. The sudden “*Voltefaccia*” (“turnabout”) of the fascist system in 1938 was not solely the consequence of German influence but of an internal development as well.

Historians holding that the racist and antisemitic turn of the Italian fascist regime was only due to German influence speak about a process of “de-fascistization of fascism” (defascistizzazione del fascismo) as termed by Emilio Gentile.<sup>92</sup> According to this line of argumentation, Italian fascism due to its turning antisemitic under Nazi pressure lost its essence, and the regime that persecuted Jews in Italy was a regime different from the original fascist system. While this narrative appears to be rather apologetic and handy for those downplaying the crimes of fascism, it can be supported with a few reasonable arguments.

First of all, the amicable relationship of Italian Jewish communities with the regime, referred to as their “honeymoon period” by Meir Michaelis,<sup>93</sup> lasted for quite a long time, the first fourteen years of the regime (1922-1936). While the integration of Italian Jewry continued during fascism, at the same time this period saw the revival of Jewish consciousness<sup>94</sup> when compared to the pre-WWI liberal age in which Jewish public opinion raised identification with Italy (italianità) to the level of a religious duty.<sup>95</sup> Such a renaissance of Judaism was an effect of the heated nationalism of the social environment, and the founding of Jewish schools (provoked by the increase of Catholic influence on public schools). At the same time the Jewish renaissance was encouraged by Mussolini’s publicly expressed sympathy for Zionism as well. Mussolini favored Zionism for its anti-British function. After concluding by the 1930s that the general Zionists did not fulfill this, he shifted his support to the Revisionist Zionists who fought against the British Mandate.

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<sup>92</sup> Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo: storia e interpretazione (Fascism: History and Interpretation)* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2002).

<sup>93</sup> Meir Michaelis, “The Current Debate over Fascist Racial Policy”, in *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, (Eds.) Sergio Della Pergola and Robert Wistrich (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 50; Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 48.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Ledeen, “The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism”, 5.; Cristina Bettin, *Italian Jews from Emancipation to the Racial Laws* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>95</sup> Robert Wistrich, “Fascism and the Jews of Italy”, in *Fascist antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, 13.

Mussolini not only counted on Zionism as a weapon against British colonialism, but counted on Italian Zionists in particular in expanding Italian influence in the Mediterranean through building partnerships with the Jewish communities. Both the Rabbinical Academy of Rhodes established in 1926 and the *Federation of Sephardic Jews* founded in 1929 functioned under the patronage and with the financial support of the Italian government.<sup>96</sup> Later on, between 1934 and 1938 the Italian government financed the training of German, Czechoslovak, Polish and Lithuanian Revisionist Zionists in the nautical school of Civitavecchia.<sup>97</sup> With this support Italy provided the future Jewish state with professional sailors and in exchange provided herself with potential diffusers of Italian culture in the Middle East.

It is important to note that the strengthening of Italian nationalism as an aim of the fascist leadership, did not necessarily lead to a strengthening of antisemitism, since Italian nationalism was anticlerical from the outset, the unification of Italy was a result of a long struggle against the Catholic Church (among others). Therefore Italian nationalists did not take on Catholic anti-Judaism and did not secularize it as occurred in the case of numerous European nationalisms. In fact it was anticlericalism rather than antisemitism that provided a functional equivalent in fin-de-siècle Italy for middle and lower middle class discontent.<sup>98</sup>

The *Lateran Concordat* of 1929 broke the anticlerical tradition of the nation-state. With its establishment instead of anticlericalism, Catholicism became a marker of Italian identity. At the

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<sup>96</sup> Simonetta Della Seta, *"Italian Zionism Confronts Fascist and the Racial Laws"*, in *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, 40.

<sup>97</sup> "Correspondence of the Association of Italian Revisionist Zionists with the President of the Nautical Schools' Council, and correspondence of the latter with the Department of Public Security in the Ministry of Interior.", 1934, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Pubblica Sicurezza, A16 Ebrei Stranieri (Foreign Jews), 70th item, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.; Della Seta, *"Italian Zionism Confronts Fascism and the Racial Laws"*, 44. A famous graduate of Civitavecchia was Zvi Kolitz, author of Mussolini's Hebrew biography *"Mussolini ishiato vektorato"* (*"Mussolini, his personality and his teaching"*) published in Tel Aviv in 1936, author of the influential religious Yiddish text *"Yosl Rakover Talks to God"* (Buenos Aires, 1946) and co-producer and co-writer of the first Israeli full-length feature film *"Hill 24 Doesn't Answer"* (1954).

<sup>98</sup> Wistrich, *"Fascism and the Jews of Italy"*, 14. in *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, 13-18.

same time also the Jewish communities succeeded in demanding a similar arrangement for themselves, manifested in the *Rocco Laws* of 1930-31 which established the *Union of Italian Jewish Communities*. Jews were obliged to belong to the territorially competent community and to contribute with annual dues (those who refused to do so had to compile a file to officially break up with Judaism). This regulation obviously violated religious freedom and made it subsequently easy to identify Jews in the period of persecution. Nevertheless in 1930-31 this meant an achievement for the communities' leadership, and scholars arguing for the independence of Italian fascism and antisemitism justifiably point to the fact that the Jewish denominational leadership benefitted from fascism. At the same time, scholars on the other side of the debate justifiably point out that the regime abandoned anticlericalism, which was the key of Jewish integration in Italy.

The rise of Nazism did not immediately change Italian fascism, since cooperation between Italy and Hitler's Germany was rather cumbersome. After the NSDAP's (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) noticeable success in September 1930,<sup>99</sup> Mussolini and leading Italian publicists expressed sympathy for the Nazi party, still disassociating themselves from Nazi racism. For Mussolini, it was a "Nordic heresy" of true fascism and he dismissed it two years later as "nonsense" ("stupidaggine") in Emil Ludwig's volume of interviews, *"Conversations with Mussolini"*.<sup>100</sup>

Historians insisting on the independence of Italian fascism and antisemitism emphasize the significance of the groundbreaking events of the international history of fascism which made Italy part of the same community of interest as Germany. In such a narrative the involvement in the Spanish Civil War on Franco's side in July 1936, the establishment of the Berlin-Rome Axis in

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<sup>99</sup> The NSDAP won one hundred and seven seats in the Reichstag out of five hundred and seventy-seven in the elections.

<sup>100</sup> Michaelis, *"The Current Debate over Fascist Racial Policy"*, 52.; Benito Mussolini and Emil Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini (Conversations with Mussolini)* (Milano: Mondadori, 2000). (Originally published in 1932.)

October of the same year and the Anschluss in March 1938 can be explained as a chain of events ever increasing Nazi influence on Italy which explains the antisemitic turn. In this framework the antisemitic legislation is interpreted as a sign given by Mussolini to Hitler to indicate his willingness to put aside rivalries after having acknowledged his failure to prevent Germany's expansion in Central Europe and readiness to stabilize the Berlin-Rome Axis. What is overlooked in this explanatory framework is Italy's major enterprise in those years: the building of a colonial empire in Ethiopia.

The publication of *"History of the Italian Jews under Fascism"* by Renzo De Felice<sup>101</sup> in 1961 introduced a new stream in historiography, antithetical to the narrative of the Nazification of fascism. De Felice interpreted the history of Italian fascism as a prelude to the Italian Holocaust, and the antisemitic legislation of 1938 as a logical development of Mussolini's dictatorship. The fiftieth anniversary in 1988 of the antisemitic legislation's implementation re-activated the debate over the connection of fascism and antisemitism.<sup>102</sup> Michele Sarfatti in his book, *"The Jews in Mussolini's Italy"*, also argued for an autonomous genesis of Mussolini's antisemitism challenging his image as a benevolent leader misled by Hitler.<sup>103</sup>

Mussolini's main characteristic was indeed his inner ambiguity and deliberate duplicity in his declarations. While Wistrich's statement that Germanophobia was a more authentic sentiment in Mussolini than antisemitism is convincing,<sup>104</sup> the very basis of his pro-Zionist choices was his belief in the power of the international Jewish community which was easily transformed in a belief in an "international Jewish conspiracy", the most common basis of modern antisemitism.

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<sup>101</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo (History of the Italian Jews under Fascism)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961).

<sup>102</sup> Enzo Collotti, *Il Fascismo e gli Ebrei: le leggi razziali in Italia (Fascism and the Jews: The Racial Laws in Italy)*, 3. ed (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 3.

<sup>103</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>104</sup> Wistrich, *"Fascism and the Jews of Italy"*, 16–17.



De Felice defines the perceived necessity of strengthening the German alliance and the pressure of the PNF's (Partito Nazionale Fascista/National Fascist Party) pro-German faction as the main causes of the antisemitic turn, similarly to scholars on the other side of the debate.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, he also maintains that antisemitism was in a certain sense inherent in the fascist creed due to its inclination to progressive totalitarization, which was strengthened after the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-36). Michaelis, claims that De Felice exaggerated the pro-German pressure on Mussolini in his party, since from 1936 onwards the head of the pro-German extremist wing was himself.<sup>106</sup>

Mussolini was driven to become politically pro-German in 1936 due to the isolation and economic sanctions Italy suffered in the international arena after her aggression against Ethiopia. While we can state that such rapprochement increased German influence on his regime, we have to admit that the aggression against Ethiopia was an Italian initiative. The building of an empire by conquest both as the renovation of the ancient Roman Empire and as a "compensation" for Italy for her "*vittoria mutilata*" ("mutilated victory") in the First World War, belonged to the core of fascist ideology. The attack was justified in Italian media with racist propaganda, as a war against an allegedly inferior people.

It is essential that the antisemitic laws of 1938 were not the first pieces of racist legislation during fascism, but were preceded by the law of 19<sup>th</sup> April 1937 prohibiting marriages between Italians and Ethiopians.<sup>107</sup> While racism should not be confounded with antisemitism, this law indicates that raising "racial consciousness" among Italians became a major concern for

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<sup>105</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 243-244.

<sup>106</sup> Michaelis, "*The Current Debate over Fascist Racial Policy*", 82.

<sup>107</sup> *R.D.L. 19 aprile 1937, n. 880 sulle sanzioni per i rapporti d'indole coniugale tra cittadini e sudditi (Royal decree-law of 19th April 1937, n. 880 On the reprisals for conjugal relationships between citizens and subjects*, Access: April 22, 2014., [http://archivio.camera.it/patrimonio/archivio\\_della\\_camera\\_regia\\_1848\\_1943/are01o/documento/CD0000007126](http://archivio.camera.it/patrimonio/archivio_della_camera_regia_1848_1943/are01o/documento/CD0000007126).

the regime and that the definition of membership in the “Italian race” was the competence of those in power. Therefore the identification of Jews as racial outsiders or insiders was only a matter of the decision of the Fascist Grand Council. How much anti-Black racism seemed to be distant from antisemitism in the eyes of contemporaries is demonstrated by the lack of Jewish opposition to anti-Black racism.

Indeed, the Italo-Ethiopian War is crucial in the evolution of fascist antisemitism not so much for the cultivation of racism as for its consequences that led to Mussolini’s disappointment with Zionists. Mussolini sent the two most authoritative spokesmen of Italian Zionism, Angelo Orvieto and Dante Lattes, to London, Paris and Geneva to convince Zionist leaders, the British government and the League to end the economic blockade against Italy (part of the sanctions for Italy’s aggression against Ethiopia). From the failure of Orvieto and Lattes, Mussolini instead of concluding that Zionists had little influence in international politics, came to believe that world Jewry had betrayed him.<sup>108</sup> Such a conviction demonstrates that Mussolini believed in the power (thus, also in the existence) of the international alliance of world Jewry. This was one of the beliefs he professed consistently throughout his life. This is why he helped Italian Jews in organizing Jewish institutions in the Mediterranean and helped Zionists in reviving Jewish life in Palestine. He thought it would promote the interests of Italy. However, he turned against Jews and Zionism once and for all in 1936 for the same belief. This new development helped him to overcome his aversion to Hitler. Still, for another two years no antisemitic discrimination was introduced in Italy. Why was antisemitic legislation introduced after the Anschluss and not right after the Berlin-Rome Axis’s establishment in 1936?

The international isolation of Italy following the sanctions of the *League of Nations* due to her aggression against Ethiopia, the engagement in the Spanish Civil War on Franco’s side (July

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<sup>108</sup> Ledeen, “*The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism*”, 13.

1936) and the following establishment of the Rome-Berlin Axis (October 1936) created the fundament of the Fascist-Nazi *community of destiny*. It could not turn into a *community of interest* immediately, due to the Italian-German conflict over Central Europe. It was against Italy's interest to have a Great Germany unified with Austria on her border. In the issue of Austria, Italy did not support the revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty system. Nevertheless, the Anschluss became a *fait accompli* in March 1938. It was time for Mussolini to accept his failure in preventing the establishment of an enlarged German Empire. Soon the Fascist Grand Council of Italy decided to put aside rivalries and prove that Italy was ready to cooperate with the Third Reich as an ally.

The Italian antisemitic legislation of 1938 is interpreted as a sign given to Hitler for Mussolini's decision to deepen the alliance. However, I argue that it is necessary to add that the Fascist Grand Council's decision to use antisemitism for this function was conceivable because the Duce had turned against the Jews in 1936. At the same time antisemitism fulfilled another essential function for fascism, namely the development of totalitarianism. Francesco Germinario analyzes in detail the spiral that forced Mussolini to shape his dictatorship as antisemitic, because totalitarian regimes need to secure society's support with a vision of fighting an enemy, and constant mobilization can be achieved only if identifying internal enemies.<sup>109</sup> Fascism from the outset evaluated war and confrontation very positively, but an enemy was needed to revitalize fascist militancy. Jews were just perfect scapegoats to be used for this purpose after the end of the war against Ethiopia, as the only somewhat "Significant Other" (not numerically though, only due to visibility in the intelligentsia and in the elite). Germinario recognizes the function of antisemitism as an amalgam of the German-Italian alliance as well, and in this sense accepts the

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<sup>109</sup> Francesco Germinario, *Fascismo e antisemitismo: progetto razziale e ideologia totalitaria (Fascism and Antisemitism: Racial Project and Totalitarian Ideology)* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2009), 58–65.

notion of “Nazification of fascism”. Nevertheless he analyzes in detail the differences which Italian racism kept in relation to Nazi race theory.

Italian racism was characterized in the mid-30s by a heated debate between different schools. The so called “*spiritual racism*” represented by Julius Evola won the regime’s support. Evola’s theory claimed that fascism regenerated the Arian-Roman race which had the mission of realizing the totalitarian revolution. However, race was not only a corporal characteristic, but race was manifested in the spirit as well. Therefore not all Italians belonged to the Arian-Roman race, only those possessing the militant spirituality of fascism.<sup>110</sup> Jews were excluded by virtue of their “Jewish spirit”. Yet “spiritual racism” maintained the possibility of not regarding fascist Jews Jewish for the purposes of antisemitic legislation, thus the institution of “exemptions”.

The two other schools of racism, biological racism and national-racism are hardly distinguishable from each other and from Nazi racism.<sup>111</sup> Therefore Mussolini’s preference for spiritual racism marks his willingness to still maintain some degree of independence from Nazism. Spiritual racism was a result of inner development of fascism on the road to totalitarization, thus, this stream was the most useful for the regime.

Summing up, fascism had the potential to turn antisemitic because of being a dictatorship with aspirations of building up totalitarianism and homogenizing people. The same prejudice, the belief in the existence of an international Jewish lobby, provided the basis of philosemitic and pro-Zionist fascist policies in the “honeymoon period” of fascism and Jewry, but also provided the basis for fascist antisemitism.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 99–110.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 77–81.

### III. 2. The Fascist Regime and Italian Jews

Mussolini liked to refer to Italy as “the only European country free of antisemitism”. Indeed, when the fascist movement was born (1919-22), antisemitism was an isolated phenomenon in Italy, modern antisemitism was hardly noticeable and Catholic anti-Judaism was isolated due to the meager influence of the Vatican after the unification of Italy. The Papal State forced Roman Jews to live in ghettos even in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, no wonder that Jews fought enthusiastically for Italy’s unification during the *Risorgimento* and thus gained patriotic merits paving their way to a quick integration during the liberal age (from the unification in 1861 to Mussolini’s coming to power).<sup>112</sup> Therefore in the time of the fascist movement’s birth Jews were seen just as potentially convertible people to fascism like average Italians.

Jews were not only among the founding fathers of fascism (Cesare Goldman hired the hall where the founding meeting was held, and Duilio Sinigaglia, Gino Bolaffi and Bruno Modolfo were martyrs of the early movement), some of them held most prestigious positions in the consolidated regime, such as Guido Jung Finance Minister (1932-35). Margherita Sarfatti was both editor of the official fascist newspaper “*Popolo d’Italia*” (“Italy’s People”) and the mistress of Mussolini for a long time. She wrote the first hagiographic biography of the Duce.<sup>113</sup>

Retrospectively, Evola and other fascist ideologues strived to prove that anti-fascism and being Jewish was intertwined. It was not the case before 1938. Since antisemitism did not belong to the essence of fascism, being Jewish did not predestinate anyone to oppose it. Using Alexander De Grand’s definition, fascism was “a doctrine of bourgeois resurgence whose essence was anti-liberalism and anti-socialism, the core of its ideology was radical nationalism”.<sup>114</sup> Therefore anti-

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<sup>112</sup> Rome was annexed to unified Italy only in 1870.

<sup>113</sup> Margherita Sarfatti, *The Life of Benito Mussolini* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925). Interestingly it was published first in English and only later in Italian, the Italian version’s title is *Dux*.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander De Grand, *Italian Fascism. Its Origins and Development.*, 2. ed (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), XII.

liberal, anti-socialist, and Italian nationalist Jews were attracted to it. While anti-liberalism, anti-socialism and radical nationalism go often hand in hand with modern antisemitism, as argued above, Italian nationalism did not due to its historical anticlericalism. Furthermore, Italian fascism possessed another substantial feature which distanced it from antisemitism: the positive evaluation of modernity.

At the same time – especially in the beginning – there was not one fascism, but different *fascisms*, since the starting point was a rebellion against the liberal establishment blamed for the mutilated victory of Italy in the First World War. This rebellion unified different political streams. There were perpetrators of antisemitic vandalism (smashing gates of synagogues, prayer books and prayer shawls) among the members of the fascist troops. Michele Sarfatti, who supports the view of a continuity of antisemitism in Italian fascism, points out that anti-Jewish vandal attacks were never investigated and antisemites never oppressed in the fascist party.<sup>115</sup>

Renzo De Felice holds that while Jewish individuals participated in the creation of fascism (for instance the two hundred and fifty Jews possessing the certificate of being participants in the *March on Rome*), the community leadership was distrustful between 1922 and 1926 due to the increasing reconciliatory gestures of Mussolini's government towards the Vatican (most notably the introduction of obligatory Catholic religious education in primary education). However, Mussolini consciously built up a policy leading to a compromise in 1926.<sup>116</sup>

The double-edged belief in the international Jewish lobby made Mussolini and doctrinaire fascists suspect Jews of dual loyalty. The ambition to homogenize the population, characterizing totalitarianism, inevitably put Jews in a delicate situation as members of a minority. Therefore

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<sup>115</sup> Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 2006, 46.

<sup>116</sup> De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 2008, 78–101.

anti-Jewish suspicions and corresponding attitudes existed always in the fascist regime, even during the “honeymoon period”.

While numerous Jews were working in the cultural and scientific sphere, not a single Jewish scholar was appointed to the *Accademia d'Italia*. Italian cultural sphere was traditionally characterized by the dominant role of academies. Mussolini founded the *Accademia d'Italia* in 1926 for the sake of centralizing and controlling more effectively the field of culture. This academy was generously funded by the state, including high annual allowance to the members, who were appointed by the government. Annalisa Capristo argued that Jewish scholars were not missing by chance from the membership.<sup>117</sup> Excellent Jewish scholars were suggested to Mussolini from the academy's inauguration in 1929 on, yet none of the Jewish nominees was appointed.<sup>118</sup> As early as in 1929 anti-fascist émigrés in Paris held that Jewish candidates were deliberately excluded for Mussolini's anti-Jewish prejudice. Emil Ludwig raised the question in his “*Conversations with Mussolini*” in 1932. The Duce stated that it was only by chance that there had been no Jewish members appointed yet, however Alessandro Della Seta archeologist was a nominee. He did not mention that he had just a few days earlier refused to appoint Della Seta. As Ugo Ojetti, writer and art critic, member of the *Accademia d'Italia*, revealed in his diary, Mussolini refused Della Seta's appointment precisely because Della Seta was a Jew.<sup>119</sup>

In fact, Mussolini even in his philosemitic and pro-Zionist period took care to clarify the limitations of his benevolence. In 1928, in the same year in which he created the Italian-Palestinian Committee, he published an unsigned article in the newspaper “*Il Popolo di Roma*”

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<sup>117</sup> Annalisa Capristo, “*The Exclusion of Jews from Italian Academies*”, in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, Ed. by Joshua Zimmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 81–95.

<sup>118</sup> Among the excellent Jewish scholars who were suggested to Mussolini were Gino Arias, professor of political economy, Member of Parliament, fascist since 1923 and Catholic from 1932; Giorgio Del Vecchio, professor of philosophy, fascist since 1921, rector of the University of Rome (1925-27); Federigo Enriques scholar of geometry; and Carlo Foà, professor of physiology, fascist since 1924.

<sup>119</sup> Capristo, “*The Exclusion of Jews from Italian Academies*”, 82.

warning Italian Jews that they should decide whether they constituted a religion or a nation and that the necessary conclusion would be drawn from the answer. Mussolini instructed his Jewish mistress, Margherita Sarfatti, to inform the Milanese community about the Duce's authorship.<sup>120</sup> As a result of this maneuver prominent Jews expressed their devotion to fascism and dissociation from Zionism.

Nonetheless, Barduzzi, Italian consul in Marseille, wrote to the Duce in 1929 confidentially, that he felt it necessary to eliminate Jews from the leading positions of the Marseille Italian colony, because "a Jew cannot be a convinced fascist" and because of the domination of Jews in the antifascist Italian émigré community of France.<sup>121</sup> In 1934 even the mainstream media began to identify Jews collectively as anti-fascists, when the trial of seventeen members of the illegal anti-fascist organization *Giustizia e libertà*, out of which eleven were Jewish, was interpreted as a Jewish conspiracy.<sup>122</sup> After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War the large number of Jews involved in anti-fascism and also in the Italian political émigré communities was often emphasized. Nevertheless, until the publication of the "*Manifest of Race*" in July 1938 which declared Jews' non-belonging to the Italian race, the possibility of Jews' loyalty was maintained.

Just like there were fascist and antifascist Jews, there were antifascist Zionists and Zionists loyal to the fascist regime as well. While from our perspective, after all the horrors attached to fascism it is not appropriate to apply the expression "fascist" to the Revisionist Zionists, in the 1930s they referred to themselves as the "fascists among the Zionists", an opinion

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<sup>120</sup> Ledeen, "*The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism*", 8–9. (Mussolini's article concerned was written a propos a Zionist Congress held in Milan.)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>122</sup> Fausto Coen, *Italiani ed ebrei: come eravamo: le leggi razziali del 1938 (Italians and Jews: This is Who We Were. The Racial Laws of 1938)* (Genova: Marietti, 1988), 17. Carlo Levi, the author of the famous novel "*Christ Stopped at Eboli*", was also exiled to the South as a result of this trial and the novel was inspired by his experiences gained in a God-forsaken Southern Italian village during his exile.



shared by their opponents belonging to other streams of Zionism.<sup>123</sup> Leone Carpi, the leader of Italian Revisionist Zionists maintained that “Italianism” and strong Zionist attachment to Eretz Israel were compatible.<sup>124</sup> At the same time those few Jews who made aliyah in the fascist period (for instance, between 1926 and 1938 only one hundred and fifty-one), according to the interviews of Cristina Bettin made with many of them in the 1980s, were first anti-fascists and only afterwards became Zionists. They arrived at a strong identification with Eretz Israel because fascism alienated them from their Italian identity.<sup>125</sup>

Apart from the few anti-fascist Zionists and non Zionist anti-fascists, Italian Jewry was surprised and shocked by the antisemitic turn in 1938. Despite the obvious premonitory bad signals, such as antisemitic press campaign of 1934, and the Berlin-Rome Axis in 1936, throughout the 1930s Mussolini continuously reassured Jewry that there was no hostility against Jews in their quality of being Jewish, but only against certain Jews as antifascists. Therefore many Jews armed with their and their ancestors’ patriotic merits unconsciously paid more attention to the good signals than to the bad ones, since the former were easier to believe.

Concluding, Italian fascism was characterized by the simultaneous application of policies towards Jewry and Zionism contradicting each other. While Jews were recognized for their fascist merits, they were suspected of a potential dual loyalty instead of an exclusive loyalty to fascist Italy. Zionists were treated as allies in Italian expansionism, first of all if foreign Zionists, while Italian Jews were expected to remain rather Italians than Jews. These controversies made it possible for Italian and foreign Jews to adhere to fascism. For despite the continuous presence of

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<sup>123</sup> David Ben Gurion dubbed Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism “Vladimir Hitler”. Michael Stanislawski *Introduction*, in Vladimir Jabotinsky: *The Five*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), XII.

<sup>124</sup> Della Seta, *Italian Zionism Confronts Fascism and the Racial Laws*, 44.

<sup>125</sup> Bettin, *Italian Jews from Emancipation to the Racial Laws*, 129.

potential antisemitism, fascism provided favorable circumstances for Jewish life in Italy, especially if compared to contemporary Germany or Central Europe.

In the next chapter we turn to the manifestation of all these controversies in the sphere of higher education, the most important sphere for the story of the *numerus clausus* exiles, and thereafter turn to the integration of foreign, including Hungarian Jewish students.

## IV. Fascist Italian Higher Education and Foreign Jewish Students

While the problem of relations between fascism and antisemitism and the suddenness or not suddenness of introducing antisemitic legislation in 1938 has a voluminous scholarly literature,<sup>126</sup> fascist hospitality towards foreign Jews has so far remained somewhat marginalized. The most comprehensive work on Italian Jewish history during fascism by Renzo De Felice refers to the presence of foreign Jews, but it is essentially a history of Italian Jews.<sup>127</sup> Michele Sarfatti's work, although its title suggests that it is a history of Jews in Italy and not a history of Italian Jews, does not engage in narrating the story of those Jews who chose fascist Italy over their home countries.<sup>128</sup> Sarfatti argues convincingly that fascism violated religious equality from the outset and that the antisemitic wing of the fascist party was never suppressed by Mussolini. However, in his analysis the presence of foreign Jews who benefitted from fascist neutrality and even from benevolence between 1923 and 1938 is not taken into consideration. Apart from works specifically engaged in the history of universities, foreign Jewish students are treated as characters of the Jewish history of fascist Italy only in Cristina Bettin's book on Jewish integration in Italy<sup>129</sup> and in Onofri's local history on Bologna.<sup>130</sup>

The most significant achievement of fascist Italy in the field of education, the Gentile reform, excellently reflects fascist ambiguity towards Jews. From an Italian Jewish perspective, it

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<sup>126</sup> See first of all Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (History of the Italian Jews under Fascism); Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*; Francesco Germinario, *Fascismo e antisemitismo: progetto razziale e ideologia totalitaria* (Fascism and Antisemitism: Racial Project and Totalitarian Ideology); Michael Ledeen, "The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism", Fausto Coen, *Italiani ed ebrei: come eravamo: le leggi razziali del 1938* (Italians and Jews: This Is Who We Were. The Racial Laws of 1938). Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival*. (New York: Basic Books, 1987).; Sergio Della Pergola and Robert Wistrich (eds.), *Fascist Antisemitism and the Italian Jews*.

<sup>127</sup> De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 2008.

<sup>128</sup> Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*.

<sup>129</sup> Cristina Bettin, *Italian Jews from Emancipation to the Racial Laws*.

<sup>130</sup> Nazario Sauro Onofri, *Ebrei e fascismo a Bologna* (Jews and Fascism in Bologna) (Crespellano: Editrice Grafica Lavino, 1989). If not concentrating on students, Klaus Voigt's monograph on the German Jewish refugees in Italy after 1933, has to be considered a basic work of the topic. Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario: gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*. (The Precarious Refuge. The Exiles in Italy from 1933 to 1945.) Vols. 1-2. (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1996).

was a calamity, since it brought to an end of secularity in public primary education. Gentile's reform confirmed the return of Catholic influence to schools which had already begun in 1921-22. Mussolini declared as early as 1921 that Catholicism could be used for national expansion and Dario Lupi, Undersecretary of Public Instruction, restored the crucifixes in classrooms in November 1922.<sup>131</sup> Gentile in 1923 went further and introduced obligatory religious education in schools, which exposed Jewish children to a strong Catholic proselytizing.<sup>132</sup> At the same time, on the level of higher education, Gentile's innovations did not only not harm Jews, but on the contrary, provided foreign Jewish youth with favorable circumstances to study in Italian universities. This was especially important for East Central European Jews, since in the very same years Hungary implemented the antisemitic *numerus clausus* law; Polish and Romanian academic sphere was characterized by a widespread obsession with a presumed necessity of a *numerus clausus*; and anti-Jewish violence was on the agenda in German and Austrian universities. It is not to say that Gentile intended to attract specifically Jews to Italy, but that his efforts to internationalize the student body of Italian universities met an existing demand of East Central European Jews for a country where they would be allowed to study without facing antisemitic hostility.

#### IV.1. Fascist Efforts to Internationalize Italian Universities

Benito Mussolini called the Gentile reform "the most fascist reform", demonstrating how much it expressed the aim of fascism, namely the transformation of Italy into a great power.<sup>133</sup> Gentile – similarly to his Hungarian colleague, Kunó Klebelsberg – succeeded in convincing his government that public education is a central vehicle of increasing a state's power and therefore

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<sup>131</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, 44.

<sup>132</sup> Ledeen, "The Evolution of Italian Fascist Antisemitism", 4.

<sup>133</sup> Giulio Palermo, *L'Università dei baroni. (The University of Barons.)* Milano: Edizioni Punto Rosso, 2011, 21.

must be a major concern of politics. Gentile found that there were too many universities and students in Italy and of a too low quality. Therefore he aimed to decrease the number of students and to increase the quality of education.<sup>134</sup> However, this did not lead to the exclusion of foreigners. On the contrary, there was an effort to allure qualified foreigners in for the sake of expanding Italian influence abroad. Consequently, the Gentile reform was expansionist, it instructed universities to encourage foreigners to apply. Since the other most important characteristic of the reform was authoritarianism resulting in the deprivation of universities from most of their traditional autonomy, Italian universities applied uniform admission policies.

How much the role of having foreign students was taken as a part of a country's international prestige is demonstrated not only by the minister's instructions, but also by declarations of academics. For instance, Giorgio del Vecchio, rector of the Sapienza University of Rome, in his speech inaugurating the academic year 1926-27 expressed Italian jealousy for the international student body of the Sorbonne and emphasized that foreign students, upon their return to their home countries, would spread the seeds of Italian civilization.<sup>135</sup>

The first step for the sake of attracting foreign students to fascist Italy was the full tuition waiver for two years, offered to foreigners enrolling in an Italian university in 1923. As Guido Mazzoni, the president of the *Italian Committee for Foreign Jewish Students*, reported in 1925, due to the influx of more than a thousand foreigners, the number of Jewish students in Italy rose to an unprecedented level.<sup>136</sup> As mentioned earlier, in Hungary the rumor that tuition was for free in Italy was maintained for a long time. This misunderstanding by Lajos Szabolcsi found its way

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<sup>134</sup>Claudia Farkas, "A zsidó iskola fénysugár." *Irányok és zsidóellenesség a fasiszta Olaszország oktatáspolitikájában (The Jewish school: trail of light. Directions and Hostility towards Jews in the Educational Politics of Fascist Italy).* Dissertation for habilitation." (Budapest: OR-ZSE Hungarian Jewish Rabbinical Seminary, 2013), 14.

<sup>135</sup> "Discorso del Prof. Giorgio del Vecchio (Discourse of Prof. Giorgio del Vecchio)", in *Annuario della regia università degli studi di Roma dell'anno scolastico 1926-27 (Yearbook of the Royal University of Rome "Sapienza" for 1926-27)* (Rome), 15. Archivio Storico dell'Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza".

<sup>136</sup> "A numerus clausus hatodik éve előtt (*Before the Sixth Year of the Numerus Clausus*)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No. 34 (August 22, 1925): 2.

to Hungarian historiography on the *numerus clausus*. Nevertheless, the fact that foreign students enjoyed advantages in Italy is true.

It is noteworthy, that internationalization was a more important concern than the quality of applications. Despite Gentile's original intention to decrease the number of students and simultaneously increasing the quality of the student body, foreign students practically only needed to prove their high school graduation to be accepted in an Italian university. Virtually all the forty-six Hungarian Jewish students, whose documents I reviewed during my research in the Archives of the University of Bologna, had very bad grades in their maturity exams, yet their application was accepted.

As mentioned earlier, fascist Italy's hospitality towards foreign Jewish migrant students can be interpreted as something different from neutrality with regards to ethnic and religious background. Renzo De Felice suggests that already the partial tuition waiver introduced in 1926 was a gesture on the part of Mussolini intended to win the favor of Jews for fascism.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, Elisa Signori points out in her fundamental study on foreign Jewish student influx to fascist Italy "*An Academic Peregrination in Contemporary Age: The Foreign Jewish Students at the Italian Universities between the two World Wars*", that the new sending countries of migrant students in the interwar period were Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Baltic states.<sup>138</sup> Most of these countries were marked by academic antisemitism. The preponderance of students from these countries (first of all Romania, Poland and Hungary) among foreigners in Italy is especially demonstrable for the 1930s, when the Italian Ministry of Education obliged the

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<sup>137</sup> Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 2008, 80.

<sup>138</sup> Elisa Signori, "*Una peregrinatio academica in età contemporanea: gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre. (An Academic Peregrination In Contemporary Age: The Foreign Jewish Students at the Italian Universities Between The Two Wars.)*".

universities to include statistical tables about the students in their yearbooks, consequently the background of students became comparable on the basis of the same type of data.

The Fascist Student Unions of each Italian university (Gruppi Universitari Fascisti, abbreviated as GUF) had an essential role in the indoctrination of the students, thus making them fascists. On the other hand, it was a narrow, albeit state-supported field for student initiatives, facilitating the organization of student life. The GUF was a privileged “laboratory of the fascist experiment” according to Elisa Signori. Conquering the youth is always essential for securing a regime’s sustainability. The amount of state support spent on student organizations by the fascist regime had no precedent in pre-fascist Italy.<sup>139</sup> The GUF implemented the political leadership’s will to student life. The involvement of the GUF in integrating the foreign students demonstrates how high a concern this integration was for the regime.

Foreign students could enroll in the GUF of their university from 1927. From this year on, they benefitted from a number of advantages connected to GUF membership, first of all the right to stay in cheap dormitories (“Casa dello studente”), to attend the student canteens, and the GUF organized Italian language courses for them on all levels.<sup>140</sup> Being youth organizations controlled from above by a regime aspiring to totalitarianism, the GUF tried to fill all the free time of the students as well. Understandably, for foreign students even the leisure activities organized by the GUF were particularly important. These programs included above sport activities, trips to make foreign students visit multiple places in Italy. Foreign students had even their own representation within the GUF through the national groups headed by trustees.

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<sup>139</sup> Elisa Signori "Prefazione (Preface)", in Simona Salustri: *La nuova guardia. Gli universitari bolognesi tra le due guerre (1919-1943)* (*The New Guard* [newspaper title] : *The Bolognese Academics between the Two Wars, 1919-1943*) (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), VII.

<sup>140</sup> Simona Salustri, *La nuova guardia: gli universitari bolognesi tra le due guerre (1919-1943)* ("The New Guard": *The Bolognese Students between the two Wars 1919-1943*), 122–123.

The Bolognese GUF published from 1933 its student newspaper “*La Nuova Guardia*” (“The New Guard”), first as a pamphlet attached to another publication, then as a supplement of it. *La Nuova Guardia* had special editions in several foreign languages explaining and propagating certain specific facets of fascism.<sup>141</sup> The aim of such publications was both propaganda to be spread abroad (these issues were delivered to the organizations taking part in the *Confédération internationale des étudiants* and to GUF based abroad) and to be distributed among foreign students present in Italy.

The GUF of Bologna nurtured the confidence of Jewish students in their future in Italy particularly for its role in the establishment of a kosher canteen in Bologna and for its standing up against German antisemitism in 1935.

Establishing a kosher canteen was initiated by the Zionist Student Union *Techiyah* (“*Salvation*”), founded by eighty-nine Jewish students of the University of Bologna in 1934. The Bolognese Jewish community’s attitude was ambiguous both towards this association and the idea of the kosher canteen. Although there was an enthusiastic protector of the project inside the community, Vasco Finzi, the community’s president, Attilio Muggia was against the plan.<sup>142</sup> Muggia might have thought that the key to authorities’ benevolence towards foreign Jews was their integration and a kosher canteen demonstrated the opposite intention, Jews should not present specific demands. We must remember that in 1934 the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany to Italy had already started and Italian Jews experienced earlier in that year a fascist press campaign identifying Judaism as something intertwined with anti-fascism. In March 1934

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<sup>141</sup> Gian Paolo Brizzi, *Bologna 1938: Silence and Remembering: The Racial Laws and the Foreign Jewish Students at the University of Bologna*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> Gian Paolo Brizzi, “Bologna, 1938. Il silenzio e la memoria. Le leggi razziali e gli studenti ebrei stranieri dell’Università di Bologna (Bologna, 1938. Silence and remembrance. The racial laws and the foreign Jewish students of the University of Bologna)”, In *La cattedra negata: dal giuramento di fedeltà al fascismo alle leggi razziali nell’Università di Bologna (The Negated Chair. From the Oath of Loyalty to Fascism to the Racial Laws at the University of Bologna)*, Ed. by Domenico Mirri and Stefano Arieti (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002), 63–64.



Jews were blamed collectively of anti-fascism even in mainstream media, after the trial of the *Giustizia e libertà* members, as was detailed in the previous chapter.

The support of the *Fascist Student Union* for the *Zionist Student Union* in Bologna is all the more noteworthy. The Fascist student leadership was more well-informed regarding the intentions of Mussolini's entourage, which was truly controversial in the 1930s. While fascist media interpreted anti-fascist rebellion as a Jewish conspiracy, in the very same year the government began to finance the training of foreign Revisionist Zionists in the nautical school of Civitavecchia, as was mentioned in the previous chapter. Thus, different groups of Jews were differentiated by the fascist government, Revisionist Zionists were favored, and Zionist foreign students accepted as well. For it should be stressed, that the membership of *Techiyah* was constituted mainly of Polish, Romanian, and German Jewish students, additionally three Hungarians (Elek Hirschler, Imre Klein and Ernő Klein), and only three Italian students joined.

Muggia's worries could be strengthened by the police's opposition to the kosher canteen. In the end Muggia informed the president of *Techiyah*, Nachum Kochanowicz, about a positive result, however in a most reserved tone, not suggesting at all that he was happy about it. The Bolognese authorities permitted the functioning of the Zionist student association and of the kosher canteen, on the condition that the association would not involve itself in any other activity than Jewish cultural life and that the authorities would be informed about any change in the membership.<sup>143</sup> Muggia apparently either suspected these foreign Zionists of being subversive anti-fascists, or feared the potential suspicions their activity could provoke in fascist Italy. He was not alone in the Italian Jewish leadership to have such worries. A few weeks later Felice Ravenna, president of the *Union of Italian Jewish Communities*, warned him in a letter that the

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<sup>143</sup> "Lettera di Attilio Muggia a N. Kohanowicz (Letter of Attilio Muggia to N. Kahanowicz)", October 19, 1934., Gruppo Universitario Sionistico Tehijà/Mensa casher per studenti stranieri/Corrispondenza, Archivio Storico della Comunità ebraica di Bologna (Archives of the Jewish Community of Bologna).

issue of the canteen should not be solely viewed as a Jewish issue. It was at least to the same extent a delicate political issue, and prudence was needed, otherwise the community might end up financing politically “undesirable elements”.<sup>144</sup>

At the same time it is worth noting that the police was concerned about controlling *Techiyah*, in the same way as every youth initiative was controlled in this dictatorship, but did not oppose it for anti-Jewish hostility. It is not known whether the suspicion of a link between Jews and subversion came up or not, or whether it was rather a concern of controlling foreigners and students. However, apparently the GUF’s support was sufficient in combating such worries of the authorities.

One year later, in 1935 “*La Nuova Guardia*” (n. 12, 1935) published a number of articles detesting racism on the occasion that the topic of the international student conference *Congrès de la Confédération internationale des étudiants* was racism. One of the articles was written by the Polish Jew Wolman, at the same time also the Italian leaders of the GUF expressed opinions which reassured Jewish students that the opinion leaders of Fascist youth labeled race theory as non sense, just like their Duce.<sup>145</sup> The foreign Jews’ illusion that they would have a future in Italy was reinforced again.

## IV. 2. Hungarian Jewish Student Life in Italy

The membership of only three Hungarian students in the Bolognese Zionist student association suggests that Zionism had hardly any followers among them. It is not surprising in the light of the weakness of Zionism in interwar Hungary. In fact, most of the accounts on the ideological outlook of the numerous *clausus* refugees in Italy indicate a vivid Hungarian

<sup>144</sup> “Lettera di Felice Ravenna ad Attilio Muggia (Letter of Felice Ravenna to Attilio Muggia)”, November 4, 1934. Gruppo Universitario Sionistico Tehijà/Mensa casher per studenti stranieri/Corrispondenza, Archivio Storico della Comunità ebraica di Bologna (Archives of the Jewish Community of Bologna).

<sup>145</sup> Brizzi, “*Il rientro impossibile. Studenti stranieri ebrei a Bologna 1938-45. (The Impossible Return. Foreign Jewish Students in Bologna 1938-1945.)*”, 169–170.

patriotism, for which they were explicitly praised by the foreign minister in 1926. However, we must remember that most of the accounts are from *Egyenlőség* and from the *Central Student Aid Committee*, thus from the ideological entourage of Lajos Szabolcsi, the major protector of the exiled students. He was vehemently anti-Zionist and a maintainer of the concept of “Hungarians of the Israelite faith”. Thus, students expressing their gratitude for the *Student Aid Committee* and writing to *Egyenlőség* framed their thoughts in such a spirit. A nice example of this framing is a memorandum by the *Association of Hungarian Jewish Students Living in Italy* of 1923, published in *Egyenlőség*, which declared that

*We are proud of being Hungarians and of being Jewish. We promise to you, that we are striving, and we will keep on striving to prove with our honest thoughts that we are Hungarians, Hungarian patriots, who want to dedicate the knowledge learned at the Western universities, the experiences and every noble characteristic to the altar of the homeland and we will triumph, for the truth is ours.*<sup>146</sup>

However, from some individual memoirs it becomes clear that among the migrant students there were some committed leftists, who did not adhere to Szabolcsi’s Hungarian nationalism, at the same time they did not have a strong Jewish self-identification either and were not interested in Zionism, but were committed to universalist ideologies. For instance, Simon Teich, who graduated in medicine in Turin, had to choose Italy, as the cheapest country for studies, since his family stopped financing him due to his social democratic activity, deemed as subversive.<sup>147</sup> Another doctor, Aladár Hábermann, although finding a job in Hungary with his Viennese medical degree (followed by another degree in Rome and a state exam in Milan), left Hungary for being politically undesirable.<sup>148</sup> It is noteworthy that although he was a principled leftist, he was

<sup>146</sup> „Büszkék vagyunk arra, hogy magyarok vagyunk, hogy zsidók vagyunk. Ígérjük nektek, hogy mi igyekezzünk és igyekezni fogunk, őszinte gondolkodásunkkal: bebizonyítani majd, hogy mi magyarok vagyunk, magyar hazafiak, akik a nyugati országokban elsajátított tudományt, tapasztalatot, minden nemes tulajdonságot és érzést a magyar haza oltárára ajánljuk és szenteljük és így győzni fogunk, mert miénk az igazság”. *“Elena Jaffe, olasz bujdosók megmentője (Elena Jaffe, savior of the exiles in Italy)”*, *Egyenlőség* Vol. 42, No. 48 (December 1, 1923.): 2–3.

<sup>147</sup> Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza.*, and attached DVD interview with the author.

<sup>148</sup> This is the remark of his daughter, Anna Maria Hábermann, who helped the author of this thesis with sharing a lot of details, even details above the story of the Hábermann family to which she dedicated several books and a

allowed to settle in fascist Italy, where politically suspicious people were under surveillance. Yet another Jewish student, the Polish Dora Klein, graduate of Bologna wrote a detailed memoir, in which narrated the student life she shared with Hungarian Jewish students as well. Her story sheds light on a curious facet of the control fascist authorities imposed on the foreign students, since she was a Communist, yet she became aware of having been under surveillance by the Italian political police since her arrival in Italy only when she tried to marry an Italian marine officer, who did not receive the Ministry's permission to marry her due to her former Communist activity in Czechoslovakia.<sup>149</sup> Thus, the political police was aware of which students were anti-fascist, yet they were not harmed unless they wanted to achieve something more than enrollment in a university. Having international students was so important, that even anti-fascists were allowed to study in Italy.

At the same time, there were supporters of fascism among the migrant students, so much so, that in Padua a student club for the foreign supporters of fascism was established (*Nucleo Universitario Studenti Stranieri Aderenti al Fascismo*) by the Hungarian Jew Imre Lukács. Lukács was even accepted by the Duce in audience in 1928.<sup>150</sup> Concluding, the political outlook of the *numerus clausus* exiles was just as varied as that of Italian Jews. In the following, I move the focus to the question how these students lived in Italy.

Lili Fenyő, medical student in Florence, in her most readable account on the life of *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy “*Snapshots from the life of Hungarian students abroad*” characterized the arrival of the students in Italy in the following colorful way:

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documentary film: Anna Maria Hábermann, *Il labirinto di carta*. (*The Labyrinth of Papers.*) (Milano: Proedi Editore, 2010); Anna Maria Hábermann, Tamás Kieselbach, and Ildikó Tóth, *Tamás könyve* (*The book of Tamás*) (Budapest: Kieselbach, 2010).; Róbert Kollár and Sándor Lázs, *Holtak országa* (*A country of the dead*), documentary, (2011).

<sup>149</sup> Dora Klein, *Vivere e sopravvivere: diario 1936-1945* (*To Live and To Survive: Diary 1936-1945*) (Milano: Mursia, 2004).

<sup>150</sup> Emilio Tassi, "Lettera di Emilio Tassi al Capo del Governo (Letter of Emilio Tassi to the Prime Minister)", 1938. settembre 15., SPD. (Special Secretary of the Duce) CR. (Reserved) 1922-19434. 80R. Busta (envelope) 143, Fascicolo (file): 197 Lukács Dott. Emerico, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

*One goes to Padua, because a famous medical professor lectures there. The other goes to Florence, because if being forced to go abroad, (s)he prefers Florence, the city of arts. The third chooses Rome. Catania is the choice of the fourth, because it's cheaper there. The fifth rolls the dice on a map. Where does it fall? (S)he will go there. After all, it does not matter. Nobody is expected by anyone, nobody has a destination. We can go anywhere, if there is a university, where it is possible to study. [...] We are not going anywhere. We are only coming from somewhere, where we are banned from studying.<sup>151</sup>*

After this sorrowful introduction the author goes on to describe the difficulties of finding their place in Italy with a sense of humor. Her account mirrors the typical phenomena of the migratory student life narrated in numerous articles of *Egyenlőség* as well. She belongs to the students narrating in the spirit of Szabolcsi's entourage, emphasizing both Jewish self-consciousness and Hungarian patriotism.

First of all, the aspect of chain migration is revealed from "*Snapshots*" which tells the story of three girls who go to study medicine to Florence. At the same time, the author's emphasized intention is reporting on the life Hungarian Jewish students in Italy on behalf of a collective. One of the girls speaks Italian, since she has already finished two years in Padua, however it turns out that those starting their studies hardly speak any Italian. The different little groups of Hungarian Jews find each other quickly in the university and befriend their Italian peers as well.

*Within one month each of us has Italian friends, within six weeks each of us knows Italian families and the mother of our friend considers us her own child and everybody is trying to make us forget that we are alone in a foreign country.<sup>152</sup>*

Besides the courtesy of Italian simple folk, that of professors and university administrators is stressed as well. The life of the exiles is characterized by a grave homesickness, deficiency of Italian knowledge initially, financial difficulties continuously and strong group solidarity with the compatriots. It turns out as well, that after a short while it becomes obvious to everyone, that virtually all the foreign students are Jewish. Interestingly enough, the patriotic Jewish main

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<sup>151</sup> Fenyő, *Snapshots*, 5.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

characters defend Hungary in conversations where Italians argue for the absurdity of antisemitic Hungarian politics. The girls do not approach the local Jewish community until Passover. Passover makes their longing for their families unbearable therefore one of the Hungarian peers arranges a dinner invitation for Seder by an old Florentine Jewish couple.

The fact that numerous students went to Italy without speaking or understanding Italian, makes the preponderance of medical students among them understandable. According to the Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks, seventy-four percent of Hungarian enrollments in Italy were registered at a medical faculty between the academic years 1925-26 and 1937-38.<sup>153</sup> Italy was a good option first of all for those interested in a medical career. In Hungarian gymnasias it was obligatory to learn Latin for eight years. Thus, high school graduates had a Latin knowledge which helped them in their medical studies and in learning Italian quickly.

The matter of language is one of the few aspects of the exile in Italy in which Italian-Hungarian cultural approaching helped the numerous *clausus* exiles, since it extended the possibilities of learning Italian in Hungary. The teaching of Italian as an elective subject was introduced in numerous high schools in 1924, since the new law about the high schools (1924: XI.) obliged scientific gymnasias to teach a modern language, English, French or Italian as elective subject besides the obligatory Latin and German teaching. The years following the Italian-Hungarian contract of friendship in 1927 saw the further increase in the availability of Italian teaching in Hungary.<sup>154</sup> Thus, the younger Jewish children could choose to study Italian in the Hungarian educational system and follow the pioneers of the early 1920s to Italy with a higher level of preparedness to study in Italian.

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<sup>153</sup> See the volumes of *Hungarian Statistical Yearbooks* between 1926 and 1938.

<sup>154</sup> Beáta Szlavikovszki, *"Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the history of Hungarian-Italian cultural relations between 1880 and 1945.)"*, 111–112.

The financial difficulties of the Hungarian Jewish students detailed in Fenyő's report are repeated in multiple accounts. Furthermore the students experienced that local Jewish communities were not particularly eager to support foreign Jewish students. The memorandum by the *Association of Hungarian Jewish Students Living in Italy* of 1923 (quoted above) stated that the attitude of Italian colleagues was most courteous; however, Hungarian Jewish students were suffering misery and starvation. Some of them turned to the local Jewish communities to ask for a meager support to make it possible for them to stay in Italy and continue their studies, however, they were rejected everywhere. The community representatives most politely sent them away arguing that they were overburdened with supporting their own poor. Only one, the earlier mentioned Mrs. Elena Jaffe of Padua, engaged in collecting donations for the Hungarian Jewish students.<sup>155</sup>

At the same time in an overview of the situation in Italy in the same issue of *Egyenlőség* which published this memorandum, we read that the four Hungarian Jewish students living in Florence were most satisfied by experiencing benevolence and help first of all from the local Jews who were striving to establish a canteen for the foreign Jewish students by the end of the month.<sup>156</sup> Two years later Miklós Langer, student of medicine in Naples, nevertheless, emphasized that:

*The rumor, that the Italian communities support us financially, is not true. At least, the community in Naples has not even supported a single foreign Jewish student so far.*<sup>157</sup>

In fact, in the same year even the Florence-based *Italian Committee for Foreign Jewish Students* warned Hungarian Jewish prospective students that only those should come to Italy, who could secure for themselves fifteen dollars monthly, since the only support they could count on was the

<sup>155</sup> "Elena Jaffé, olasz bujdosók megmentője (Elena Jaffe, savior of the exiles in Italy)".

<sup>156</sup> "Zsidó diákok vándorútja (Wandering of Jewish students)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 42, No. 48 (December 1, 1923): 10.

<sup>157</sup> Miklós Langer, "A magyar zsidóság nagy Golusz-regénye (The Great Exile-novel of Hungarian Jewry)", *Egyenlőség* Vol. 44, No. 29 (July 18, 1925.): 8.

partial tuition waver and it was virtually impossible to find employment in Italy to earn a living.<sup>158</sup>

The University of Bologna deserves a special emphasis for its primacy regarding Hungarian presence. The archives of this university preserves the files of students from the fascist period, which contain every document related to the individuals, mostly documents submitted for university administration, thus certificates of Hungarian citizenship to receive the partial tuition waver of foreigners, maturity exam certificates and birth certificates, and usually the student's thesis as well. I reviewed forty-six of the approximately three hundred Hungarian student dossiers of the interwar period, I chose such students whom I found either in the report of consul Pözel, analyzed in the second chapter, or in the sources referring to Hungarian Jewish presence in Italy after 1938, which will be analyzed in the fifth chapter.<sup>159</sup> Thus, I reviewed the dossiers of such students whom I knew to be *numerus clausus* exiles. This is not a representative sample. Therefore I will not draw quantitative conclusions. I will only outline some of the characteristics almost all of these students shared.

The vast majority of them enrolled in the faculty of medicine, a few of them studied engineering or pharmacy. They did not achieve good grades in their maturity exam in Hungary, thus my initial hypothesis that Italian universities grasped the most talented foreign students, thus that the application policy was meritocratic, was not verified. Apparently, only the fact of applicants' being high school graduates was considered, not the grades achieved in the maturity exam. Not even proving knowledge of Italian was required. Thanks to the partial tuition waver even children of lower middle class families were able to enroll, for many of the students came from families of artisans in the Hungarian countryside. One of the students, Júlia Fischer, even

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<sup>158</sup> "A *numerus clausus* hatodik éve előtt (Before the sixth year of the *numerus clausus*)".

<sup>159</sup> Fascicoli degli studenti, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.



presented a “certificate of poverty” to the university, issued in Budapest for the purposes of administering her visa.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, besides the relatively low costs of living Italy was characterized by the lack of part-time employment for students, therefore they needed to rely on their families’ support or on the *Student Aid Committee*. It was even more so in the case of girls. This explains partially the low proportion of women among the exiles of the *numerus clausus* exiles. Even less employment possibilities were open to women than to men. Girls could take on teaching private lessons. But, unlike men, they could not work as porters or waiters. Women were underrepresented in Hungarian higher education any way, however it is also true, that families were more reluctant to send their daughters to abroad to study. For a young girl living alone abroad could lead to compromising situations.

Since birth certificates included the fathers’ occupation, it can be seen that all the students reviewed by me were the first generation in their family to study in higher education. The fathers were merchants, commercial agents, and artisans. Thus these young people came from such Jewish families who were eager to achieve social mobility through the education of their children, even despite the *numerus clausus* law. Some students did not succeed in concluding their studies for economic or other reasons,<sup>161</sup> and most of those who did, did so after studies at two or three different universities. The career of Miklós Frankl, who started his medical studies in Florence, continued in Pavia and enrolled in Bologna in 1927, where he graduated in 1931, was typical.<sup>162</sup> Peregrination between different countries was not exceptional either. It was more

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<sup>160</sup> "Fischer Julie. Dossier 6625.", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students’ dossiers), 6625., Archivio Storico dell’Università di Bologna.

<sup>161</sup> A medical student of Bologna, László Földes, who became a literary character in the novels of his nephew, the writer Pál Bárdos, ceased his studies in Bologna in 1932 and never continued due to his decision to emigrate to America and never to return to Europe. Bárdos Pál, *Az első évtized* (The First Decade) (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1986); Pál Bárdos, *Frau Földes von Makó*, vol 1, 4 vols (Budapest: Syllabux, 2012). Pál Bárdos was so kind to share with the author some further background information.

<sup>162</sup> "Frankl Nicola. Dossier 8146", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students’ dossiers), 8146, Archivio Storico dell’Università di Bologna.

common to finish in Italy studies begun in a university with German as the language of instruction, as László Aczél did, who left Prague for Padua and then Padua for Bologna.<sup>163</sup> However, some broke their studies in Italy to leave for a German-instructing university, as László Brüll, who left Padua for Brno and from Brno went to Bologna.<sup>164</sup> Peregrinating back and forth between Padua and Bologna was especially common. For leaving for another university, one needed to submit a request for the rector's permission, for which it was not necessary to indicate the reason, however, almost all the requesters referred to "reasons of family". At the same time some left Italy simply because of finally succeeding in sneaking into the Jewish quota in Hungary and enrolling in a Hungarian university. This was the case of Imre Funk and Zsigmond Vámos.<sup>165</sup>

Regarding the overall nature of the Hungarian Jewish students' sojourn in Italy one can conclude that the influx of *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy was a chain migration of young people initially not quite aware of where they were going, only escaping Hungarian academic antisemitism. Italy was an appropriate destination for the lack of academic antisemitism and for the relatively low costs, though peregrination was often continued between different Italian university towns due to the different living standards. At the same time the lack of employment possibilities and the reluctance or incapacity of the local Jewish communities led to a situation of constant economic hardship for the students. The sample of forty-six Hungarian Jewish students of Bologna suggests that the lower middle class social background of many students was possibly another reason for the economic hardships, since many the members of this sample came from families of tradesmen and artisans who might have lacked resources to support their children

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<sup>163</sup> "Aczél Ladislao. Dossier 7641", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers), 7641, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.

<sup>164</sup> "Brüll Ladislao. Dossier 6769", Facoltà di Scienze Matematiche, Fisiche e Naturali (Faculty of Sciences), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' Dossiers), 6769, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.

<sup>165</sup> "Funk Emerich. Dossier 6659", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers), 6659, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna; "Vámos Sigismondo. Dossier 7550", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers), 7550, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna. (Funk returned to Italy after one year at the University of Budapest though.)

abroad. Despite economic difficulties, the hospitality of the Italian population and academics created the nimbus of Italy as a receptive, friendly country in Hungary.

The next chapter poses the question what happened to the Hungarian *numerus clausus* exiles in Italy in 1938 when antisemitic legislation was introduced. Archival sources regarding the fate of those few, who were able to stay in Italy, is in focus. First of all the destiny of those students is investigated who sojourned in Italy even in 1944, at the time of the Hungarian Holocaust.

## V. The Numerus Clausus Refugees in Italy after 1938

The previous chapters have explained what brought Hungarian Jewish students to fascist Italy and under what circumstances they lived there. In this last chapter the question at stake is what happened and why after the turning point of Italian fascist history in 1938 and during the Second World War. It is especially important to ask what happened to the minority who stayed in Italy after the expulsion of foreign Jews, since their destiny, due to their in-between position between Italian and Hungarian Jewry, shows us how much the difference between the Hungarian and the Italian anti-Jewish laws determined chances to survive the Holocaust. There are essential conclusions to be drawn from this part of history with regard to Italy and Hungary, these two allies of the Nazi Empire with their two markedly different Holocaust histories.

Although retrospectively one can look at Italian fascism as a regime potentially turning antisemitic, the introduction of antisemitic legislation in 1938 was an unexpected calamity for both Italian and foreign Jews. The first action taken against Jews was the expulsion of foreign Jews from the universities (August), soon followed by the segregation of Italian Jewish students in all levels of education (September). Giuseppe Bottai, Minister of National Education, banned the universities from accepting foreign Jewish students on August 6. The new rule generated chaos in academia, its application generated a series of contradictions and questions, as the flow of universities' letters to the Ministry demonstrates.<sup>166</sup> Not even the most pressing issue to decide, namely what to do with foreign Jews already enrolled in Italy in previous academic years, was solved for three months. In these three months numerous students left Italy, for instance forty

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<sup>166</sup> "Ministero della pubblica istruzione (Ministry of Public Education), Direzione generale istruzione superiore (General Department for Higher Education), Divisione II leggi, regolamenti, statuti, esami, corsi, statistiche, tasse, studenti ecc. (Division II for Legislation, regulations, statutes, exams, courses, statistics, fees, students) 1925-1945)", Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

percent of foreign students left Bologna.<sup>167</sup> Those who waited long enough, were secured by a decree of November 15 that they were allowed to stay in Italy to finish their studies.<sup>168</sup> A Hungarian Jewish student, Zoltán Traubkatz, asked permission to stay for the remaining eight months until his degree, from the *Special Secretary of the Duce*,<sup>169</sup> as early as September 11. He wrote this request also on behalf of two friends, who signed the letter as well, in which Traubkatz declared: “we are three Hungarians, of Israelite religion and of absolutely fascist sentiments”.<sup>170</sup>

Meanwhile a census of Jews was conducted in August, including foreign Jews. Out of the almost three thousand (2985) Jews who had assumed Italian citizenship later than 1919 (whose citizenship was withdrawn in September and they were obliged to leave Italy within six months with the other foreign Jews),<sup>171</sup> six hundred and forty were Hungarian.<sup>172</sup> However, the Ministry of Interior instructed the prefectures to submit the exact list of foreign Jews residing in the respective localities (including non citizens). Due to this investigation we know that Imre Lukács, the former president of the fascist student club of foreign students in Padua, was living in Pisa as an Italian citizen.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Roberto Finzi, *L'Università italiana e le leggi antiebraiche (The Italian University and the Anti-Jewish Laws)* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1997), 52.

<sup>168</sup> "Regio Decreto-Legge, 15 novembre 1938, No. 1779 (Royal Decree-Law of November 15, 1938, No. 1779)", *Fondazione CDEC - (Foundation Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center) - Milan*, Access: May 14, 2014., [http://www.cdec.it/home2\\_2.asp?idtesto=589&idtesto1=565&son=1&figlio=558&level=7&stampa=1](http://www.cdec.it/home2_2.asp?idtesto=589&idtesto1=565&son=1&figlio=558&level=7&stampa=1). (Italian Jewish students were allowed to finish their studies by the racist law of September 5: Royal Decree Law No. 1390 “For the Defense of the Race in the Fascist School” Finzi, *L'Università italiana e le leggi antiebraiche (The Italian University and the Anti-Jewish Laws)*, 40.

<sup>169</sup> An institution established to handle special requests which demanded the personal decision of Mussolini.

<sup>170</sup> "Traubkatz Zoltán, Arányi János, Magvas László", September 11, 1938., Segreteria Particolare del Duce. (Special Secretary of the Duce) Carteggio riservato 480R. (Reserved 480/R) “Ebrei”. (Jews) 1922-43. Busta (Envelope) 144, Fascicolo (File) 345, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>171</sup> Fausto Coen, *Italiani ed ebrei: come eravamo : le leggi razziali del 1938 (Italians and Jews: This is Who We Were. The Racial Laws of 1938)*, 29.

<sup>172</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo (History of the Italian Jews under Fascism)*, 2008, 8.

<sup>173</sup> *Pisa*, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale Pubblica sicurezza, Divisione Affari generali e riservati. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, Division for general and reserved issues) Busta (Envelope) 14, Fascicolo (File) 61, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma. The same investigation reveals that seven hundred and twenty-eight foreign Jews were residing in Rome, among them the chief rabbi Izidor Kahan, a Hungarian Jew. *Roma (Rome)*, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale Pubblica sicurezza, Divisione Affari generali e riservati.) László Kovács, Hungarian Jewish doctor is on the list as well, mistakenly labeled as a German.

A peculiarity of the Italian anti-Jewish legislation and its application was the widespread practice of “discrimination”, which was the name of the process through which Jewish individuals were exempted from the scope of anti-Jewish laws for their own or their close relatives’ merits. These merits included the (close relative’s) dying, or the individual’s having been wounded or mutilated or decorated for participation in the First World War or in the wars against Libya, Ethiopia or in the Spanish Civil War, or generally for the “fascist cause”, furthermore membership in the fascist party dating previously to 1922.<sup>174</sup> Nearly one quarter of Italian Jewry qualified for exemption for one of these reasons.<sup>175</sup> There were Hungarian Jews who turned to the same method, and indeed some of them could claim having fascist merits. The Central State Archives of Rome (Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma) preserves a lot of letters that were sent in 1938 to the *Special Secretary of the Duce* requesting exemption. An important feature of this body of sources is that numerous letters were not written by the individual concerned, but by his Italian wife. As mentioned earlier, men constituted the majority of the migrant students, therefore in most of the mixed marriages the husband was the Hungarian Jew and the wife the Catholic Italian (foreign Jews married to Jewish Italians were less likely to rely on the exemption, therefore less likely to write such requests). In all of the cases, the authors understandably overemphasized sympathy for fascism, yet they had indeed merits to refer to. Furthermore, in a lot of matters, such as the circumstances for which they left Hungary for Italy

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In fact he was an exile of the Hungarian numerus clausus, working in Rome as a doctor. Mrs. Göring, Hermann Göring’s sister-in law would be among his patients, therefore Kovács would be saved from the Gestapo in September 1943 by Albert Göring, the infamous Göring’s brother. (“A zsidómentő Göring (The Other Göring, Who Saved Jewish Lives)”, Népszabadság Online, *nol.hu*, published on January 12, 2014. Access: May 14, 2014, [http://nol.hu/kulfold/20140111-a\\_zsidomento\\_goring-1437193](http://nol.hu/kulfold/20140111-a_zsidomento_goring-1437193).)

<sup>174</sup> *Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza italiana* (“Provisions for the Defense of the Italian Race” -Royal Decree Law of November 17, 1938, No. 1728, Access: May 14, 2014., <http://www.memorieincammino.it/admin/UploadAllegatiArgomentiArchDoc/0000007/f.Provvedimenti%20per%20la%20difesa%20della%20razza%20italiana%2017%20novembre%201938.pdf>.)

<sup>175</sup> Robert Wistrich, “Fascism and the Jews of Italy”, in *Fascist antisemitism and the Italian Jews*, Ed. by Sergio Della Pergola and Robert S. Wistrich (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 16–17.

and the story of their marriages, we have no reason to doubt the authors' veracity. The very fact of living in mixed marriages with Catholic Italians marks a level of integration, for it presupposes the individual's socializing among local people without relying on the sphere of the Jewish community.

The decision of many couples that it was the woman to write to the Duce's secretary was also motivated by the gender roles accepted in Italian society. The letters were often composed in a begging and extremely emotional tone, considered as more convincing than a dry enumeration of arguments, and men were not supposed to beg anyone or display personal sentiments, if not political ones. Women were allowed to argue on an emotional basis, to narrate stories of love and marriage, and rely on Mussolini's mercy for women and children who should be left by their husbands if the decree expelling foreign Jews were implemented. For instance, Miklós Lukács, a doctor, who wrote from Tortora to the Secretary, after declaring that he loved Italians and their Duce and this did not contradict his origin from Hungarian parents of the Jewish faith, he remarked that he was of fascist sentiments and "got married with a Catholic Italian" in 1937. Thereafter he turned to list the fascist merits of the wife's family, reserving the most persuasive argument, why he should not be expelled, to the end of his letter, namely that his pregnant wife was expected to give birth exactly in the month in which he should leave Italy. The Secretary's response was that "you can stay calm", thus he could stay with his family.<sup>176</sup>

As a comparison, how much different a woman's letter could be, I quote the often mentioned Imre Lukács's wife, Libia Tassi. She did not only mention the husband's and her own fascist sentiments and activities (he founded a fascist student club for foreigners in Padua, she

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<sup>176</sup> "Lettera di Miklós Lukács alla Segreteria Particolare del Duce (Letter of Miklós Lukács to the Special Secretary of the Duce)", September 8, 1938., SPD. (Special Secretary of the Duce) CR. (Reserved) 1922-1943. 80R. Busta (envelope) 143, Fascicolo (file): 198. Lukács Dott. Miklós, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

founded a female fascist club in her village), but detailed the profundity of her love and the pain she felt for his expulsion to come. She declared that

*I married him for love, with the Pope's dispensation, with Catholic rite. I have been most happy with my husband because I discovered in him such an inclination for our religion, and a perfect Italian and fascist character. [...] I love him with all the devotion of a young faithful wife in love and the tears come to my eyes at the thought of being forced to be separated from him.*<sup>177</sup>

She continued by asking for mercy for their two little children who would be raised without a father if his husband were forced to leave the country, or otherwise she, as a wife would be forced to choose between her husband and her homeland. In the end, she even suggested that her husband might not be entirely Jewish, since his father was an illegitimate child. It was indeed a widespread practice of desperate Jews in Italy (and in the Third Reich as well) to prove one of the parents' birth either from an extra-marital relationship or anyway not from the Jewish husband of the mother, for the sake of decreasing the number of Jewish ancestors. To mitigate the humiliation of the family, usually an already passed grandmother was chosen for the false accusation of adultery, so that the grandfather could be declared an unknown, thus possibly Christian, man.

As if the Lukács-Tassi family doubted that Lukács's devotion to fascism was sufficient to achieve his exemption, even his father-in-law wrote a letter to the authorities listing his own fascist merits and arguing that his son-in-law's father was an illegitimate son.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, Lukács provided an excerpt from his father's birth certificate claiming to be an illegitimate son. This excerpt was issued in Budapest in 1938 therefore it is quite possibly a falsification of the

<sup>177</sup> "Lettera di Libia Tassi Lukács", September 15, 1938., SPD. (Special Secretary of the Duce) CR. (Reserved) 1922-19434. 80R. Busta (envelope) 143, Fascicolo (file): 197 Lukács Dott. Emerico, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>178</sup> Emilio Tassi, "Lettera di Emilio Tassi al Capo del Governo (Letter of Emilio Tassi to the Prime Minister)", September 15, 1938., Secreteria Particolare del Duce/ Busta 480 R/197th item. Lukács Dott. Emerico, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.



data of the original birth certificate. In the end, the secretary of the Duce communicated to the Lukács-Tassi family the answer that “you can stay calm”.<sup>179</sup>

These two examples were not detailed to claim that it was easy to achieve exemption for Hungarian Jews in Italy. They were presented in order to demonstrate that Hungarian Jews once achieving the highest level of integration, marked by the practice of their profession in Italy and by living in mixed marriages with non-Jewish Italians, in some cases as Italian citizens, could successfully use the same methods to achieve exemption as did Italian Jews. Especially, if the individual had already converted to Christianity for the sake of mixed marriage, since the Catholic Church claimed that the state violated the Lateran Concordat with the racial laws which prohibited mixed marriages even with converted Jews.

For the majority of the *numerus clausus* exiles 1938 marked their re-exile, for the majority was in a more vulnerable situation than the two Lukács doctors, only few were Italian citizens to begin with. Even though those who were still university students could stay to finish their studies, from June 1940 (Italy’s entry to the Second World War) they were closed in internment camps as citizens of a country where antisemitic legislation was in vigor (Hungary). Comparing the database of foreign Jews interned in Italy<sup>180</sup> against the prosopography of Hungarian students in interwar Italy,<sup>181</sup> I found only five Hungarian Jewish inmates who were students or graduates of Italian universities.<sup>182</sup> Noteworthy, that the prosopography does not include every such student. Furthermore, the database of interned foreign Jews includes a lot of

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<sup>179</sup> SPD. (Special Secretary of the Duce) CR. (Reserved) 1922-19434. 80R. Busta (envelope) 143, Fascicolo (file): 197 Lukács Dott. Emerico, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>180</sup> "Indice generale degli ebrei stranieri internati in Italia 1940-1943 (General Index of Interned Foreign Jews in Italy 1940-1943)", *Fondazione CDEC - (Foundation Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center) - Milan*, Access: May 15, 2014., <http://www.cdec.it/ebrei%5Fstranieri/>.

<sup>181</sup> Beáta Szlavikovszki, *"Fejezetek a magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatokról 1880–1945 között. (Chapters from the History of Hungarian-Italian Cultural Relations between 1880 and 1945.)"*, 174–218.

<sup>182</sup> Dénes Bálint, András Fenyves, György Grünbaum, Klára Klein, László Münster. However, it is known about the interned Simon Teich as well that he previously graduated in Turin. Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza*.

mistakes regarding names and sometimes citizenship, for it is about people from most different linguistic backgrounds, which apparently was very difficult to administer for the authorities (additionally, country borders were not always well defined during the war).

In fact, even exemption was often insufficient to save one from the subsequent anti-Jewish persecutions. Exempted Jews could avoid internment which other foreign Jews suffered in Italy between 1940 and 1943. But paradoxically this could result in a worse situation from September 1943 when, following Mussolini's fall, Italy split and the Northern part was occupied by Germans, who established the fascist Republic of Salò. For the remaining two years of the war Jews living in Northern and Central Italy were persecuted by the Gestapo. Whereas, those closed in detention camps in Southern Italy were set free. In fact, the largest detention camp was in Ferramonti in Tarsia, in Calabria.

The Republic of Salò, the Northern Italian fascist puppet state was under the control of Nazi Germany, for this shadow of the former fascist power owed its very existence to the German army. It was just as loyal to the Nazi empire, as Hungary. Yet the destiny of Jewry would be different in the two states. Although Italian Jewry lived mostly in the Northern and central part of the country, thus exactly in the territory controlled by fascists and Germans for a long time, eighty-five percent of Italian Jews survived the Holocaust.<sup>183</sup> In fact, Italy has one of the highest "survival rates" so to say besides Denmark and Bulgaria. It is very difficult to speak about "survival rates" and at the same time avoid the appearance of downplaying the tragedy of the Holocaust. Yet it is important to ask the question why did most Italian Jews survive the two years

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<sup>183</sup> Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival.*, XV.

of German occupation and why was the vast majority of Hungarian Jews murdered in less than one year (from May 1944 to January 1945).<sup>184</sup>

Here the focus is only on a part of the comparative history of the Republic of Salò and Hungary, these two allies of Nazi Germany, during the European Holocaust. The survival of some numerous *clausus* exiles in Italy is at stake, which was due to possibilities they could choose which were not open to Jews living in Hungary. An essential difference between the two regimes was that in Hungary there had been official antisemitic propaganda led by the state from 1920 on. Thus, a whole generation of Hungarians had been educated and indoctrinated in an antisemitic spirit, which was a *sine qua non* of the Horthy-regime. At the same time antisemitism was not inherent in Italian fascism, although it was developed by fascism in the second half of the 1930s. Since the remaining years of the fascist regime after the legislative antisemitic turn coincided with the chaotic years of the unsuccessful years, the regime did not have enough time to indoctrinate even its own officers, let alone the general population.

Between 1943 and 1945 a civil war was taking place in Italy on top of the world war. While it endangered the lives of civilians for a longer time than in countries in the frontline for a shorter time, on the other hand it created the possibility of escaping from German occupied territories southwards for civilians, Italian soldiers opting for the Badoglio-government and the Allies instead of Mussolini and Hitler, and for Italian and foreign Jews. The very presence of a strong resistance to the German occupiers provided Jews the possibility to join the partisans, which possibility did not exist in Hungary due to the weakness of the anti-German resistance.

Jews in Northern Italy were often imprisoned after September 1943 and deported. Susan Zuccotti in her groundbreaking work on the history of the Italian Holocaust detailed the factors

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<sup>184</sup> Approximately six hundred thousand Hungarian Jews were victims of the Holocaust, thus every tenth victim was Hungarian. 437 000 of them were deported from Hungary (enlarged by the First and Second Vienna Awards of 1938 and 1940) between May and July 1944.

which made the survival of eighty-five percent of Jews under German occupation possible, which is not to minimize that the German occupiers and Italian fascists were responsible for the deportation and/or murder of 6,800 Jews.<sup>185</sup> According to Robert Wistrich, chances for a Jew to survive were higher in Italy than in most German occupied countries thanks to a “mixture of administrative corruption, general disorder, casual carelessness, and humanitarian sentiments shown by many Italian officers”.<sup>186</sup>

I would like to point out that there was also a difference in the policies of the governments between the Republic of Salò and Hungary above all the above mentioned factors. An astonishing correspondence of 1944 between the Foreign Ministry of Salò and the Hungarian government, furthermore the inner correspondence of the Italian foreign and interior ministries suggests that the two Nazi-allied governments had different answers to the question how far the “final solution” should go. It is especially shattering to learn in light of Hungarian political efforts in the 2010s at downplaying Hungarian responsibility for the Hungarian Holocaust, that the Hungarian government in July 1944, thus in the same summer when 437,000 Jews were deported to concentration and death camps, wanted to catch even the few Hungarian Jews still living in Italy. The government required the Italian Foreign Ministry to provide the names of Hungarian Jews living in Italy.<sup>187</sup> Later in August the Hungarian government proposed an exchange of Italian and Hungarian Jews between the two states.<sup>188</sup> The only reasonably assumable explanation

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<sup>185</sup> Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival.*, XV. In the fall of 1943 there were 37 100 Italian and 7000 foreign Jews. Ibid., XVIII.

<sup>186</sup> Wistrich, "Fascism and the Jews of Italy", 16–17.

<sup>187</sup> "Telespresso no 31\1301 dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri al Ispettorato generale per la razza, al Ministero dell'interno gabinetto, alla direzione generale Affari politici (Telegraph No. 31\1301 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the General Inspectorate for Race, Interior Ministry, Department for general political affairs)", July 10, 1944., ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 stranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>188</sup> "Telespresso n. 31\1764 Ministero degli Affari Esteri Direzione generale Affari Generali. Alla Legazione d'Italia a Budapest alla presidenza del consiglio dei ministri, Ministero interno gabinetto, Ministero interno (Telegraph No. 31\1764 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for general foreign affairs to the Italian embassy in Budapest, to the

is that Hungarian authorities did not want to simply give up control over the fate of Hungarian Jews who were residing in Italy.

As a consequence of the Hungarian inquiry about Hungarian Jews living in Italy, Italian authorities collected reports from the municipalities to discover who were Hungarian Jews in the Republic of Salò. However, they did not fulfill the request to exchange these Jews for the even fewer Italian Jews residing in Hungary. If these people had not yet been arrested, there was a reason not to arrest them, since a decree of December 1943 had ordered the arrest of all Jews.<sup>189</sup> The reason for which some Jews still dared to live at home, instead of escaping or hiding, must have been the authorities' decision not to regard them as targets of persecution. As the numerous following examples of individual fates demonstrate, what they had in common was their living in a marriage with a non-Jewish Italian, except for one student helped by his Bolognese rector, the notably fascist Ghigi.

The reports concerned listed every Hungarian citizen residing in the given municipality, who was originally Jewish, explaining the specific legal situation of each.<sup>190</sup> The reports did not fail to list those Jews who had left for unknown destinations in 1943-44 escaping the Gestapo. It is important to point out that not all these municipality reports are preserved, and there were still other Hungarian Jews hiding in Italy or fighting as partisans, about whom the authorities did not know, and this was the reason for their survival. Those who were still not hiding, but living in Northern Italian municipalities, were married to Catholic Italians. For instance, the municipality

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council of ministers, council of the Interior Ministry, Ministry of Interior)", August 21, 1944., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>189</sup> Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival.*, XVI.

<sup>190</sup> These reports are preserved in the Central State Archives in Rome: Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. Busta 3 (Ministry of Interior, General department for the public security, category A 18 foreigners and foreign Jews 1930-1956, envelope 3).

of Turin informed the Ministry that only one Hungarian Jew was residing in Turin, János Füller, a dentist, married to Emma Moreni.<sup>191</sup> At the same time we know from the autobiography of Simon Teich, that he was working in a hospital in Turin under a false name (Tullio Salvi) as a doctor, and after having been reported to the Gestapo, left to the mountains to join the partisans.<sup>192</sup> Both of them survived the war, as it is ascertained by a letter of Füller to the University of Bologna in 1946<sup>193</sup> and the following fate of Teich, who became a famous plastic surgeon.

As a counter-example for the danger in which foreign Jews without a non-Jewish spouse lived, the case of the engineer Gyula Fogel (mentioned in the second chapter as a student in Pözel's report of 1928) can be cited. The municipality of Padua reported that Fogel had already been arrested by the German Secret Police.<sup>194</sup> Unfortunately his later destiny is unknown.

György Mátrai, a doctor and a graduate of Padua and Imre Klein, dentist, were still working in their profession in the autumn of 1944 in Forlì, both of them married to a Catholic Italian. Imre Klein was furthermore exempted from the anti-Jewish laws.<sup>195</sup> In Trieste the Hungarian Jewish dental technician, László Aczél, a graduate of Bologna, mentioned in the

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<sup>191</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Torino al Ministero dell'Interno direz. Gen. Pubbl Sicurezza (Republican Prefecture of Turin to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, October 27, 1944., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>192</sup> Teich Alasia, *Un medico della Resistenza*.

<sup>193</sup> "Lettera di Giovanni Füller al rettore (Letter of János Füller to the rector)", October 4, 1946., Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers), 9607 Füller Giovanni, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.

<sup>194</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Padova al Ministero dell'Interno direzione denerale della polizia (Republican Prefecture of Padua to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, September 5, 1944., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>195</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Forlì al Ministero dell'Interno direz. Gen. Pubbl Sicurezza (Republican Prefecture of Forlì to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, August 12, 1944., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma. (This Imre Klein is not the same person as the Bolognese student who was member of the Zionist Student Union "Techiyah".)

fourth chapter, was living in a mixed marriage as well and still working in his profession.<sup>196</sup> In Bologna two Hungarian Jewish doctors (László Bernáth and István Salgó), and a dentist (György Sándor) were working in the autumn of 1944, furthermore one Hungarian Jew was still studying at the university, Gyula Kemény. Bernáth, Salgó and Sándor even had children from their Italian wives, and the children were listed in the report.<sup>197</sup> At the same time it was noted that Sándor was not considered Jewish, since Italy took into account the Hungarian anti-Jewish law of 1939 (1939:IV), according to which Jews living in Christian marriages, if converted to Christianity previously to this marriage, were not subjected to this discriminatory law.<sup>198</sup> In the case of Sándor and Kemény, it is ascertainable that they did survive the war. Sándor lived until his old age in Bologna. He corresponded with the university as late as in 1969 to gain a certificate of his degree for the purposes of administering his pension.<sup>199</sup> Gyula Kemény lived even in 1971 in Bologna, as his letters to the university reveal. He indeed owed his success in avoiding forced labor service in the Hungarian army in 1942 (which was the fate of Hungarian Jewish men) to the Bolognese rector, Alessandro Ghigi, who wrote a letter to the Hungarian Ministry of Defense that Kemény was enrolled in Bologna and could not cease his studies.<sup>200</sup> Kemény graduated in July 1942. Nevertheless, Italian authorities did not bother to send him to Hungary later on. In the

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<sup>196</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Trieste al Ministero dell'Interno direzione denerale della polizia (Republican Prefecture of Trieste to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, July 20, 1944., Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>197</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Bologna al Ministero dell'Interno direzione denerale della polizia (Republican Prefecture of Bologna to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 sranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>198</sup> "1939. évi IV. törvénycikk a zsidók közéleti és gazdasági térfoglalásának korlátozásáról (1939:IV. Law on the restriction of Jews' actions in the public and in the economic sphere)", Access: May 16, 2014., <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=8098>.

<sup>199</sup> "Fascicolo (dossier) 8829. Sandor Giorgio", Facoltà di medicina (Faculty of Medicine), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers), 8829, Sandor Giorgio, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.

<sup>200</sup> "Fascicolo (dossier) 1262. Kemény Giulio", Facoltà di chimica industriale (Faculty of Industrial Chemistry), Fascicoli degli studenti (Students' dossiers) 1262. Kemény Giulio, Archivio Storico dell'Università di Bologna.

municipality reports there is also trace of another *numerus clausus* refugee still living in the Republic of Salò in 1944 (in Alessandria),<sup>201</sup> György Ney, engineer, who was listed in Pözel's report of 1928 as well.

The same paragraph of the Hungarian anti-Jewish law which justified Sándor's exemption was referred to by Rosa De Molli, the Catholic wife of another *numerus clausus* refugee, Aladár Hábermann. She succeeded in convincing Italian authorities to take this paragraph into account in his Hungarian husband's case. Therefore Hábermann could work as a doctor in Busto Arsizio. During the German occupation he and his wife treated and hid partisans. Hábermann gained Italian citizenship in 1951 due to his merits in the anti-fascist resistance.<sup>202</sup> Gaining Italian citizenship was a great honor, indeed considered as honoring anti-fascist merits. Requests for citizenship by foreigners solely on the basis of the decades spent in Italy were not easily accepted. For instance, György Sándor was not an Italian citizen even in 1964, thirty-one years after his first request (1933), although he lived in Italy from 1927.<sup>203</sup>

The very fact of the non-deportation of these foreign citizens is significant, since in most countries foreign Jews were the first victims of the Holocaust.<sup>204</sup> Italy did not release foreign Jews to the German authorities before the German occupation, not even German (or former German) citizens. Indeed, fascist Italian Jewish policies remained paradoxical during the war, when Italian Jews could be randomly arrested and Jews abroad (in territories occupied by the

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<sup>201</sup> *Prefettura repubblicana di Alessandria al Ministero dell'Interno direzione generale della polizia (Republican Prefecture of Alessandria to the Ministry of Interior, General Department for Public Security)*, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale per la Pubblica Sicurezza, categoria A 16 stranieri ed ebrei stranieri 1930-1956. (Ministry of Interior, General department for public security, category A16 Foreigners and foreign Jews) Busta (envelope) 3, Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.

<sup>202</sup> Notice of his daughter, Anna Maria Hábermann.

<sup>203</sup> Fascicolo (dossier) 8829. Sandor Giorgio.

<sup>204</sup> For instance, from Vichy France during one night 12,800 foreign Jews were rounded up on July 16-17, 1942, out of whom only thirty survived. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival.*, 8.



Italian army), were occasionally protected by Italian officers against Nazis.<sup>205</sup> This had to do with a willingness to preserve at least one aspect of policy as independent from the Germans, for the sake of contradicting in something at least. As for foreign Jews living in Italian families, we see that practically they had the same opportunities and chances to avoid persecution as native Jews. Thus, they needed courage, luck and empathetic or neutral neighbors as well, nevertheless their being Catholic or occasionally only being spouses of Catholics did matter a lot. In Hungary, on the contrary, most Christian Jews were persecuted.<sup>206</sup>

These few Hungarian Jewish intellectual refugees continued to live and work in the Republic of Salò, due to authorities' reluctance to extradite them to Hungary or to deport them, because they practically lived as Italians and were integrated in Catholic families. Their home country, Hungary was the German ally to send most of her Jewry to death in the shortest time, in the shadow of an obvious German defeat to come, requesting meager German presence for it. Moreover, the Hungarian Holocaust began earlier than the German occupation. Jewish men were conscripted to forced labor service from Hungary's very entry to the war, instead of military service, thus they were sent to the front without proper equipment.<sup>207</sup> Therefore male Jewish students returning to Hungary after 1938 were most likely sent to the front as forced laborers, therefore they had a much lower chance to survive the war than those remaining in Italy. Before surviving the Holocaust, Hungarian Jewish men needed to survive the battles of the Eastern front.

Concluding, numerous Hungarian Jewish intellectual migrants, exiled from Hungary by the *numerus clausus* law, owed some or all the years of university studies to fascist Italy's

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<sup>205</sup> Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue, Survival*.

<sup>206</sup> For instance, Christian Jewish men conscripted to labor service had the only advantage to wear a white armband instead of a yellow one. In Hungary there was no authority to have possibility to exempt people from the anti-Jewish laws' scope, unlike in Italy or in Germany.

<sup>207</sup> Deportations began earlier as well, in the summer of 1941 when 16 – 18,000 Jews (allegedly of uncertain or foreign citizenship, in fact even Hungarian citizens) were sent to Kamenec-Podolsk and extradited to the German army. Randolph L. Braham, *A magyar holocaust (The Hungarian Holocaust)*, vol 1. (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 169–174.

receptivity towards foreign Jews. For a few of them, studying in interwar Italy determined their whole life so much that they not only began their career there, but started their families as well. Their in-between situation between their original and their chosen homelands made them live the destiny of Italian Jewry which was characterized by a higher chance of survival of the Shoah than the fate of Hungarian Jewry, due to the significance authorities attributed to conversion to Catholicism and to support gained from the general population. The support of Italians for the persecuted Jews was another essential factor in contributing to their survival. This support was due to the fact that by the time of the German occupation of Northern and Central Italy in September 1943 most of the population was tired of fascism, the war, and the German alliance, which increased the willingness to help those victimized by these three evils.

## Conclusion

The thesis investigated a paradoxical story of academic peregrination of the interwar period. For a decade and a half, from the introduction of the Gentile reform (1923) to the introduction of antisemitic legislation (1938), fascist Italy provided a shelter for Hungarian Jewish intellectual refugees (amongst other Jewish exiles of other nationalities) exiled from Hungarian higher education by the *numerus clausus* law (1920). The migration of the *numerus clausus* exiles is in fact part of the history of interwar East Central European antisemitism, not only of the history of universities.

The fascist country's receptivity even towards Jews is not a paradox *per se*, because Italian fascism was not inherently antisemitic. Yet the destiny of the *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy was paradoxical. They found a place to fulfill their intellectual aspirations – that were frustrated in Hungary – in an allied country of the Horthy regime. In Italy they often displayed their Hungarian patriotism and their attitudes towards Italian fascism were just as varied as that of Italian Jews, thus there were supporters of fascism among them. Both Hungary and Italy allied to Nazi Germany, yet Hungarian Jews who managed to stay in Italy, even though foreign citizens, had more chance to survive the Shoah in the Republic of Salò than in Hungary, a country which contributed to the extermination of three quarters of her own Jewish citizens.

The peregrination towards Italy provoked by the *numerus clausus* was not a phenomenon of brain drain, since Italian universities were more concerned with internationalizing their student body than with selecting applicants on a meritocratic basis. As my sample from Hungarian Jewish students of the University of Bologna demonstrated, quite bad Hungarian maturity exams were sufficient for a successful application. These students were apparently not predestined to enroll in higher education. They were not the most excellent graduates of Hungarian secondary

education; they were Jewish therefore they would have needed to belong to the top six percent of Jewish applicants in order to enroll in a Hungarian university, and they were the first generation in their lower middle class families to go to university. Yet their families made the sacrifice to send them abroad to study (medicine in most cases). Thus, their parents, who were typically tradesmen and artisans, identified higher education as the channel through which their children's social mobility could be achieved. They turned to the same strategy of assimilation which characterized Jewish middle classes previously to the First World War: securing the children's upwards social mobility through higher education.

Peregrination could mean leaving Hungary forever, or only temporarily, until fitting in the Jewish quota in a Hungarian university, and eventually naturalizing a foreign degree (few Italian degrees were naturalized though). Leaving Hungary for Italy was not an expression of Jewish dissimulation. Even settling in Italy resulted in the continuation of assimilation, if not to the Hungarian, then to the Italian social environment, as mixed marriage with a non-Jew was a common phenomenon among the *numerus clausus* refugees in Italy. Italy provided more opportunity for Jewish assimilation and for survival during the Holocaust than Hungary did.

This thesis contributed to several research fields: to the history of education by confronting the curious connection between interwar Central European academic antisemitism and the internationalization of Italian universities under fascism; to the debate over fascist Jewish policy by analyzing the special case of foreign Jewish students; and to the field of Jewish Studies by providing the first study on the *numerus clausus* exiles who chose Italy. Yet this research should be developed in the future by a comprehensive prosopographical and social historical study on all the foreign Jewish students who escaped Central European antisemitism in fascist Italy.

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