



The Situation of the Jewish Population Changes

ETERNAL ECHOES

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Jews Receive Equal Civil Rights

The Jews deprived of rights so far first received equal civil rights in the Act of emancipation, 1867, and then Jewish religion received equal rights as well in the Act of reception, 1895.

This was the most active period for the Jews of Makó. Many of them belonged to the intelligentsia and were doctors, teachers, and lawyers. Industrial and commercial companies were established, thus laying the foundations of the economic development of the town. They founded a higher commercial school that later received nationwide reputation.

The Jews of Makó participated in the town management as well as in public life. Through their foundations, their charity activities were remarkable. In the peasant and peasant-civil society of Makó, it was the Jews who primarily represented the classical middleclass.

Jews of Makó were not uniformed, neither socially, nor in religion. Apart from well-to-do civilians many were lower middle class, and worked as tradespeople or artisans. There were also Jewish families living in poverty, where males were peddlers, onion-sellers or workers to be able to sustain the family.

The First Racial Anti-Jewish Laws

Hungary was among the losing powers after World War I. The chaotic period of the revolutions following the war (1918, 1919), and the peace-treaty decision in Paris (Trianon, June 4, 1920) shocked the population. A new era began: after the period of reception, it was a period of discrimination. The new, "Christian-national" course was an authoritarian state – restricted democracy, which besides being anti-liberal and anti-communist was also anti-Jewish. In 1920 the first racially defined anti-Jewish law in Europe (*numerus clausus* 25/1920) was passed. The law restricted the number of Jewish students at colleges and universities.



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An Orthodox family in Makó.



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A Jewish middleclass family in Makó.



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Anti-Jewish laws.

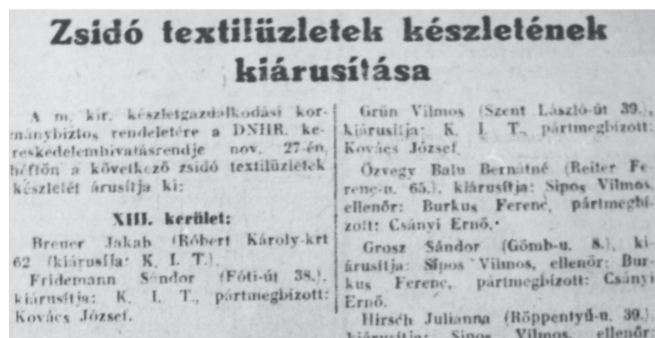
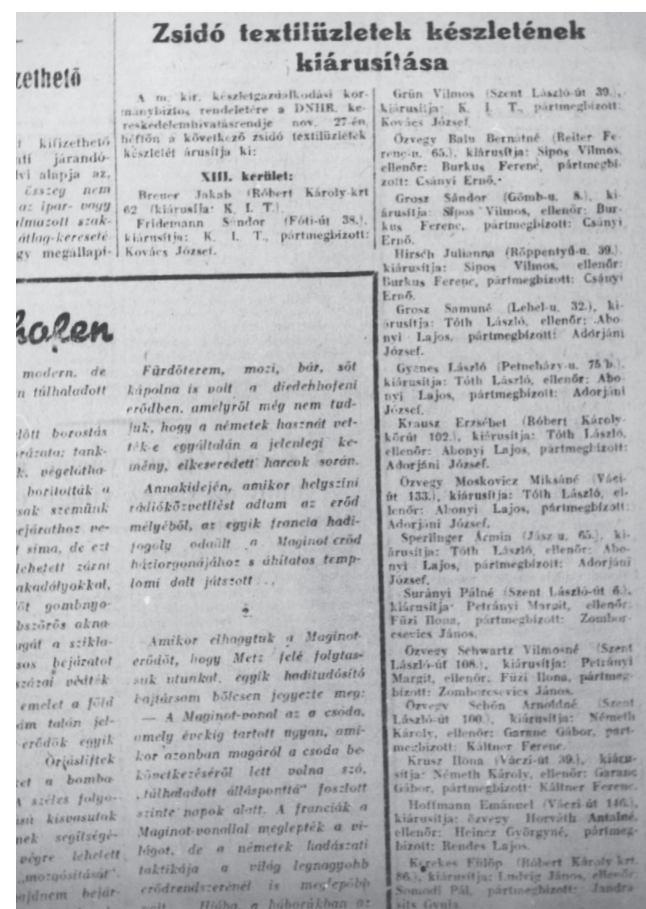
In the Hungarian society traumatized by the crisis, the so-called “Jewish question” came up more and more strongly. With the strengthening of orientation towards Germany and then during World War II the Hungarian governments passed several so called anti-Jewish laws, which aimed at excluding the Jews from economic and social positions.

In the 1920s the situation also changed in Makó where the family of Susanna's mother lived. The basically tolerant relationship between Jews and non-Jews became tenser. Antisemitism intensified and after 1938 the residents labelled as Jews were gradually expelled from the economic and social life of the city. In September 1939, 19 members of the council lost their seats. In 1940 vice-count Béla Ferenczy banished Jewish merchants from the marketplaces of town and county with a resolution. In 1941 the Jews were excluded from METESZ, the organisation with monopoly over onion-trade, which made the living of these families financially unsustainable.

After the German occupation, the mayor of Makó on his own authority decided about and regulated the way town civil servants handled the relationship with the Jewish citizens. For example, Jews were banished from the Hitler Park (today: Petőfi Park).



Advertisement of the opening of a textile shop for members of the Arrow Cross Party only.



The note announces total clearance sale of articles in a number of Jewish textile stores.

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The ghetto was designated by vice-count Béla Ferenczy in the area of the former Jewish Quarter, where between 20th and 25th May 1944, 1600 people were gathered. It was not bordered by board fence, and policemen and gendarmes guarded the entrances of streets. Outside the territory of the ghetto, people were concentrated in two other buildings: one was the school building and the other – mostly for converted Jews – was on the other end of the town in the so-called Leipnik-house.

At the end of May Mózes Vorhand orthodox chief rabbi was brutally beaten by policemen, and died of this violence several days later.

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The Orthodox Chief Rabbi,
Mózes Vorhand.

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Jews in the ghetto of Makó.

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Text: Urbancsok Zsolt, Dr. Kecskeméti Ármin Egyesület, Makó

Translation from the Hungarian original: Andrea Szonyi

Graphic design: Cecilia Undemark Péterfy