Aspects of Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1915-1918

by Péter Bihari

Abstract

Before 1914 the vocabulary of anti-Semitism was already present in public discourses in Hungary, but it did not yet represent the central problem of a still 'liberal Hungary.' With the First World War, the Hungarian middle classes became the main losers in the social disruption of Hungarian society. 1916 must be seen as the turning point of the social splits and divisions. The former policy of the "Burgfrieden," or party truce, was undermined by the profound psychological experiences of the war. In this context, old anti-Semitic stereotypes prejudices were reactivated while new ones emerged. Jews, in general, came to be treated as internal enemies, earning huge profits from the war at the expense of Christian Hungarian society that was being ruined.

This paper analyzes three stages of growing anti-Semitic agitation in Hungarian society during the war: First, the attacks against the banks around 1916; second, the public debate on the Jewish question in 1917, opened by the publication of the book A zsidók útja [The Path of the Jews] by the sociologist Péter Ágoston and intensified by the "inquiry into the Jewish question" of the journal Huszadik Század [Twentieth Century]; third, the surge of anti-Semitism that began with anti-Semitic speeches in the Hungarian Diet in 1917, leading to a broad anti-Semitic campaign by predominantly Catholic newspapers, in which Otto Prohaszka and Bela Bangha were the leading figures.

The thesis is that Hungarian anti-Semitism was far from being a spontaneous outburst of popular feelings. It was fairly well organized and coordinated, mainly by ecclesiastical circles. It was the First World War that proved to be the catalyst, contributing to an extreme anti-Semitism and thereby sealing the fate of "liberal Hungary."

Introduction

The First World War dramatically changed Hungarian Jews' whole way of life. Before the First World War Hungarian political culture, as well as the attitudes of the population, were dominated by liberal classes who steadfastly opposed anti-Semitism. This is true notwithstanding the fact that at the beginning of the anti-Semitic wave that hit late 19th century Europe an active anti-Semitic movement arose in Hungary, and that prominent agitators like Győző Istóczy or Géza Ónody took action to spread blood libel accusation in the Tiszaeszlar case of 1882 as part of a broader anti-Semitic campaign. The creation in 1895 of the anti-Semitic Catholic People's Party, which enjoyed firm support from the Hungarian Catholic Church, which sincerely feared the rise in laicism and consequent loss of its prerogatives. The anti-Jewish campaign launched by some Hungarian students at the University of Budapest in 1901 was also an alarming development yet none could truly challenge the attitude of the institutions.[1] Hungarian Jews experienced remarkable social advancement in this period, and the Jewish communities in Hungary were able to develop a lively social and intellectual life. In politics and public services anti-Semitism did not play a significant role at the time: as of 1910 22 % of the Members of Parliament were Jews, and even higher ranks in government, state, and public service were open to Jews. János Teleszky, for example, served from 1912 to 1917 as finance minister; in 1913 Ferenc Heltai was chosen as mayor of Budapest; and the ministry of war was held from 1910 to 1917 by Samu Hazai, who had converted to Christianity.[2] In the struggle against anti-Semitism, Jews were firmly supported by the nationalist prime minister István Tisza who was convinced that anti-Semitism was a German phenomenon.[3] This overall positive scenario for Hungarian Jews

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[1] Rolf Fischer, *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn 1867-1939: Die Zerstörung der magyarisch-jüdischen Symbiose* (München: Oldenbourg, 1988).

[2] Miklós Konrád, "Jews and Politics in Hungary in the Dualist Era, 1867–1914," in *East European Jewish Affairs* 39/2 (2009): 167–18; Kati Vörös, "A Unique Contract: Interpretations of Modern Hungarian Jewish History," in *CEU Jewish Studies Yearbook* 3 (2002-2003): 229-255; Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1999); János Gabányi, "Hazai Samu báró," in *Magyar Katonai Közlöny* 10/1 (1922): 1–13.

[3] See, for example, his letter from April 3rd, 1915: Tisza István, *Összes Munkái*, vol. 4 (Budapest: Franklin, 1926), 210-211.

collapsed with the First World War and the subsequent years of revolutions and counterrevolutions.

This study aims to cast light on a rather neglected field, the history of the home front in Hungary during World War I.[4] It is easy to recognize that the middle classes – mainly civil servants, private employees and freelance intellectuals – were the main losers within the changing social stratification that developed between 1914 and 1918, both economically and in terms of prestige. Much the same process took place in Imperial Germany and Austria, though perhaps less dramatically than in Hungary. In Hungary inflation was higher than in almost any other belligerent country, with the result that the fall of real wages hit the middle classes harder than anywhere else. Thus the degradation of this middle class was more conspicuous, the complaints and despair more embittered than even in Germany or Austria – not to speak of the Entente powers. The second half of 1916 became a turning point in every sense: under the strains of total war powerful economic, social, political, and spiritual tensions came to the surface, making the already existing splits and divisions of Hungarian society irreconcilable.

It is a commonplace that the Great War was fought under the slogan of national unity. In Hungary – as in Imperial Germany and Austria – the notion of a "*Volksgemeinschaft*" [people's community] was ruined for good by the inequalities of the home front, while that of a "*Burgfrieden*" [party truce] was undermined by the profound psychological experiences of the war. In Hungary this process accelerated in 1916, at which point one can observe three main tendencies. First: poor food supply and sharp inflation reached a critical point by this period. Second: the fighting dragged on hopelessly, while the Rumanian attack awakened the fears of an imminent collapse of Saint Stephens's Kingdom. Third: internal political struggles became embittered again, and after the death of Franz Joseph, the position of prime minister István Tisza looked more shaky than in the previous months of the world war.[5]

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[4] Péter Bihari, *Lövészárkok a hátországban: középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországon*, (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008); *Bangha Béla Sj emlékezete*, eds. Antal Molnár, Ferenc Szabó (Budapest, JTMR – Távlatok, 2010); István Milotay, *Egy élet Magyarországért. Ami Horthy emlékirataiból kimarad* (Budapest: Gede testvérek, 2001).

[5] Ferenc Pölöskei, *István Tisza, ein ungarischer Staatsmann in Krisenzeiten*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994); Gabor Vermes, *István Tisza. The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of A Magyar Nationalist,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Norman

In this framework we must consider the so-called Jewish question. By 1916–1918 many old stereotypes against the (more or less assimilated) Hungarian Jewry had ossified, while a number of new charges were brought forward against them. In no other belligerent country did Jews play such a prominent role in running the war economy as in Hungary. Several industrial and banking companies were owned by Jewish Hungarians; the *Haditermény Rt.*, the central office for war production,[6] and other committees of this kind where led by Jews and functioned as quasi organs of the warring state. And the Jews of Budapest apparently strengthened their "special position," the "most bourgeois position" during the war years. This situation reinforced not only the old anti-Semitic motifs; rather, anti-Semites created new stereotypes linked to these new roles. Old motifs of Jews as worthless soldiers – even shirkers–, usurers and profiteers, disseminators of immoral ideas and an alien mass-culture had been renewed.[7] Jewish entrepreneurs like Manfréd Weiss[8] or Vilmos Vázsonyi, [9] or intellectuals like Oszkár Jászi[10] reached the peak of their fame during the war years. Old accusations – like that of the Galician influx or the Jewish over-representation in the educational system – were revived, and new ones – the occupation of Hungarian land and grabbing of political power – were born. Jews in general began to be treated as internal enemies, accused of making huge profits out of the war, while Christian Hungarian society was falling into ruin and going bankrupt. For an ever greater number of anti-Semitic authors the World War merely completed the process by which a triumphant Jewry came to usurp the place of the declining Hungarian middle class. Thus, during the war years, the problem of the middle classes and that of the Jews became increasingly intertwined.

Stone, "Hungary and the Crises of July 1914," in *The Journal of Contemporary History* 1/3 (1966): 153-170.

[6] Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der Habsburgermonarchie 1914-1918,* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2013), 592-593.

[7] Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military. A History*, (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[8] István Reményi Gyenes, *Ismerjük őket? Zsidó származású nevezetes magyarok* (Budapest: Ex Libris Kiadó, 2000). For the importance of the Manfréd-Weiss-Factories for the Habsburg war production see: Rauchensteiner, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, 216; 592.

[9] *Magyar nagylexikon XVIII* (Unh–Z), ed. Bárány Lászlón (Budapest: Magyar Nagylexikon, 2003), 288–289.

[10] György Litván, *A twentieth-century prophet: Oszkár Jászi, 1875–1957*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006).

Attacks against the Banks

The first act of the surge of Hungarian anti-Semitism was a series of concentrated attacks against banks around 1916. Such attacks can be taken for a coded and hidden form of anti-Semitism, and were well understood as such by contemporaries. But the prologue to the first act was represented by the scandals related to army contractors in 1915 (accused of selling paper-sole boots and poor clothing to the army), which provided the opportunity for an attack against the Jews. The press alarmed the public, and succeeded in revealing some interwoven interests – but insinuated mainly that the local army contractors were Jews from Máramaros county.[11] The consequences of this first scandal are easy to calculate: loss of faith in the military and non-military authorities, demands to stop inflation and profiteering, demands to introduce "strong fists" against fraud – as in Germany.[12] One editorial of the popular newspaper "*Az Est*" [Evening] confronted "German heroism" with the "betrayal of the cloth-swindlers." The author called for "unmerciful revenge against all villains," no matter, whether with "earlock or high medals."[13] The Lower House of Parliament began to discuss two bills, one on the reprisal against abuses in army contracts, the other on the financial responsibility of culprits.[14] Parliamentary debates in 1915 gave ample opportunity for attacks against Jews. The usual argument was to contrast brave soldiers with harmful shirkers or honest farmers and petty traders with swindler army contractors.[15]

Two points of the debates are worth mentioning. One is the first appearance of the condemnation of banks expressed by Károly Huszár of the anti-Semitic Catholic People's Party, who proclaimed that the banks owned by Jews stood behind many dubious transactions.[16] After the suppression of the Republic of Councils Huszár had taken part of the anti-Communist government in Szeged,

[11] "A papíroscsizmaszállítók előzetes letartóztatásban," *Az Est,* March 15th, 1915.
[12] "Marha, disznó," *Az Est*, March 16th, 1915.
[13] "Fantasztikus," *Az Est*, March 20th, 1915.
[14] *Képviselőházi Irományok* [Documents of the House of Representatives]. Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda Részvénytársaság, 1915, Tc. XVIII; 1915, Tc. XIX; *Képviselőházi Napló* [Diaries of the House of Representatives], Budapest: Atheneum, 1915, vol. 46, n. 1148, 90-111 and vol. 49, n. 1149, 112-116. Already the latter document stated an "unfortunate identity of races" concerning the traitors and army-contractors (113).
[15] Károly Huszár, *Képviselőházi Napló,* 1915, vol. 26, session 573, 385-390.
[16] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1915, vol. 26, session 573, 390.

and from November 1919 to March 1920 he was appointed Prime Minister.[17] The other is of a more philosophical nature, but indicates a final break with liberalism. The publisher, sociologist and member of parliament Pál Farkas declared (with unanimous approval from both sides of the House) that "now it is not the individual who ought to be protected against an absolutist state, but rather state and society have to be protected against the excesses of individuals."[18]

Some papers and periodicals quickly took up the issue. The magazine of the author and journalist István Milotay, "*Új Nemzedék*" [New Generation] – initially close to Mihály Károlyi's Independence Party – , simply began to refer to the "tribe of army contractors" already in 1915, and linked them to "our heroes."[19] This witticism was also applied to the Jews somewhat earlier by the magazine "*Magyar Kultúra*" [Hungarian Culture] of the Jesuit Béla Bangha,[20] a central figure of Hungarian Anti-Semitism.[21] In this periodical the prolific Károly Burján – a high school teacher – condemned the Jewish social scientist, historian, and politician Oszkár Jászi and the radicals for their paper-sole boots and referred to them as "hyenas of the nation."[22] The satirical "*Bolond Istók*" usually spelled the word "*hadimilliomos*" ["war millionaire"] as "*hadi-milliomosch*" – not because of the German but because of the Yiddish connotation of the spelling.

The aforementioned scandals were largely forgotten with the new strains of the war, though they could easily be brought to the surface of public memory. A more constant and more dangerous enemy was found by rightist circles (in and out of Parliament): the most important banks of Budapest. This issue had a role in most of the parliamentary debates taking place in 1916, under the guise of bills on new taxes or new financial institutions, and these discussions were intertwined with all possible themes of the World War. One of the first attacks – in February 1916 – was launched by Géza Polónyi, a jurist and politician of the Independence Party, who had served as Minister of Justice between 1906 and 1907 and who had repeatedly criticized the government after his resignation. The

[17] Sándor Szilassy, "Hungary at the Brink of the Cliff 1918–1919," in *East European Quarterly* 3/1 (1969): 95-109.

[18] Pál Farkas, *Képviselőházi Napló,* 1916, vol. 27, session 581, 62; but Károly Huszár and Dezső Ábrahám (both reprimand the role of banks), *Képviselőházi Napló* 1916, vol. 27, session 581, 71-72.

[19] Orlando, "Új honfoglalás," *Új Nemzedék*, November 28th, 1915.

[20] "Rövid feljegyzések," *Magyar Kultúra*, 3/23 (1915): 495.

[21] Later Bela Bangha published in German the volume: *Klärung der Judenfrage* [Clarification of the Jewish Question], (Wien-Leipzig: Reinhold, 1934).

[22] "A nemzet hiénái és a progresszió," in *Magyar Kultúra*, 3/8 (1915): 384.

eternal trouble-maker's speech was a sharp criticism of the liberal municipal council of Budapest as well as of the banks. He simply stated that he came to the following conclusion: inflation is due to the "profiteering and speculations of the larger banking houses of Budapest." And he went further yet, putting most of the blame on *Hitelbank* – that being a "money house [!] of international significance," owned by the Rothschilds with its "true head in London and Paris."[23] Deputy Polónyi openly charged the largest Hungarian bank and its leader, Adolf Ullmann, a member of the Upper House, with high treason – "a terrible consequence," so he said.

A longer line of attacks was linked to the rejection of the law on a new Banking Center, proposed by the government. The opposition –i.e the Independence Party and the Catholic People's Party – demanded lawful limits to the accumulation of financial capital. The politicians István Rakovszky, co-founder of the Catholic People's Party, deputy and from 1905 to 1910 vice president of the parliament, Elemér Preszly and Endre Ráth, lawyers and deputies from the Catholic People's Party claimed that the main concern of large banks was army contracts – and hence they could increase their incomes enormously during the war.[24] Even prelate Sándor Giesswein – a quiet pacifist and (practically alone in his People's Party) not an anti-Semite – called the prevailing "bankocracy" the gravest tyranny, adding that those who use this word should not be charged with anti-Semitism.[25] Later he came to the very "materialistic" idea that the World War was the result of the contest between the Creusot-, Schneider- and Krupp-companies.[26] The discussions were renewed when a bill on the taxation of war profits came to the fore, producing some new allegations. Rakovszky continued to refer to the activities of *Hitelbank* and the Rothschilds, this time claiming that "banks determine the whole legislation."[27] "We have a huge capitalistic oligarchy here, weighing the country down and pursuing a financial policy that is not aimed at the prosperity but at the decay of its industry, agriculture, and commerce."[28] Rakovszky aptly used the obvious dichotomy here, as he did earlier by contrasting the old and the new middle classes. This stress on the existence of two antagonistic middle classes – in connection with the question of banks – was too much even for Tisza. The Prime Minister felt obliged to state that though

[23] Géza Polónyi, *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 29, session 631, 363.
[24] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 28, session 604, 74.
[25] *Ibid.* vol. 28, session 606, 144–145.
[26] *Ibid.* vol. 30, session 642, 313.
[27] *Ibid.* vol. 30, session 643, 338–340.
[28] *Ibid.* vol. 30, session 640, 208.

there were indeed two middle classes, both proved to be worthy of esteem, with much to learn from each other. But Tisza also said that he understood the indignant reactions in the House over the tone of the debates on banks.[29]

The Christian politician István Haller – who later served as Minister of Religion and Education after the suppression of the Republic of Councils between 1919 and 1920 and prepared in this function the law of *Numerus clausus*, the first Anti-Jewish Act of 20th-century Europe[30] – did not charge commerce as a whole, only evil "Galician" capital.[31] The lawyer and Christian politician György Szmrecsányi also delivered his ideas on usury, profiteering and the banks and he did not refrain from explicitly speaking of the power of Jewish banks. He was the most bellicose and threatening in the debate, saying: "we will keep a record of this problem, and time will come when we will enlighten those hundreds and thousands of families about the causes of their famine, misery and suffering at a time when their head is at the front to shed blood for king and country (Hear! hear!) [...] We will enlighten the country about those heartless profiteers who are able to collect capital from tears and misery."[32] Szmrecsányi also used the same dichotomy of a few rich capitalists versus the bulk of the honest Hungarian people. By 1916 this was a widespread, even commonplace view, both on the political left and political right.

To be sure, some MPs warned of too much bias against trade or the banks in general, also warning against the renewal of heated political antagonisms. Pál Sándor listed the aristocrats sitting on the boards of trustees of banks, while the politician Gusztáv Gratz, in 1917 chief of the trade section in the common Foreign Office and from June to September 1917 Hungarian Finance Minister,[33] refuted the wide-spread idea that army contracts were themselves illegal

[29] *Ibid.* vol. 29, session 621, 64.

[30] Mária M. Kovács, "The Numerus Clausus in Hungary 1920-1945," *Alma Mater Antisemitica. Akademisches Milieu, Juden und Antisemitismus an den Universitäten Europas zwischen 1918 und 1939* [Academic Milieu, Jews and Anti-Semitism at European Universities between 1918 and 1939], (Wien: New Academic Press, 2016), 85-111.

[31] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 29, session 628, 278–279.

[32] *Ibid.*, vol. 29, session 623, 137.

[33] Günter Schödl, "Ungarische Politik jenseits von Nationalstaat und Nationalismus: Gustav Gratz (1875–1946)," Id., *Formen und Grenzen des Nationalen. Beiträge zu internationaler Integration und Nationalismus im östlichen Europa*, (Erlangen: Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Fragen, 1990), 137-188; Vince Paál, Gerhard Seewann "Einleitung," Gustav Gratz, *Augenzeuge dreier Epochen. Die Memoiren des ungarischen Außenministers Gustav Gratz 1875–1945,* eds. Vince Paál, Gerhard Seewann, (München: Oldenbourg, 2009), 1-18.

business.[34] Count Tivadar Batthyány, who was Vice-President of the Independence Party in 1910, Minister of Labor and Social Care and Member of the National Council in 1918,[35] said that the old struggle of "merkantiles and agrarians" was back again.[36] The only Slovak deputy in the Hungarian parliament, Nándor Juriga,[37] simply asked the Hungarian deputies not to discuss the Jewish question now.[38] Vilmos Vázsonyi now asked for sober-mindedness: "Because it is an all too complicated society showing complete unity, even brotherly cooperation among the fighters on the one hand [...], while there is no sign of unity here, in the civil society [on the other hand], the class conflicts are hard to conceal, and old hatreds are with us again."[39] One leading banker and member of the Parliament, Baron Gyula Madarassy-Beck, had an interesting and characteristic remark in the debate on the taxation of war profits. It was no secret, he noted, that behind any bank one could always find "the Jew." Banks are persons, he added, "with feet to trample down the whole economy around them, with hands to reach far and grasp all, with faces that truly resemble Leó Lánczy or Adolf Ullmann" ["General laughter from the right"].[40] A suitable ground was provided for cartoonists to translate the general charges into quite concrete images for the public.

These debates thus provided an opportunity for the opposition to attack Tisza's government and the banks with one stroke – even before the political "truce" collapsed for good in August 1916. They did it partly out of dilettantism – Finance Minister János Teleszky delicately remarked that not all speakers knew much about taxes and finances –,[41] partly for obvious political motives, and partly because of deep convictions. These discussions continued in the press. A

[34] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 29, session 621, 50–57; *Ibid*., vol. 30, session 641, 253. Adolf Ullmann in the Upper House: "Especially since the beginning of this war it has become a fashion to reprimand commerce, mostly from a so-called moral viewpoint" *Főrendiházi Irományok*, 1917 session 76, protocols IV, 176.

[35] Lukežić Irvin, *Riječke glose: opaske o davnim danima*, (Rijeka: Izdavački centar, 2004).

[36] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 30, session 643, 336.

[37] For Juriga see: Miloslav Szabó, *'Von Worten zu Taten.' Die slowakische Nationalbewegung und der Antisemitismus 1875-1922* (Berlin: Metropol, 2014), 282-286

[38] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 29, session 627, 152.

[39] *Ibid*., 1916, vol. 29, session 622, 105.

[40] *Ibid*., 1916, vol. 31, session 651, 174. The Jewish Hungarian deputy and financier Leó Lánczy, director-general of the Hungarian Bank of Commerce, had converted to Christianity. The Jewish political economist Adolf Ullmann was a member of the Hungarian Upper House and President of the National Industrial Union.

[41] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 30, session 643, 358.

few agrarian periodicals took up the issue again, like "*A Barázda*" [Furrow] and "*Magyar Gazdák Szemléje*" [Review of Hungarian Farmers]. The latter reflected on "War and the Rule of Banks," saying that "plutocracy" occupied politics, press, culture and even sciences, and now is about to devour large estates.[42] The article referred to the widespread belief of the banks' buying up lands. The periodical of the Hungarian Association of Farmers, "*A Barázda*," began the year 1917 by warning against the effects of the "alliance of mercantile bank capital and the revolutionary group of internationalists," who sought/acted "to force millions of farmers and agrarian workers off their rightful place."[43] It is not the content of the article that is surprising, nor the familiar conspiracy theory, but rather the adoption of such a tone in a periodical that had been moderate and upstanding up to that point.

The Debate on the "Jewish Question"

The "great debate" on the Jewish question in 1917 has been so exhaustively researched and analyzed that a few remarks might be sufficient here. Early in that crucial year the radical sociologist Péter Ágoston published a 300-page book under the title: "*A zsidók útja*" (The Path of the Jews) which led to widespread reactions.[44] According to the historian János Gyurgyák, the sociologist began to work on this theme because of his experiences on the front and in the rear, having also felt the "rapid transformation of public opinion."[45] Of course Ágoston, as a good Marxist thinker, wanted to study the real situation of the Jews, to understand their own share in the negative turn of public opinion, and to recommend some remedies. His intentions, however, do not look so benevolent in hindsight: his diaries reveal him to be an anti-Semite even before 1914.[46] His war-time experiences and the largely negative reviews of his book helped to deepen his anti-Jewish opinions.

[42] N.Á., "Háború és bankuralom," in *Magyar Gazdák Szemléje* 22/5-6 (1917): 136–142.
[43] "Háborúban előre – békében hátra," *A Barázda*, (preliminary issue) May 20th, 1917.
[44] János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish Question in Hungary], (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 89; 478-482 (with the reflections and literature cited there).
[45] Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 89.
[46] Péter Ágoston, *Visszaemlékezései - Memoárja* (Péter Ágoston's recollections), Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár, Budapest [The Archives of Political History and of Trade Unions].

Already during the political crisis of 1905–1906, Péter Ágoston attributed the weakness of the Social Democrats to the disproportionately high share of "officials and Jews" in their ranks.[47] During the war years his anti-Jewish remarks multiplied and turned more bitter: he accused Jews of walking around cowardly in the rear, claiming that they withdrew support for the progressive camp, that they earned too much and that their women showed off in their rich dresses, while failing to take part in public charity.[48] The purported Jewish clannishness/cohesiveness was another constant reproach of the diary.[49] In fact, Ágoston seemed to share all the well-known stereotypes against modern cities, against banks and commerce, against "cosmopolitan culture" and against Jews; he himself was well aware of his own preconceptions or even prejudices.[50] On the other hand, he frequently hid his opinions behind "public opinion" or found "objective" causes for the Jewish behavior" he criticized: "The public's view is that the Jews evade service at the front at any price, which corresponds to the facts. Of course, non-Jews also try to evade it, but these have fewer means to achieve their aims."[51] Ágoston thought the war proved that Jews were an alien element. Furthermore he declared that Jews are false democrats and false patriots.[52] Even the war, Ágoston noted, "failed to assimilate the Jews to us – bad enough, as national states will succeed the present empires, with much less room for Jews than up to now."[53] As a solution of the Jewish question he imagined a mass exodus to Syria and Palestine after the war.[54]

The question of a left wing anti-Semitism can certainly be raised here. It existed even if it was relatively weak in Hungary, and Ágoston himself was hardly a typical representative. He seems to have been an "unintentional" anti-Semite before the war, one who became aware of his views during the cataclysm and tried to "rationalise" them in pseudo-scholarly fashion. Despite the rather moderate tone of the views expressed in his book – far more moderate than in his diaries –, its publication caused an uproar in Jewish circles, all the more so as he proved to be ignorant of many aspects of Jewish life. But his main sin was that he stirred up the backwater – or rather that he touched very delicate nerves exactly

[47] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 3, II. ő.e, 453.
[48] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e, 34, 450.
[49] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e, 10, 73.
[50] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 3. IV. ő.e, 28-29.
[51] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e, 263, 283, 413.
[52] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e. 15, 30, 430, 637.
[53] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e, 33, 497.
[54] *Ibid.*, 689. f. 4. I. ő.e, 564.

at a time when the tensions were high already, and did so – completely unexpectedly – as a representative of the radical left.[55]

The anti-Semitic press, of course, responded to Ágoston's book with great approval, criticizing him only for not going far enough in his conclusions.[56] The neolog-Jewish journal *Egyenlőség* [Equality] found itself in a difficult position with the unexpected turnabout, and decided to turn severely against the new enemy.[57] The Hungarian Jewish poet, author and editor Lajos Szabolcsi, since 1915 editor of the journal *Egyenlőség*, pursued a bellicose strategy against Ágoston and launched a counter-offensive. He enlisted some Jewish and non-Jewish authorities (such as the Calvinist bishop of Debrecen, Dezső Baltazár) to oppose Ágoston, and published a whole volume to refute "the notorious anti-Semite."[58] That, however, was only the beginning or, rather, the pretext for a new public debate. The Jewish social scientist and politician Oszkár Jászi and his radical circle felt that Szabolcsi's attacks hindered any serious debate about a real and important social problem, and went ahead with what became the famous "inquiry into the Jewish question" in their journal "*Huszadik Század*" [Twentieth Century]. They put three questions to nearly 150 prominent personalities: "Is there a Jewish question in Hungary, and, if so, what is its essence? What are the causes of the Jewish question? What is the solution to the Jewish question?" Alas, the editors received only 50 useful answers, and it is impossible to know now who were the men in the other two-thirds who received the questions but chose not to reply. The result of the inquiry proved rather distressing to liberal Jewry: 37 of those polled replied that there was a Jewish question, only 13 with "nay," while ten replied too briefly to be interpreted.[59]

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[55] Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 476-483.

[56] Károly Burján, "A zsidókérdés," in *Magyar Kultúra* 5 (1917): 337–346; Zoltán Farkas, "A zsidókérdés. Levél Jászai Oszkár úrhoz," *A Cél*, 8/9 (1917): 521–528; István Milotay, "Egy bátor könyvről," *Új Nemzedék*, April 25th, 1917; "A zsidók útja. Dr. Ágoston Péter könyve," *Új Nemzedék*, April 25th, 1917.

[57] For the journal *Egyenlőség* [Equality] in World War One see: Katalin Fenyves, "Im Kreuzfuer der Fremdwahrnehmung: Die jüdische Presse in Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg" *Jüdische Publizistik und Literatur im Zeichen des Ersten Weltkriegs*, eds. Petra Ernst, Eleonore Lappin-Eppel, (Insbruck-Wien-Bozen: Studienverlag, 2016), 289-305.

[58] Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 233.

[59] "A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Körkérdés," in *Huszadik Század*, 18/36 (1917, July–December): 1–164. Péter Hanák, *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemizmus* [Jewish Question, Anti-Semitism, Assimilation], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), 5-117; For this survey see also: Ferenc Laczó, "Assimilation und Nation: Das 'jüdische Thema' in Ungarn. Eine interpretierende Geschichte des langen 19. Jahrhunderts," *Die 'Judenfrage' in Ostmitteleuropa. Historische Pfade*

This is hardly the place to dwell on the details of the debate, which occupied 159 densely-set pages in the sociological journal "*Huszadik Század,*" but some new features of the "Jewish question" are perhaps worth mentioning. Not surprisingly some (but not all) of those authorities who admitted the existence of the problem attributed its intensity to the effects of the war. The orthodox journalist and Zionist Sámuel Bettelheim suggested that "anti-Semitism is a necessary consequence of war just like inflation or famine," and added: "we are facing the advent of an anti-Semitic period in Hungary."[60] Leó Lukács, editor of the Zionist *Zsidó Szemle* [Jewish Review] was no less ominous: "The real Jewish question in Hungary, in its entire brutality will appear only in the coming decades."[61] Nathaniel Katzburg is right in pointing out that this debate was the first one to give voice to Zionist opinions – even if it remains uncertain whether at that time these represented a wider stratum than before the war.[62] One more approach deserves brief mention, the language of "eliminationist anti-Semitism" (Daniel Goldhagen) used by the author and sociologist Károly Méray-Horváth against the Galician immigrants. "Against them there is no appropriate mercifulness. These ought to be wiped out, just as we wipe out every sort of infection."[63] The ominous words probably went unheard or were taken only metaphorically at the time.

Not surprisingly, Szabolcsi and *Egyenlőség* were scandalised by the inquiry. Szabolcsi felt betrayed by Jászi and his radical comrades – right at a time when his idol, Vilmos Vázsonyi, had become cabinet minister, which Szabolcsi mistakenly took as a sign of a subsiding of the Jewish question. Jászi "put the stigma on Jewry in the fourth year of the world war. [...] *He raised and scientifically constructed the Jewish question, which hitherto existed only in vague clerical slogans* – this one thing is certain."[64] At this one point Szabolcsi unintentionally agreed with anti-Semitic publicists who mockingly pointed out that the "Jewish question," in reality, was produced by the Jews themselves.[65] According to

und politisch-soziale Konstellationen, eds. Andreas Reinke, Kateřina Čapkova, Michal Frankl, Piotr Kendziorek, Ferenc Laczó, (Berlin: Metropol, 2015), 150-165.

[60] Samu Bettelheim, in *Huszadik Század*, 18/36 (1917, July–December): 52.

[61] Leó Lukács, in *Huszadik Század*, 18/36 (1917, July–December): 111.

[62] Nathaniel Katzburg, *Fejezetek az újkori zsidó történelembol Magyarországon*, (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó 1999), 161.

[63] Károly Méray-Horváth, in *Huszadik Század*, 18/36 (1917, July–December): 113.

[64] Lajos Szabolcsi, "Hitvita a Huszadik Században," *Egyenlőség*, August 4th, 1917 (Italics in the original).

[65] "Te is fiam, Jászi?," *Új Nemzedék*, August 12th, 1917.

Szabolcsi's simplistic accusations, Jászi's motives with the inquiry had been twofold. On the one hand, he merely wanted to whitewash his dilettante comrade, Ágoston. On the other hand – and more importantly – he was driven by the notorious self-hatred (*Selbsthass*) of the converted Jew working inside him. "I was beside myself" – remembered Szabolcsi – "only a converted Jew could do something so outrageous as that, only a proselyte can hate his old confession that much."[66] In his rage in the pages of *Egyenlőség*, Szabolcsi crossed all existing boundaries when he claimed that the whole "Jewish question" would not have existed without Jászi who, he continued, "lives in a state of mental bigamy."[67] He "revives old, anti-Semitic methods, like those of Istóczy, in sociological guise."[68]

Nevertheless, one question remains – for what reason did Jászi and his "*Huszadik Század*" launch the inquiry "in the fourth year of the world war"? The answer is not easy to determine, and I deliberately want to disregard here Jászi's complex – and changing – views on the Hungarian-Jewish problem.[69] One has to consider that the debate on the "Jewish question" was not the only one organized by "*Huszadik Század*"; they arranged an earlier one on "*Mitteleuropa*" and one on the problem of national minorities in 1918. This is not so surprising for a scholarly periodical (which dealt with several other issues of public life as well). The main explanation was probably Jászi's and his friends' liberal belief in science and rational thinking – they certainly were of the opinion that an inquiry like that would help solve even the most difficult social problems, including the "Jewish question."[70] Or to put in another way: partial irrationalities will lead towards an eventual rationality – if the problems are openly discussed. (Some discussants recommended that representatives of Jews and anti-Semites be seated at the same table to negotiate their problems, and even expected positive results). Péter Hanák wrote a fine book on Jászi, in which he demonstrated how Jászi tried to "rationalize" the world war, which he – from the first day on – considered "the greatest catastrophe in world history."[71]

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[66] Lajos Szabolcsi, "Hitvita a Huszadik Században III," *Egyenlőség* August 18th, 1917; Lajos Szabolcsi, "Hitvita a Huszadik Században IV," *Egyenlőség*, August 25th, 1917.

[67] Dániel Pogány, "Nyílt levél Jászi Oszkárhoz," *Egyenlőség*, August 25th, 1917.

[68] Lajos Szabolcsi, "Hitvita a Huszadik Században III.," *Egyenlőség*, August 18th, 1917. *Magyar Kultúra*, *Új Nemzedék* or *A Cél* accused Jászi in the same way.

[69] Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 482-508;

[70] Péter Hanák, *Jászi Oszkár dunai patriotizmusa* [The Danubian Patriotism of Oszkár Jászi], (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1985).

[71] Postcard of Jászi to Endre Ady from Italy, March 8th 1914, Ady Endre Művei, *Levelei* [Complete Works, Correspondance], (Budapest: Szépirodalmi könyvkiadó, 1983), 316.

Of course, it remains questionable whether Jászi's decision to organize an inquiry in such difficult times was a wise one.[72] (I do not refer to the conditions of the world war in general, but mainly to censorship in concrete terms, which unavoidably distorted information and to the state of public opinion as well). Jászi and his circle, as well as the majority of the discussants were men still brought up in the values of the liberal 19th century. There is another interesting evidence which seems to support my view. Most authors of Jászi's "*Huszadik Század*" were convinced that the advent of mass-media would increase the mobilizing potential of the left. So an article written in 1917 greeted even the rightist Catholic press movement with satisfaction, claiming that it might bring new groups "into political organization and the reading of press," thus "disseminating both education and democracy."[73]

The Surge of Anti-Semitism

The first open attack on Jews took place on the very same day that the political truce collapsed – on August 23rd 1916. This assault arose in connection with the war contractors: the deputy of the Independence Party, Endre Ráth, questioned Prime Minister Tisza on the abuses of *Haditermény Rt.*, the central office for war production and other institutions. The new feature of this political attack – which, in my opinion, formed part of the all-round offensive against Tisza – consisted in Ráth's reading of a long list of grain merchants of the central offices. His list contained many names like Weiss, Löwy, Spitzer, Stern – names of Hungarian Jewish entrepreneurs – and the speaker even added: "I would be more pleased with Hungarian names."[74] Some deputies joined forces with Ráth, while Premier Tisza rejected the charges and asked the questioner to "refrain

[72] For a further analysis of this inquiry see: Ferenc Laczó, "Das Problem nationaler Heterogenität. Die Diskussion über die 'Judenfrage' in der Zeitschrift 'Huszadik Század' im Jahr 1917," *Die 'Judenfrage'- ein europäisches Phänomen?* eds. Manfred Hettling, Michael G. Müller, Guido Hausmann, (Berlin: Metropol, 2013), 145-177.

[73] Rita Mária Kiss, "A hatodik nagyhatalom" [The Sixth Great Power], *Századvég*, 20/1 (2001): 90.

[74] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 31, session 652, 256-257.; Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 96.; Lajos Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő* [Two Generations], (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1993), 184.

from false generalizations."[75] From that time on no more hidden hints were necessary in the attacks against the banks and the centrals; the "Jewish question" of the war came openly into daylight, and remained in the foreground at least until 1920.

We must remember that *Krisenjahr* [Crisis Year] 1916 was also the year of the collapse of the *Burgfrieden* in Germany. By that period "hatred against war profiteers of all sorts had become explosive. Anti-Semitism in Germany made its first creeping breakthrough in the terrible home-front crisis of the central years of the Great War."[76] "The reproaches concerning the present food situation are directed primarily against the producers and the middlemen, the latter being without exception identified as speculators and war-profiteers and assumed to be mainly Jews."[77] In 1916, the year of the notorious *Judenzählung* [Jewish census] in the German army, the German *Reichstag* set up a special multi-party committee to investigate profit-making from the war. By and large, the committee succeeded in demonstrating that some large enterprises had made enormous profits out of the war, but it proved helpless concerning practical measures. Nevertheless the committee helped keep the subject of war profiteering alive "*as a theme of anti-Semitic agitation*."[78] As the German historian Wolfram Wette noted in his study on the parliamentary arms control, the new orientation of public interest in the Jewish scapegoat contributed greatly to divert attention from its own misconduct.[79]

Some on the political right demanded harsh actions and revenge. But it seems more important that – due to the overall situation and the intellectual "conceptualization" of the problem – "the anti-Semitic pack is once again in full cry in all the streets."[80] A report issued by the Berlin police headquarters about

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[75] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1916, vol. 31, session 652, 259; Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 96 (Remarkably this session alone – on August 23rd , 1916 – occupies 96 pages in the protocols of the Lower House.)

[76] Immanuel Geiss, "The Civilian Dimension of the War," *Facing Armageddon*, eds. Hugh Cecil, Peter Liddle, (London: Cooper, 1996), 20-21.

[77] Gerald D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993), 61.

[78] Wolfram Wette, "Reichstag und 'Kriegsgewinnlerei' (1916-1918). Die Anfänge parlamentarischer Rüstungskontrolle in Deutschland," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 36/2 (1984): 31-56; 49.

[79] Wolfram Wette, *Reichstag und 'Kriegsgewinnlerei'*, 50-51.

[80] Cited in *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933. The Problematic Symbiosis*, ed. David Bronsen, (Heidelberg: Winter, 1979), 52.

the attitudes and the situation of the population in the city notes that even among those circles who had not previously held anti-Semitic attitudes a strong hostility against the Jews had emerged, and, the report added – in words with their own clear anti-Semitic undertone –, that the Jews had used the war situation to their own advantage.[81] The outcome was that, by 1917-1918, anti-Semitism reappeared as a "political factor" in Germany.[82] Just one more point is worth mentioning – the role of the churches, more specifically of the Catholic Church. According to a recent study by Olaf Blaschke, an "inherent" anti-Semitism had several functions for the Catholic mind: it was primarily a phenomenon indigenous to the Catholic mentality, belonging as a matter of course to the foundational knowledge and emotional disposition of your "average Catholic" [*des Durchschnittskatholiken*], and embedded in the *ressentiments* of the clergy.[83] In October 1916, a respected leader of the German Catholic Centre Party, Matthias Erzberger proposed during the debate in the German parliament on food supply and war profiteering to publicly reveal the entire personnel of war-centrals "according to age, income, and *denomination*" [emphasis added]. The mighty General Ludendorff was probably pleased to hear the proposal, but the Social-Democrats rejected it. Their leader, Friedrich Ebert, warned not to ask for the religious affiliation of people (just like the Hungarian Tisza before him), because this question establishes a tendency that must be avoided.[84]

Exactly two years passed between the skirmish caused by Endre Ráth's interpellation on the abuses of the central office for war production, defaming Jews as their profiteers, and the other parliamentary debate about anti-Semitic manifestations, in August 1918. In these two years the "Jewish question" turned up almost daily, in connection with every possible topic in the House, like war centrals, war contractors, food distribution, war heroes and villains, unbearable shifts in incomes or just the policies of any governments. These debates are largely unknown up to now.

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[81] Cited in *Berichte der Berliner Polizeipräsidenten zur Stimmung und Lage der Bevölkerung in Berlin 1914-1918*, eds. Ingo Materna, Hans-Joachim Schreckenbach, Bärbel Holtz, (Weimar: Böhlau, 1987), 299.

[82] Werner Jochmann, "Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus," *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923*, ed. Werner E. Mosse, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1971), 437.

[83] Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1997), 107.

[84] Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1969), 525.

On January 1st 1917, Károly Huszár of the People's Party started the year by providing typical names of profiteers in Upper Hungary – like Schwarz, Deutsch, etc. – and also condemned child labor in Manfréd Weiss' factory.[85] On February 10th, the deputy from the Independence Party Béla Kelemen attacked the Tisza government for being idle when many collect millions through profiteering and by abusing war contracts.[86] A week later, another politician from the Independence Party, Géza Bosnyák, spoke of the "food and industrial usury of the great banks."[87] On February 20, his fellow party member István Bottlik reprimanded all large capitalist enterprises "caressed by the state against general welfare."[88] On the same day the large landowner and politician, Margrave György Pallavicini, undersecretary of state in the government of Móric Graf Esterházy in autumn the same year, commented more harshly: Hungarian farmers – returning from the front – "will be exposed to the mercy of these banks and [...] become either slaves of the banks or take to the road."[89] On March 2nd, Ubul Kállay – deputy of the Independence Party and publisher of the anti-Semitic periodical "*A Cél*" (The Aim) – drew a parallel that soon became a commonplace: "Those like MP Zoltán Désy die as heroes on the front; the usurers, profiteers, and the like happily continue their petty trades." And he went on claiming "all possible ways and means to encourage not only the proliferation of our people, but also to maintain and organize [!] racial hygiene" – following the German example.[90] On March 13th, the Catholic politican János Frey from the People's Party returned to the recipe of Endre Ráth: after a few strong remarks about banks, war centrals, middlemen in commerce, and other such "beasts" he proceeded to provide a list of the contractors of *Haditermény Rt.* in Baranya county: mainly Brauns, Singers, Krauszes, etc.[91] On March 19th, the politician and historian Sándor Pethő from the Democratic Party again accused the omnipotent banks with deliberately enhancing inflation for profits,

[85] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1917, vol. 33, session 692, 512–518.
[86] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 34, session 698, 172.
[87] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 34, session 699, 236.
[88] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 34, session 700, 255.
[89] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 34, session 700, 269.
[90] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 34, session 709, 562. Zoltán Désy was an Independent Perty MP, who had accused Prime Minister László Lukács – in 1912 – of assigning money to the Party of Work, and called him "the greatest panamist in Europe." In 1913 the tribunal finally acquitted Désy of the charge brought against him for slander (he was defended by Vázsonyi); the next day Lukács resigned and Tisza became Prime Minister. Désy thus turned into a hero of the national opposition. In 1915 he died a hero's death at the Eastern front.
[91] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1917, vol. 35, session 712, 78–79.

thus "making terrible ransoms" on consumers.[92] On the same day, Endre Ráth returned to his old tune, with some variations: our trains leave with worthy Hungarian peasants and "return with Polish Jews in caftans" coming to Budapest.[93] Later he referred to the war contractor Manfréd Weiss' huge plants – but at that point Count Tivadar Batthyány, a leading personality of the Independence Party could not resist interrupting him: "These [plants] ought to have been nationalized on the first day [of the war]. He has acquired a bigger fortune than that of Count Esterházy! He buys a few landed estates every day! They [!] seize the land from our poor people!" The left loudly agreed.[94]

Still on the same day another count, József Károlyi from the Independence Party, gave a cultural twist to the discussion and made a revealing claim that was widely commented on in the press.[95] First he stated that "a non-Christian materialist tendency has gained the upper hand [in Hungary] – this trend, with its cohesion and constant desire to cause sensation already visible before the war, [...] has just been awaiting and searching for the occasion to come into power [...] This racial materialism endangers our racial Hungarian national self and our ancient Christian self. (Very true! from the left.) Many feel this now, more than before. (Very true! from the left.)" The solution he found was "Christian concentration."[96] This slogan – vague as it may sound – was to have a profound impact in 1918. The next day (March 20th), a third aristocrat from the Independence Party, Mihály Esterházy, returned to the land-problem, but this time with an anti-German flavour: "While the Hungarian is fighting, Hungarian land is being robbed from him! Bankers should remain at their banks! German banks lease considerable parts of our country!"[97] Others, like Tivadar Batthyány did not refrain from stating that our allies "have come to occupy the country!."[98] At that session, the agriculturalist from the Smallholder Party, János Novák, spoke against a Jewish profiteer;[99] then, on March 22nd, the deputy of the Independence Party, Aurél Förster, spoke out against the great banks.[100] The very active Károly Huszár attacked Tisza's "personal dictatorship" as "the reign

[92] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 716, 185.
[93] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 716, 197.
[94] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 716, 207. (During Batthyány's sentences "Exclamations on the left: It ought to have been requisitioned. After the war he will buy up the whole country!" – *ibid.*)
[95] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 716, 190. Károlyi's speech was discussed negatively in *Világ* and *Az Ujság* and positively in *Új Nemzedék* and *Magyar Kultúra*.
[96] *Képviselőházi Napló*, 1917, vol. 35, session 716, 190.
[97] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 717, 219.
[98] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 717, 219.
[99] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 717, 228.
[100] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 719, 293.

of the terror of impotence," directed a few strong remarks at the un-Christian trends of literary and scientific life in Hungary and ended his speech with a proposal to call up Manfréd Weiss for military service.[101] On March 31st, the Catholic politician János Bartos from the People's Party again brought up the bleeding millions on the front and the few great banks in the rear, which were acquiring millions and, more recently, huge estates . These, he said, "squeeze the last drops of fat out of the country and, since there is no more fat, now sap the blood." They rule the country, he continued, as "there is a secret union to spoil those social strata which, up to now, proved incorruptible."[102] Finally, as if to end war year 1917, Zoltán Meskó – a new MP of the Independence Party – devoted his maiden speech to Manfréd Weiss and his business. (October 20th was already the period of Wekerle's government.) He charged, among other things, that Weiss's yearly income – estimated at 400-500 million crowns – would be enough to buy up the whole country, as he would soon possess more money than the state itself. Meskó emphasized the defence of Hungarian soil: "I consider aliens all those purchasers of land who love Hungarian soil only for its yield, in contrast to those ready to spill their blood for it, in order to preserve it."[103] Later it was Meskó who founded one of the first proto-Nazi (Arrow-Cross) parties in Hungary.[104]

It is not difficult to discover that which connects the leading themes of the debates. The rule of the great banks and the war centrals was identified with Jewish (or occasionally with German) capital. These alien powers supported an un-Christian liberal-materialistic culture, thereby endangering Hungarian values. In this view the rule of Tisza's "liberal-mercantile" Party of Work and the rule of the Jewish banks naturally supported each other. It is hard not to view these attacks as being conspicuously carried out by the Independence Party against Tisza, and by the People's Party against Jewish capital (while they enthusiastically agreed with each other in condemning both). It was perhaps easy for MPs of the Catholic People's Party – often themselves priests – to argue with black-and-white (or black-and-red) images, in a language which inevitably evoked the sufferings of Christ (Christians) and his (their) greedy and power-hungry enemies. There was but one new theme in this chain of accusations: the alleged hunger of big capital for land, and the ensuing deprivation of Hungarian farmers

[101] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 719, 301–304.
[102] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 35, session 724, 429–431.
[103] *Ibid.*, 1917, vol. 37, session 745, 88.
[104] Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 692.

of their lands.[105] This point seems important: until the war, the battle revolved around wealth and cultural influence; now Hungarian land and – as we have seen in the case of Vázsonyi – political power were also added to the anti-Jewish agenda: everything worthy seemed to be at stake.

Not only did the parties of the opposition feel that it was time to renew their attacks against Tisza and his unpopular "regime" and to connect their charges with those against the even more unpopular war-economy. We have seen how the management of the war was intertwined with what was purported to be chiefly Jewish big capital. The Tisza-government had three members of Jewish origins (from 1913) as well as some Jewish under-secretaries.

In a rather paradoxical way the Hungarian Parliament even grew in importance during the war years, since practically all other forms of political action (e.g. through associations) were restricted. Under conditions of press censorship, the reports of parliamentary debates could go unhindered and frequently received extensive coverage in the newspapers. These reports were hardly diminished by the war (despite serious paper shortages): there were already too many delicate or censored areas anyway. Fed up with war-news, the public turned their interest to reports on parliamentary debates – mentioning each speaker by name and their main arguments. Of course, MPs were well aware of this opportunity and willingly cultivated such public relations.

The journal *Egyenlőség* rightly observed that most of these debates were generated by the parliamentary system itself: "Every time the government submits its report to parliament on the administration of exceptional power, there is an inflation of economic crimes in connection with the war."[106] There were eight lengthy debates of this kind in both houses of parliament. In a still semi-liberal Hungary, it would have been impossible to use "exceptional power" without subsequent parliamentary approval and to restrict or censor the debates. But *Egyenlőség* failed to see that the only alternative would have been the closure of Parliament – under the circumstances, any pretext could well be found for a passionate debate of the kind mentioned above.

Articles on the alleged hegemony of the Jews and on the "Jewish question," in general, began to flood the Hungarian press – first the periodicals, later the daily

[105] See Ullmann's speech in the Upper House also: Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 184.
[106] Sándor Komáromi, "A hadibűnökről," *Egyenlőség*, February 3rd, 1917.

papers – in 1917. The most important publications in this genre were, in part, Catholic, like *Magyar Kultúra* [Hungarian Culture], *Élet* [Life], *Keresztényszocializmus* [Christian Socialism] and *A Sajtó* [The Press], in part, close to the Independent tradition, like *Új Nemzedék* [New Generation] and *A Cél* [The Aim]. By 1918 their outlooks, at least concerning the omnipresent "Jewish question," were almost indistinguishable from each other.

The Catholic weekly and monthly magazines were very consistent and perseverant: from early 1915 on – the time of the first war contractor scandals – they never ceased to occupy themselves with Jewish problems, which they did more and more regularly, extending it to every possible field, while their tone became ever cruder. The best example is perhaps father Béla Bangha's *Magyar Kultúra* (launched in 1913 to counter liberal-progressive influences). Bangha, himself a radical – though non-racist – anti-Semite, proved to be an apt and influential organizer of militant-Catholic forces.[107] One of his chief columnists was the high school teacher Károly Burján, a notorious (racial) anti-Semite, who delivered his short comments in each number of the monthly review. His main enemies were the freemasons and the radicals: Oszkár Jászi and the like, with their *Huszadik Század* and their daily paper *Világ* [World]. Burján immediately "discovered the links" between these radical circles and the sinful war-contractors. In his "The hyenas of the nation and the progressives" (1915) one finds the following statement: "That stupefyingly loathsome pus which is emanating from this furuncle [...] all sticks to progressive names"[108] – and so forth in the same manner, in connection with inflation, shortages, black market, national minorities, etc., and even the organized holidays for war orphans.[109] *Magyar Kultúra*, of course, kept its finger on educational and political issues, like the election of the (Jewish) philosopher Bernát Alexander to the deanship of the faculty of arts at the Pázmány Budapest University in 1915 or the appointment of "Weiszfeld-Vázsonyi" as Minister of Justice (in 1917).

The weekly *Élet* – edited by another high-school teacher and headmaster, József Andor, was somewhat more moderate, closer to the line of Ottokár Prohászka,

[107] On Bangha: Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 295-301, Miklós Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus és a jobboldali radikalizmus története 1867-1918*, (Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 2003), 257, 331.
[108] "A nemzet hiénái és a progresszió," *Magyar Kultúra*, 3/8 (1915): 384.
[109] Gyula Noé, "A szabadkőmíves vezetésű hadiárva-szanatórium," *Magyar Kultúra*, 5/ 17-18 (1917): 816.

the famous reformer-bishop of Székesfehérvár.[110] It usually dealt with literary and general cultural questions in accord with the attitudes of the Christian middle classes. It attacked, for instance, the new literary trends in Budapest (like the works of Jewish authors Sándor Bródy, Ferenc Molnár or Dezső Szomory), but avoided gutter-like anti-Semitism.[111] This was the case until 1918, at least, at which point the periodical's tone became apocalyptic, preparing for a final reckoning in the manner of a "Hungarian awakening." In that year Prohászka, as we shall see, also turned active in politics and extremely prolific as a publicist. In 1916 he wrote seven articles in *Élet*, in 1917 only six (none of which engaged with political themes), but he wrote no less than fourteen in the first ten months of 1918, including explicitly political ones. The sixty-year-old bishop seemed to become an unquestionable authority: he and his role were repeatedly compared to the "greatest of Hungarians."[112]

Two more new clerical publications appeared in 1916-1917: *A Sajtó* [The Press] and "*Kereszténységszocializmus*" [Christian Socialism]. Both had but one theme – the Jews –, both represented a gutter-type anti-Semitism. They fitted well into the apocalyptic atmosphere of the last war-year, to be discussed later, where they will also receive treatment as part of the vanguard of the Catholic offensive of 1918.

Új Nemzedék and *A Cél* make an altogether different impression. The talented and unscrupulous publicist of the Independence Party, István Milotay, launched his monthly *Új Nemzedék* in 1913, intending it to serve as a modern organ against Tisza's "liberal" policy:[113] "The great curse of the policy of the Hungarian opposition is that in the 19th and even in the 20th century it still fights for its aims in an insurgent manner. It has no permanent standing army and enlists its insurgents recruited for the elections to confront the well-organized power of the ruling regime" – where one should again note the militant tone.[114] Lajos Szabolcsi, the editor of *Egyenlőség* is certainly mistaken in claiming that Milotay had launched his periodical to discuss the "Jewish question."[115] Again, only in

[110] Bettina Reichmann, *Bischof Ottokár Prohászka (1858-1927). Krieg und christliche Kultur in Ungarn,* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014).
[111] József Andor, "Kultúránk válsága," *Élet*, February 13th, 1916.
[112] The whole issue of *Élet,* October 1918.
[113] On the early career of Milotay see Péter Sipos, "Milotay István pályaképéhez" [To the Career of István Milotay], *Századok*, 105/3-4 (1971): 3-4.
[114] István Milotay, "Kolozsvár," *Új Nemzedék*, September 26th, 1915.
[115] Szabolcsi, *Két emberöltő*, 193.

1916–1917 did Milotay and his periodical take a definite turn to a sharp anti-liberalism and radical anti-Semitism, which then – from 1918 on – became his obsession. In 1914–1915, Milotay was – as an exception – against the war as well as against the great banks' rule, against Budapest and also the "Galicianers," while he still tried to organize the "insurgents" of the independents for a more radical policy and split them from the Jászi's line.[116] Be that is it may, in 1915 Milotay viewed it as his role, perhaps his mission, to find an "independent" middle way between clericalism and radicalism. However, from the end of 1915 onwards, Milotay broadened his attacks from their narrow focus on "Galicianers" to the Jews in general, referring to the "war contractor tribe."[117] In 1916 he started to report the names of Jewish *virilists*, men who hold seats in a legislative body due to their function as judges or university rectors, and of war contractors. He began at the same time to use liberalism and radicalism in quotation marks as pejorative terms.[118] At that point, he definitively went over to the neo-conservative, right-radical camp. In 1917 he joined the campaign against the "land-hunger" of great banks[119] and launched a general attack against "Jewish expansion."[120] Alluding to the famous debate in 1917, his periodical accused the Jews themselves of producing the "Jewish question,"[121] and went on to see the answer in coercion. Finally, in 1918, he joined Bishop Prohászka in advocating "Hungarism" which, he claimed, was not anti-Semitism: "We do not want the Jew dead [sic], but to wake up the Hungarian. It was time to declare this unyieldingly and invincibly."[122] No doubt: without Milotay's engagement and his talented pen the whole anti-Semitic movement would have been much less effective.[123]

The case of *A Cél* displays an even sharper curve. Launched in 1910 on the initiative and with the money of Baron Miklós Szemere as a social, economic, literary, and sport-review, it defined its task as the defense of "Hungarian faith,

[116] Orlando, "Új honfoglalás," *Új Nemzedék*, November 28th, 1915.
[117] "A hétről. A terézvásrosi "demokrácia," *Új Nemzedék*, September 3rd, 1916; *Új Nemzedék*, December 17th, 1916; "A "feudalizmus" végnapjai," *Új Nemzedék*, January 21st, 1917.
[118] "A hétről. A bank-feudalizmus szervezkedése," *Új Nemzedék*, January 14th, 1917; "A bankfeudalizmus terjeszkedése," *Új Nemzedék*, February 4th, 1917.
[119] István Milotay, "A Hangya," *Új Nemzedék*, March 25th, 1917.
[120] "Te is fiam, Jászi?," *Új Nemzedék*, August 12th, 1917.
[121] István Milotay, "Egy bátor könyvről," *Új Nemzedék*, April 25th, 1917.
[122] Cordax, "Tollhegyről," *Új Nemzedék*, September 14th, 1918.
[123] Ferenc Szálasi's propaganda-minister, Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa called him "the greatest publicist of Hungary": Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa, 1944, 59.

moral, honor and patriotism."[124] In the 1914 volume the word "Jew" does not appear at all, though the problem of ethnic minorities and the "national minority question" sometimes does. It also published prominent and progressive writers like Zsigmond Móricz. Jewish "themes" began to appear incidentally in 1916, but only "indirectly," in connection with the debates on "Pan-Turanism,"[125] or in a rough critic of "Affairs in the Capital."[126] The definite turn to Jewish themes and anti-Semitism came in late 1916 and early 1917. Ubul Kállay (MP) remained editor in chief, but Zoltán Farkas became the executive editor (the very illustrious editorial board also remained). *A Cél* opened its columns to leading anti-Semitic publicists like Sándor Kiss and Gyula Altenburger –with topics, charges and epithets very similar to the other periodicals mentioned above.[127] At some points they even proved to be more inventive: a good example was Sándor Kiss' article on the relationship of modern *belles-lettres* and the Jews.[128] In 1918 the periodical had hardly any themes other than the Jews, and the agenda of "Hungarian awakening" also fully predominated. Even Bishop Prohászka – who had joined the editorial board – honored *A Cél* with an article.[129]

As this short survey indicates, the general anti-Semitic tide started in the press at roughly the same period as in parliament, namely, in late 1916-early 1917; from that time on Hungarian anti-Semitism became ever-increasing and inexorable. The main directions were similar to those in party politics: the Catholic People's Party and the radical wing of the Independence Party. Some periodicals of the agrarian movement, as we have seen, also showed anti-Semitic tendencies, but their arguments generally remained within the usual anti-capitalist and anti-

[124] Gyurgyák was right in claiming that nothing of substance has been written on *A Cél* so far: Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 371.

[125] *Ibid.*; Reference has been made on the articles of Gyula Mészáros, István Mezey and Lajos Sassy-Nagy in Chapter V.

[126] "Animó" *A Cél,* 7 (1916): 380-386; 453-457.

[127] The editorial board (István Bernát, Count István Bethlen, Emil Dodák, Sándor Giesswein, Ákos Horváth, Baron Árpád Kemény, Gyula Mezey and Gyula Pekár) was obviously a union of various – largely conservative – political and spiritual forces.

[128] Altenburger was – atypically – director of an insurance company, who took a definite turn from liberalism to radical anti-Semitism in 1915, having returned from Germany. Kiss was – quite typically – a school-teacher, later director (Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus*, 305; Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 680.)

[129] Sándor Kiss, whom Gyurgyák called one of the first "racist anti-Semites" in Hungary, did not spare with the epithets on "Jewish" literature: *A Cél*, 8 (1917): 432-433; 562-573.

Budapest framework.[130] Of course it would be very important to know which of these periodicals sold best, which was the most influential in intellectual or middle class circles. Nevertheless it is also revealing that all of them seem to have sold well, even with more or less identical contents and style, even at a time of a growing paper shortage, though they managed amidst the general paper-misery to obtain paper of fairly good quality.

Of the two traditional satirical journals *Borsszem Jankó* [Pepper John] was pro-Tisza and philo-Semitic, *Bolond Istók* [Folly Steevie] pro-independent and hostile towards the Jews. Nevertheless they shared certain stereotypes: rich bankers and war contractors were always characteristically Jewish types,[131] as Jews happened to always be the subjects of jokes about shirkers of the home-front.[132] As cited above, war millionaires were inevitably written with an "sch" at the end ("hadimilliomosch"), which referred to their Jewish origins. *Bolond Istók* was more outspoken and harsh in this respect: the first "Jewish" war-jokes appeared early 1915 – about profiteers, usurers, and the "Galician invasion" – then expanded to every possible field: Jews were fraudsters, owners of hidden stocks, or simply parasites.[133] It is hard to assess the effect of these jokes and drawings, but they certainly reached more people, and thus exerted more influence, than the more refined arguments of Milotay or Prohászka. While intellectuals and the middle classes read the latter, simple people had the satirical journals – in this respect there certainly was a division of labor concerning the dissemination of anti-Semitic narratives.[134]

The role of various Catholic circles in the intensification of Hungarian anti-Semitism during the war has been noted throughout. Livelier Catholic activity, in general, had much to do with the "Jewish question," and by 1917-1918 all this looked like a very deliberate policy, even if I would refrain from calling it an

[130] *A Cél*, 9/1 (1918): 2-11. For the agitation against Budapest as a Jewish capital, see, for example: Charles Kecskemeti, " 'Judapest' et Vienne," *Austriaca: Cahiers Universitaires d'Information sur l'Autriche* 29/57 (2004): 35-52.

[131] Like "Magyar Gazdák Szemléje" [Review of Hungarian Farmers], "Háború és bankuralom" [War and Bankocracy], 22 (1917): 136-142; or "Köztelek" [Common Lot], "A drágaság és a székesfőváros" [High Prices and the Capital], June 12th, 1915.

[132] New stereotypes required new faces: old Jewish figures were supplemented with new ones in comic magazines – like the manipulating sergeanst (in the rear) or the parvenue magnate with his fat wife.

[133] *Borsszem Jankó*, February 1st, 1916; July 16th 1916.

[134] Bolond Istók preferred profiteers and "Galicianers": January 31st, 1915; July 2nd 1915; February 14th 1915; February 2nd, 1915 – and from this time on a regular basis.

"organized conspiracy," guided from one single center. The struggle against liberalism was fought with several weapons and on varied fronts, but the two main figures were beyond doubt -- Father Béla Bangha, the great organizer, and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, the great ideologue. "Prohászka succeeded in taking our Catholic men's society into the churches, while Bangha succeeded in leading them into the streets and organized them so as to regain public life. The greatest achievements of his life are linked to the struggle against the Jewish press and the creation of a Catholic one."[135]

Perhaps the most important field was the creation of a new Catholic press, the organization of the Catholic *Központi Sajtóvállalat* (KSV) [Central Press Company], on the initiative of Father Bangha, the "great press apostle."[136] He regarded it as the most important instrument of the Catholic struggle. Bangha launched the offensive with several articles in 1917, emphasizing that the creation of effective press is a question of life and death for the future of the whole clerical movement.[137] He was, of course, far from alone in this struggle. Co-organizers like Jusztin Baranyai and Antal Buttkay helped him, while some Catholic authors also stressed the need for a "boulevard-paper like '*Az Est*' in our hands in the capital city."[138] The support of Primate János Csernoch proved most important, he promised to subscribe shares for 100 000 crowns for the foundation of the "Central Press Company" (KSV).[139]

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[135] Some data on numbers of copies or stocks of centrally distributed papers are available, but only for daily papers. A good recent article on the Hungarian press at the turn of the century: Rita Mária Kiss, "A hatodik nagyhatalom" [The Sixth Great Power]? *Századvég*, 20/1 (2001): 67-94.

[136] Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus*, 256-260; *Új Nemzedék*, April 29th 1940 (Obituary); Gábor Salacz, *Egyház és állam Magyarországon a dualizmus korában 1867-1918* [Church and State in Hungary in the Era of Dualism], (München: Aurora Könyvek, 1974), 202.

[137] The Catholic "press-action" had a long history, described in the biography of one of its champions: Kelemen Burka O. F. M., Antal Buttkay O. F. M, Pápa, 105-115. (Buttkay was the middlemen between Bangha and Prohászka.) Also: Béla Bangha S. J., *Összegyűjtött munkái* (Collected Works), vol. XXV and XXVI (Budapest, 1941); Zoltán Nyisztor, *Bangha élete és művei* [Life and Oeuvre of Béla Bangha], (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Irodalmi Társaság, 1941); Salacz, *Egyház és állam Magyarországon*, chap. XXXI; Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus*, 331-332.

[138] Bangha S. J., *Összegyűjtött munkái*, vol. XXV and XXVI. Also: Salacz, *Egyház és állam Magyarországon*, chap. XXXI.

[139] The interwar leader of rightist-clerical political forces in Budapest, Károly Wolff, also started his political career with activity for the Catholic Press Action in 1918.: *Wolff Károly élete, politikája, alkotása* [The Life, Politics and Oeuvre of K. W.], ed. Endre Szigethy (Budapest: 1943), 58.

The subscription of shares at 25 crowns each began in January 1918, and the success of the project exceeded all expectations. By June, 16,000 shareholders bought subscriptions totaling 12 million crowns, and an assembly of "five thousand people declared the foundation of KSV":[140] "When our Fatherland was in danger, we rescued it with war loans. Now, when Christianity is in danger, we rescue it with a Christian press loan!" – as the monthly journal of the Catholic Maria Congregations, edited by Béla Bangha S. J., put it in 1918.[141] Among the 25 founders of the "Central Press Company" there were five aristocrats, among them count József Károlyi, Lord Lieutenant of Fejér county (where Prohászka was the bishop), from 1917 onward, eight prelates, and eight university professors.[142] In the list of the members of the supervising committee one finds the name of Zoltán Farkas, editor of *A Cél*.[143] The details of the "press action" can be followed from the rabidly anti-Semitic *A Sajtó* [The Press], launched by the "National Press Union of Catholic Ladies." Another, more or less similar, organ, *A Keresztényszocializmus* [Christian Socialism] – "the official central paper of the Christian Socialist Unions" – managed to put some sand in the machine of a unified Christian press empire in the making. The small paper, which represented the rudest gutter anti-Semitism, was clearly dissatisfied with the leadership of prelates, aristocrats, and leading intellectuals, and announced the foundation of a more democratic Christian Socialist Press Company. Among the 17 founding members there were mainly civil servants, office-messengers, artisans, and workers.[144] They clearly represented a markedly different and even more radical public--so much so that the most important Catholic daily paper, *Alkotmány*, quickly dissociated itself from them –, but they do not seem to have seriously disturbed the emerging unity.[145]

Meanwhile, Bangha's feverish activity was not confined to the organization of the Catholic press. He had found time to visit the country. According to Ignác Romsics, the riots in Kecskemét (in May 1917) and Kiskunfélegyháza (in

[140] József Galántai, *Egyház és politika, 1890-1918. Katolikus egyházi körök politikai szervezkedeséi Magyarországon*, (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1960), 191; Csernoch was loyal to Tisza, but positioned himself closer to Prohászka's and Bangha's lines during the war.

[141] *A Sajtó*, January 20th 1918; this racist periodical was launched in autumn 1916 as the monthly review of the "Catholic Ladies' Press Committee;" the committee's president, Countess György Mailáth, was greeted by Primate Csernoch on the occasion, and claimed to have 'more than 20 000 readers' from the very beginning."

[142] *Mária Kongregáció*, XI, 1917-1918, 149.

[143] *A Sajtó*, January 20th, 1918.

[144] *A Sajtó*, July, 1918.

[145] *Keresztényszocializmus,* September 15th , 1918.

February 1918) had a visibly anti-Jewish character, which can also be connected to Béla Bangha's tours in the region in 1916 and 1918.[146] The pater repeatedly talked about the need to suppress the Jewish press, as the report of the police chief of Kiskunfélegyháza "rightly remarked." Although Bangha's speech "did not give cause to any direct police intervention, it was still capable of arising strong disfavor and aversion against people of non-Christian denomination in the feelings and behaviors of those simple women who gathered at the assembly in large numbers."[147]

A second important field of Catholic activity was party politics.[148] On February 3rd, 1918, the three existing Christian parties merged into the united "Christian Socialist People's Party" [*Keresztényszocialista Néppárt*], and published a truly modern party program. This demanded universal suffrage, the protection of workers, the reform of landed property, and the regulation of the conditions of civil servants. Last but not least, for the first time, the program did not call for the withdrawal of the laws on ecclesiastical policy of 1894–1895. It ended with a significant statement: "We will support any government that sets itself against subversive elements."[149] Thus the party came closer than ever to becoming a real people's party. No wonder that the Social Democratic Party vehemently attacked the new party and its program.[150]

Meanwhile, political Catholicism made conscious attempts to widen its scope and bring new social groups into the movement, like workers, "godless Budapest" in general, and women in even larger numbers. "Maria Congregations" gained a stronger impetus; so did the *Kisegítő Kápolna Egyesület* [Association of Auxiliary Chapels] – organized largely on the initiative of pater Bangha in 1917 – which "had a large share in the spiritual renaissance of

[146] Yet it is remarkable how the hitherto more moderate *Alkotmány* took a radical turn in the Jewish question by 1918. As we will see, the radicalization meant a quantitative change, indicated by the number of such articles, as well as a qualitative one--not only did Prohászka write for *A Cél*, but also the gutter-anti-Semite Károly Burján for *Alkotmány* (June 10th, 1918; December 10th, 1918.)

[147] Ignác Romsics, *Duna-Tisza köze hatalmi-politikai viszonyai 1918–1919-ben* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982), 31.

[148] Romsics, *Duna-Tisza*, 31.

[149] Galántai, *Egyház és politika*; Dániel Szabó, "The Crisis Of Dualism and the 'New Compromise,'" *Hungary: Government and Politics 1848–2000*, eds. Mária Ormos, Béla K. Király, (Boulder: Atlantic Research Publications, 2001), 104–138.

[150] Galántai, *Egyház és politika*, 188; Jenő Gergely, *A keresztényszocializmus Magyarországon, 1903-1923* [Christian Socialism in Hungary], (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 58-80.

Budapest."[151] Another important step was the foundation of *Szent István Akadémia* [Saint Stephens's Academy] – to replace the previous literary and scientific department of *Szent István Társulat* [Saint Stephen Society], in 1916. "It obtained a complete academic organization, with four departments," under the leadership of the pacifist prelate, Sándor Giesswein.[152] The most significant – or at least most large-scale – organization, though, was *Katolikus Népszövetség* [Catholic People's Association], founded in 1908. This association reached a membership of about 300,000 by 1916-1917, and operated a number of filiations like the *Katolikus Karitász* [Catholic Charity] movement or the union of Catholic Schoolmistresses, which "grew constantly stronger" during the war.[153] The Catholic leadership found it much easier to support these organizations than any Catholic party – at least openly. Some of these associations had their own bulletins, etc.

The Catholic People's Association celebrated its tenth anniversary in March 1918. The festivities lasted for a whole week – with very prominent speakers –, and the jubilee assembly was used chiefly to propagate the program of the newly united Christian Socialist People's Party. MP István Rakovszky, who would later be designated Prime Minister, called for the fight against "a destructive trend" that operates with "well organized forces from behind." István Haller (MP, Minister of Culture in 1919–1920) noted: "We must organize youngsters and women, we have to care about the problems of petty farmers and workers." The mayor of Esztergom added: "let us work on the creation of a strong and independent Hungarian middle class." Finally MP Károly Huszár explained the essence of the party program: "We want a new Hungary, a Christian one, not the Hungary of the new Hungarians, but that of the people of Saint Stephen [...] We do not want to touch established rights, but we can also not be idle when the intellectuals of this nation are being replaced with a material [!] that is neither Christian nor Hungarian. While our heroes fight gloriously on the front, at home we can see frightening pictures of the decay in war morale, which can be attributed to the harmful influence of alien elements. There is regular agitation

[151] Béla Somogyi, *A Keresztény Szocialista Néppárt programmja az igazság megvilágításában*, (Budapest: Népszava-Könyvkereskedés, 1918). The author was an important victim of the Hungarian white terror in 1920.

[152] "A Szent István Akadémia," in *Huszadik Század*, 17/34 (1916, July–December): 320.

[153] Ignácz Hauser, *A budapesti római katolikus egyházközségek első tíz éve* [The First Ten Years of the Roman Catholic Congregations], (Budapest: Pallas, 1930), 15-21; 90-94.

to kill and exterminate the Christian faith and its morals. These machinations spoil the soul of our future generation."[154]

Huszár was, moreover, the third most important member of the Catholic triad. He ran as a candidate for parliament at the age of only 24, and was elected four years later, in 1910. According to the otherwise impartial parliamentary almanac, he was "the most energetic organizer of the Catholic People's Association. The number of his speeches, delivered at mass meetings at every part of the country makes tens of thousands [!]. An indefatigable organizer, a talent in organization, his election proved to be a great gain to his party."[155]

In 1917, the Jesuit Sándor Martinovich wrote a pamphlet on the Jewish question (*A zsidókérdés*) as volume 8 of the series *Vallás és műveltség* [Religion and education]. The fact that it belonged to a well-established series was one reason for its popularity; its short length and simplistic arguments were another.[156] Three types of Jews existed according to the pater: the usurer "kazar," the international Jew and the Hungarian Jew, but because of increasing immigration, the last group has become less and less numerous.[157] Summing up all the well-known stereotypes found in *A Cél*, *Magyar Kultúra*, and *Alkotmány*, the author came to the conclusion that a "thousand experiences" of the world war helped to strengthen the essence of the Jewish question: "Jewish ascendancy endangers our national existence," and the "Hungarian race is defenceless."[158] He discovered one more recent tendency: Jews made an alliance with the national minorities against the Hungarian hegemony – "Jews, democrats and nationalities in one camp! – this is the latest triple alliance."[159] Yet, Martinovich did not present any solution to the Jewish problem, leaving that instead to Bangha and Prohászka.

Finally, mention must be made of yet another new feature: the concentration of hitherto rival Catholic forces and the conscious drive for a Catholic-Protestant rapprochement. Bangha tried to join forces with Prohászka, acknowledging the

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[154] *A Katolikus Népszövetség tíz éve, 1908-1918*, (Budapest: Kiadja a Katolikus Népszövetség, 1918), 68.

[155] "A Kath. Népszövetség jubiláris közgyűlése," *Alkotmány*, March 12th, 1918.

[156] *Magyar Országgyűlési Almanach 1910-1915*, ed. Ferenc Vásárhelyi [Almanac of the Hungarian Parliament], (Budapest: Kapható a kiadóhivatalban, 1910), 200.

[157] Sándor Martinovich, *A zsidókérdés* [The Jewish Question], (Pécs: Pius-Kollégium, 1918).

[158] Martinovich, *A zsidókérdés*, 6.

[159] Martinovich, *A zsidókérdés*, 35 (According to *Egyenlőség* the book of Martinovich was distributed freely in the army, which, however, is hardly believable.)

bishop as the only person "capable of rallying around large masses of our Christian middle classes: men, women, soldiers, civilians, everybody."[160] The tendency of such a cooperation was clear from at least József Károlyi's notorious speech on Christian concentration. It appeared in the reshuffled editorial board of *A Cél*, where – from 1917 on – the Catholic Prohászka was counterbalanced by the entry of the Calvinist professor Elemér Császár and the Lutheran bishop Sándor Raffay.[161] Raffay's autobiographical notes show him to be a tough anti-Semite, to whom "the Jewish question was not a religious, but a racial issue."[162] He had studied Minister Stoecker's "social concepts" in Jena and Leipzig, and came to the conclusion that "one of the most difficult social questions is the Jewish problem [...] Nobody should object against anti-Semitism as a matter of principle. The [Jewish] race is simply disagreeable."[163] The solution would be a complete stop of immigration and the expulsion of those who came after 1914 – "the rest could possibly be endured by the Hungarians."[164]

By 1918 Bishop Ottokár Prohászka presented himself as the leading ideologue of anti-Semitism in Hungary.[165] In his earlier study, Jenő Gergely still only conceded the bishop's "clear turn to the far right" at the beginning of 1918.[166] In my opinion, the turn characterized only the realization of his role, as Prohászka's strong anti-Semitism throughout his career is beyond any doubt. He launched crude attacks against Jewish acceptance even before 1895, "lining up all the arguments of Christian anti-Judaism."[167] Later, his articles in *Esztergom* invariably referred to Jews in negative connotations "joining liberalism,

[160] Béla Bangha's letter to Ottokár Prohászka, December 8th 1918, Püspöki Levéltár Székesfehérvár [Episcopal Archives], Prohászka Ottokár levelezése, 1918. From the tone of the letter it is obvious that the two priests had hardly any contact before this letter.

[161] Szabó, *Az újkonzervativizmus*, 329; Jenő Gergely, *Prohászka Ottokár. A napbaöltözött ember* [O. P. the Man Dressed in Sunshine], (Budapest: Gondolat, 1994), 162.

[162] *Raffay Sándor püspök önéletrajzi feljegyzései* [Autobiographical Notes of Bishop Sándor Raffay], Evangélikus Országos Levéltár [Lutheran National Archives], Budapest, 39.

[163] *Ibid.*, 35.

[164] *Ibid.*

[165] He was also in contact with extreme German anti-Semites, and in 1920 the Deutschvölkische Schutz- und Trutzbund published a German translation of his brochure on the Jewish question in Hungary: Ottokár Prohászka, *Die Judenfrage in Ungarn*, (Hamburg: Deutschvölkische Verlagsanstalt, 1920).

[166] Gergely, *A kereszténységszocializmus Magyarországon*, 66-76.

[167] Cited by Anikó Prepuk, "Miért éppen recepció – Az izraelita vallás egyenjogúsítása az 1890-es években" [Why just Reception – the Emancipation of Israelite Religion in the 1890s], *Emlékkönyv L. Nagy Zsuzsa 70. születésnapjára* [Festschrift for 70th Birthday], (Debrecen: Multiplex Media, 2000), 275-276.

freemasonry and Jewry, postulating one common resultant."[168] I do not doubt that Prohászka's unusual activity in 1918 was due as much to ideological as to practical reasons. He probably did not have to convince himself to revive his anti-Semitism and present it as an all-embracing remedy against those evil forces that endanger "Christian Hungary." In 1917–1918, he must have sensed extreme peril and wanted to prepare for the coming "Armageddon" – just as some other ideologues did. But he also had to feel what Bangha confirmed in his letter: to be the only Catholic person of real authority, consequently accepting the task or rather the mission to "awaken" Christian society, render the theoretical weapons, and hold his army together for the coming battle.

A Jewish author, Miklós Hajdu, stated already in 1916 that "Hungarian Catholicism has stirred up the inner war against 'freemasons, radicals, sociologists and other such dangerous enemies' of the public;" and "Hungarian Catholicism hit back and fabricated a second declaration of war. Or a blood libel if you wish."[169] Two years later the radical *Világ* was perfectly right in complaining of "The new front of clericalism" "from Sárospatak to Székesfehérvár." In the first of these two towns, the local "*Sárospataki Református Lapok*" [Calvinist Papers of Sárospatak] spoke for "uniting the adherents of the Christian world view into one camp against the enemies of faith and churches."[170] Primate János Csernoch was a strong supporter of Christian cooperation, and furthermore seemed to have been on good terms with both Bangha and Prohászka.[171] Of course, in this nascent cooperation there was no room for philo-Semitic or even neutral priests

[168] Gizella Tauber, "Ottokár Prohászka és az Esztergom című havilap 1896-1905 között" [O. P. and the periodical "Esztergom," 1896-1905], *Ottokár Prohászka, Magyarország apostola és tanítója* [O. P, Apostle and Teacher of Hungary], eds. Szabó Ferenc, Mózessy Gergely, (Szeged: Agapé, 2002), 65-84.

[169] Miklós Hajdu, "Világnézetek csatája" [A Clash of World-views], *A magyar zsidó hadi archivum almanchja* [Almanac of the Hungarian Jewish War Archives], eds. Simon Hevesi, Jeno Polnay, Josef Patai, (Budapest: Magyar Zsido Hadi Archivum Es Az Orszagos Magyar Izr. Kozmuvelodesi Egyesulet, 1916), 36.

[170] *Világ*, September 26th, 1918.

[171] According to Jenő Gergely, Primate János Csernoch was also an adherent of a Catholic-Protestant compromise and a concentration of forces "for the defence of faith, morals and Motherland" (Gergely, *A kereszténységszocializmus Magyarországon*, 56.) In the Archives of the Primate in Esztergom, I have found an interesting – private and confidential – letter from Prohászka to Csernoch (August 9th , 1918). In the letter, Prohászka asked for the Primate's help to avoid the nomination of "a certain Jewish Hahn" in place of the retiring tax-supervisor (Pál Gassner). This, according to Prohászka, would be "highly undesirable for well-known reasons." (Private Papers, box 20. 7/515.) How interesting it would be to know these well-known reasons!

– like the Calvinist prelate of Debrecen, Dezső Balthazár, who openly protested against Ágoston's book.[172]

Before 1914 the Jewish question had been present in public discourse in Hungary, and hence provided the vocabulary and the arguments for a more radical anti-Semitism that would emerge in the first decades of the twentieth century. Anti-Semitism was one of the pre-dominant problems, one of the important divisions, but not yet "the" problem or "the" main division that came to permeate all pores of the society, as it did by 1918. It was the First World War that proved to be the catalyst, contributing to the extreme intensification of the split between a modern and a pre-modern country, thereby sealing the fate of "liberal Hungary."

It is interesting to observe how the new charges brought against this apparently "triumphant" Jewry fit into the old stereotypes. They largely avoid front service = they always shrink from physical effort; they have an eminent role in the operations of war-economy = they occupy every position in the Hungarian economy; many of them make money as profiteers and usurers = as merchants they regularly cheat Christians; they play a conspicuous role in spreading a frivolous culture during the war = they uproot traditional (Hungarian, Christian) values. Even the influx of Jewish refugees from Galicia fitted into the old pattern of an allegedly continuous Jewish immigration. Let us add that this new – often racially connoted – anti-Semitism was, of course, far from being a spontaneous outburst of popular feelings. It was well-organized and coordinated, mainly by ecclesiastical circles. A fair number of politicians joined them, sometimes out of conviction, sometimes for tactical reasons. By 1918 the transformation of Hungarian society into hostile, antagonistic camps was largely completed with the stage set for a red and/or white revolution – the consequences of which continue to bedevil our public life ever since.

While these changes took place within a short period of time, the bitter experiences of the middle classes – mainly those of civil servants at this point – were unavoidably built into old structures and explained by old enmities. The final split between a Christian-Hungarian and a Hungarian-Jewish middle class was brought about by the effects of the world war; mentalities and hostilities became ossified during the war years. Civil servants increasingly felt betrayed by the all-embracing state they served, exploited by more powerful groups, deceived in their patriotic loyalty. For most contemporary observers this dual process

[172] *Alkotmány*, August 8th 1918.; Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 410.

appeared as a ruining of the (old) Christian-Hungarian middle class, its place being filled by the rising (new) Jewish middle class. For an ever larger part of the public, this whole process looked like one part of the middle class being intentionally driven out for the sake and benefit of another part – a process that started long before the war and that accelerated between 1914 and 1918. By 1918 anti-Semitism became a cultural code in Hungary, too;[173] all important issues came to be seen through this lens as related to the Jewish question. Jewish ascendancy ("*térfoglalás*" = occupation of space) was the new code-word of the period: all stereotypes came to be perceived as parts of an emerging "Jewish conspiracy." Thus anti-Semitism also turned out to be part of a new, radical and/or racial Hungarian nationalism, making it a kind of new common denominator.

Finally let me point out again that I do not regard this development of the "Jewish question" and of anti-Semitism in Hungary as arising inevitably as a necessary consequence of the First World War. Among the most important factors I attribute the main role to the Christian Churches and chiefly the Catholic Church. Without their engagement, the lining up of heavy-weight prelates like Ottokár Prohászka and Bela Bangha or politicians like Karoly Huszár, it would have been impossible to mobilize Christian-Hungarian society. The Church authorities were, in many ways, continuing the pre-war policies. Yet, as talk about a coming "final showdown" between the two camps became almost commonplace in the last years of the war, Catholic prelates and politicians seemed to grasp the opportunity and take the lead in the crusade for a Christian Hungary. It is quite remarkable how Catholic and Protestant circles as well as Catholic and Independent political camps drew ever closer during the war, on the basis of anti-capitalism, anti-liberalism and anti-Semitism, while the question of national minorities was temporarily pushed into the background. Thus the First World War brought about new splits and divisions in Hungarian society, exacerbating several of the existing antagonisms so that they became sharper than ever before.

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[173] Shulamit Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 25-46.

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