

“Keeping hope on a low flame”

Anti-Jewish decrees in Hungary
in the wake of the German occupation

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“19 March. Very exciting day. ... our German brothers are allegedly coming. ... There was something in the air. People were sent home from the movies, but the soccer game went on.” With these the words, written in the Hungarian city Szeged, Lieutenant General Kálmán Shvoy commented in his diary on the German occupation of his country.¹

It was only on 23 March that the daily newspapers reported that the Germans had occupied Hungary on 19 March and that Regent Miklós Horthy had asked former ambassador to Berlin Döme Sztójay to form a cabinet on 22 March.²

Simultaneously with Wehrmacht units, two representatives of the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* – the SS Security Main Office), namely Hermann Krumei and Dieter von Wisliceny came to Budapest. A few days later, the chief of Department IV. B/4, *Obersturmbannführer* Adolf Eichmann, also arrived in Hungary to have the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” put into effect. During the first days of the occupation, the chief of RSHA, Ernst Kaltenbrunner himself visited the Hungarian capital, and talked with presumptive Prime Minister

¹ *Shvoy Kálmán titkos naplója és emlékirata, 1918–1945* [Kálmán Shvoy's secret diary and memoirs, 1918–1945]. ed. M. Perneki. Budapest, 1983, 275–276. According to Shvoy's diary and contemporary newspapers, the German occupation took the population of Hungary by surprise. The Premier League soccer match started at 3 p.m. in the Vasutas [Railway] stadium in Szeged. The local “Tisza” was playing “a match of life and death” against the team of Kolozsvár, one of the best in the league. (*Szegedi Friss Újság*, 19 March 1944, 4.) The result was Kolozsvár 1, Tisza 0 (*Szegedi Friss Újság*, 21 March 1944, 5.).

² *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez*. Vol. 1, [Indicting Nazism. Documents on the history of the persecution of Jews in Hungary] (henceforth: *Vádirat* 1). ed. I. Benoschofsky, E. Karsai, Budapest 1958, 36–38. For the occupation of Hungary, see: Gy. Juhász, *Magyarország külpolitikája 1919–1945* [The foreign politics of Hungary 1919–1945]. Third, rev. ed., Budapest 1988, 387–412.

Sztójay regarding the details of the radical solution of the Jewish question. On 22 March, Sztójay, referring to his talks with Ernst Kaltenbrunner, "informed the first session of the council of ministers regarding the problems to be solved in connection with the Jewish question," Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross stated during his post-war trial before the people's court.³

It was this discussion that Béla Imrédy, extreme right-wing politician and minister without portfolio was referring to when he said at a cabinet meeting a few months later: "[t]he resettling and transportation of the Jews is in progress on the basis of an oral agreement with the Germans, but there are no documents on the subject."⁴

The second meeting of the cabinet following the German occupation (29 March 1944) was already discussing the "Jewish decrees" by the dozen. Although Minister of Justice István Antal observed that government decrees needed the approval of Regent Horthy, Prime Minister Sztójay put him at ease saying: "His High Excellency the Regent gave the government under his leadership free hand with regard to all the Jewish decrees, and does not wish to influence the [ministers] in that respect."⁵

The first government decree, on the obligation of Jewish telephone subscribers to supply data on themselves, was issued on March 29.⁶ It was followed, on March 31, by a whole series of other discriminatory decrees, which forbade the employment of non-Jews in Jewish households and terminated the public service of Jews as well as their acting as attorneys. The decrees also cancelled the membership of Jews in the chambers of press, theater, and film; they ordered the registration of motor vehicles owned by Jews and, most importantly, they ordered that Jews wear the yellow Star of David.⁷

³ *Az Endre-Baky-Jaross per* [The Endre-Baky-Jaross Trial] (henceforth: EBJ), ed. L. Karsai, J. Molnár Budapest 1994, 196. For Kaltenbrunner's visit to Hungary, see also the testimonies of István Bárcziházi Bárczy and Edmund Veesenmayer, 21 December 1945. (EBJ, 179–180, 196–197). According to an interview with Alfred Tanker (commander of the German security police, SD, in Budapest in 1944) by Péter Bokor, the first visitors in Hungary besides Kaltenbrunner included SS *Reichsführer* and Minister of the Interior Heinrich Himmler Minister of the Interior, who spent nearly two days in Budapest in strict incognito. (P. Bokor, *Végjáték a Duna mentén. Interjúk egy filmsorozathoz* [End-game along the Danube. Interviews for a film series], Budapest 1982, 83–97. This is corroborated by the report of MTI, the Hungarian News Agency on 23 March 1944: "Himmler spent a few days in Budapest" (*Vádirat* 1, 41.).

⁴ Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary] (henceforth: OL), K 27, minutes of cabinet meetings, 21 June 1944.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29 March 1944. See also: *Vádirat* 1, 50–51.

⁶ *Vádirat* 1, 58–59.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53–54, 56–57, 66–69, 73–74, 78–79. Local right-wing newspapers, of course, carried these decrees on the first page. *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* continued to print the sections deemed important of the decrees published in *Budapesti Közlöny*, as did, though somewhat more briefly, *Szegedi Friss Újság*.

Even the last major anti-Jewish Law passed by parliament in 1939 did not go so far in depriving Jews of civic rights. In fact, the new decrees were unconstitutional because they amended, by decree, an act of parliament, that of §141 of Act II/1939, without even mentioning that act.⁸ Nevertheless, the majority of local organs of administration and public security accepted as legitimate the government's decrees. Specialists within the local authorities executed the decrees without a hitch; even such decrees that were marked "res", which meant that they were confidential, were never published, and did not refer to any existing law. The decrees concerned, among other things, the census of Jews, and the setting up of collection camps for Jews in *Kárpátalja* (North-east Hungary), *Észak-Erdély* (Northern Transylvania) and *Délvidék* (Southern Hungary). Eichmann's detachment of two or three hundred needed all the help and support as well as the active participation of the Hungarian administration, police and gendarmerie to be able to execute the operation of "dejudization".

Eichmann was satisfied with Regent Horthy's appointment of retired Gendarmerie Major, National Socialist Member of Parliament, and confidential agent of the Germans László Baky as under-secretary of the interior on 24 March. Put in charge of the police and the gendarmerie, Baky supervised and directly controlled Departments VI of police, VIII of police penal, XVIII of national mobilization, and XX of gendarmerie affairs.⁹ It was with even greater satisfaction that Eichmann received the appointment, effective 8 April, of László Endre, deputy-prefect [*alispán*] of county Pest¹⁰ and a notorious anti-Semite, as under-secretary of the interior under Minister of Interior Andor Jaross. The latter arranged the division of responsibilities so that "László Endre was put in charge of the departments of administration, that is, the departments of counties and municipalities, and the so-called department of housing. These dealt with several aspects of the Jewish question."¹¹ Thus, the units (approximately 20,000 men) of the ten gendar-

⁸ §141. Act II/1931 (on defense) invested the government with exceptional powers, with the responsibility of all its members, "in time of war or in case of the danger of war". *Magyar Törvénytár*. Budapest 1939, 6–128.

⁹ For Baky's appointment, see: *Vádirat* 1, 43. For a list of the departments of the Ministry of the Interior under his supervision and control, see: *Magyarország tiszti cím- és névtára* [Catalogue and directory of officers in Hungary] Budapest 1944, Supplement, 17.

¹⁰ For the appointment of László Endre, see: *Vádirat* 1, 169. Deputy mayor Béla Tóth of Szeged did not forget, on 11 April, to express "his most sincere congratulations" "on behalf of the public and the magistrates of the greatest provincial town in Hungary" to László Endre on his appointment as under-secretary of the Interior. He went on to beg that he "receive this through and through Hungarian town, which had sheltered the cradle of Hungarian renewal, into his benevolence." Csongrád Megyei Levéltár [Csongrád County Archives] (henceforth: CSML), papers of the mayor of Szeged 4681/1944. Among the papers we have found no trace of other, newly appointed members of the cabinet receiving similar letters of congratulation from the leaders of Szeged.

¹¹ The responsibilities of under-secretary László Endre are listed in: EBJ, 140. The departments listed by Jaross were Departments III, IV, and XXI. of the Ministry of Interior. In addition, Endre also supervised the so-called Committee for Rationalizing the Admini-

merie-districts,¹² and the officials of 44 counties, as well as the police force of the towns of Hungary were all placed at the disposal of the anti-Jewish operation. The local administration carried out the "Jewish decrees" down to the last dot.

It is crucially important from the point of view of the "Final Solution" that the administrative system in Hungary after 19 March 1944 remained the same as the one restored on 7 August 1919 on the basis of the laws on administration adopted back in 1887. Although several attempts were made to reform the administration, especially following the revolutions in 1918–1919, no real reorganization took place. Law XXX/1929 "On the organization of public administration", coming into effect on 29 June of that year,¹³ although reflecting the effort of the government to centralize and to professionalize the system, did not basically diminish the jurisdictional power of local autonomies. Counties and towns with full municipal rights [*törvényhatósági jogú városok*] were formally headed by prefects [*főispán*], nominated by the minister of the interior and appointed by the regent, and their powers of supervision and control covered all local administrative organs. However, real control over the everyday life of the counties was in the hands of the deputy-prefects elected by the municipal assemblies. In the subordinate districts [*járás*] control was in the hands of chief constables [*főszolgabíró*], who received their orders from the sub-prefect. The gradual narrowing of municipal jurisdiction was completed by Law XXII/1942,¹⁴ which empowered the minister of the interior to fill previously elective offices by appointment. Indeed, according to §8 Section(1), although the above offices should "usually be filled through national competition," the "competition can be waived if the authority entitled to fill the post deems it unnecessary *in the interest of the public service* [my emphasis – J. M.], or if the interests of public service require the urgent filling of that post." The massive removals and/or transfers of public servants after 19 March 1944 were carried out with reference to this Law.

The leaders of local administrations relied on the police force in towns, and on the gendarmerie in rural areas. The organization of the gendarmerie did not conform to county boundaries, but followed the lines of the military system. In other words, it was modelled after the military districts. Thus, the area of the V. (Szeged) Gendarmerie District covered, partially or fully, the counties of Csongrád, Bács-Bodrog, Csanád–Arad–Torontál, Jász–Nagykun–Szolnok, Pest–Pilis–Solt–Kiskun, Békés.

stration. See: *Magyarország tiszti cím és névtára* [Catalogue and directory of officers in Hungary] Budapest 1944, Supplement, 17.

¹² Lt.-General Gábor Faragho, Superintendent of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie said on the cabinet meeting of 21 June 1944, "Considering that we have deported more than 400,000 Jews for military labour service and resettlement, it should be counted as zero if complaints have been registered against a few of the 20,000 Hungarian gendarmes." EJB, 618.

¹³ For the text of Act XXX/1929, see *Magyar Törvénytár*, 1929, Budapest 1930, 333–407.

¹⁴ For the text of Act XXII/1942, see *Magyar Törvénytár*, 1942, Budapest 1943, 171–177.

Unlike the police, which was controlled by the ministry of the interior, the gendarmerie was under the dual supervision of the ministry of the interior and the ministry of defense. It functioned as an organization for law and order structured along military lines. The men and their officers received very harsh military training, which included emphasis on unconditional loyalty to the regent. As an organization of public safety, the gendarmerie was subordinated to the minister of the interior. At the same time, its highest military commander was the Superintendent of the Gendarmerie, Lt.-General Gábor Faragho, who from November 1942, was responsible for training as well as for military order and discipline. On 21 June 1944, the government accepted the plan of a decree, submitted by Minister of the Interior Jaross, according to which the police was also to be transformed into a body organized along military lines, and Lt-General Faragho was put in charge of both the gendarmerie and the police.¹⁵

After the German occupation, it took German plenipotentiary Edmund Veessenmayer, Regent Horthy, and the leaders of the right-wing parties three days to agree on the composition of the new government. The government of Döme Sztójay included, in addition to pro-German members of the old ruling party, several members of the far-right Party of Hungarian Renewal [*Magyar Megújulás Pártja*].

The semblance of legal continuity prevailed for the local administrations because Regent Horthy had remained in place. Indeed, the dismissals and appointments of ministers and under-secretaries carried his signature. Nor had the parliament been officially dissolved. Thus Horthy was playing an active role in setting up the new government at a time when the *Gestapo* was arresting members of the Hungarian parliament, including Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, the long-time former minister of the interior, and keeping them in detention for months.

Veessenmayer more than once emphatically demanded that Sztójay dismiss all the prefects and deputy-prefects. On 10 May, he was able to report to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop that "the cleansing of the Hungarian administration in the countryside is proceeding in a satisfactory manner. So far, forty-one prefects have been dismissed and thirty-eight new prefects have been appointed."¹⁶ Since the offices of prefects were filled at the nomination of Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross, most of the new appointees were members of the Party of Hungarian Renewal. The most important criterion was political reliability. According to the documents, "cleansing" in the jurisdiction of the V. (Szeged) Gendarmerie District included the chief constables at the head of the districts as well as the prefects, but the deputy-prefects, who actually controlled the counties, and the may-

¹⁵ OL, K 27, the minutes of cabinet meetings, June 21, 1944. For the functioning of the public administration in Szeged in detail, see: L. Földváriné Kocsis, "Közigazgatási és hatalmi szervek" [Organs of public administration and authority], in *Szeged története 1919–1944*. Vol. 4. ed. L. Serfőző, Szeged 1994, 269–308.

¹⁶ *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944* [Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German diplomatic papers on Hungary 1933–1944]. ed. Gy. Ránki, E. Pamlényi, L. Tilkovszky, Gy. Juhász, Budapest 1968, 845.

ors of the towns were hardly touched until the end of June, following the completion of the Jewish deportations. There were two changes only: at Hódmezővásárhely, Mayor Béla Endrey, who had been appointed prefect, was replaced by Gyula Sárkány, former mayor of Cegléd on 3 June; and in Pest–Pilis–Solt–Kiskun county, László Endre, who was under-secretary in charge of Jewish affairs since 8 April, was replaced by the second county recorder [*másodfőjegyző*] vitéz József Sági on May 31. There were very few such administrators as József Pálffy, mayor of Szeged, who voluntarily resigned from his office following the German occupation.¹⁷ He was officially retired at the end of May only, when he turned 70, but no document after March 1944 bears his signature, deputy mayor Béla Tóth having taken over the running of the town.¹⁸

The chief constables, at the head of districts, played at least as important a role as did the mayors in the towns. Therefore, Jaross and his colleagues needed reliable chief constables for the smooth and quick "dejudeization" of the country. At the same time, according to laws concerning administrative matters, these offices had to be held by persons with adequate training and qualifications. The minister of the interior satisfied both criteria, one must admit, in a rather shrewd manner. When leafing through the pages of the spring and early summer 1944 numbers of the official gazette *Budapesti Közlöny*, it becomes clear that Interior Minister Jaross appointed the new chief constables always "in the interest of public service", that is, with reference to Act XXII/1942. However, these appointments were not promotions for district administrator [*szolgabíró*] or deputy clerk [*aljegyző*], but simply *transfers*. The principle behind it was probably that the specialists should come from as far as possible, so that previously established local, friendly connections with Jews should not survive, and nothing should cause officials to try to delay the execution of the discriminatory decrees. The administrators should be unable to help their possible Jewish friends. This assumption is supported by the fact that the same principle can be seen to have been operating on lower levels, in the appointments of district administrators, deputy clerks, and engineers. At the same time, it is surprising to see that while in Bács–Bodrog and Pest counties nearly all the chief constables were replaced, in Csongrád and Csanád–Arad–Torontál counties there were no transfers at all. Extending the research to cover the whole country will bring us closer to the resolution of this contradiction. Anyway, the leaders of the local administrations under the ministry of the interior came up to the expectations of their superiors.

¹⁷ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged, 22/1944 confidential. It is worth noting that lord lieutenant Sándor Tukats, in a letter dated 22 March, handled Pálffy's resignation as a confidential matter. So far no documents have been found in the archives that would point to other leading officials withdrawing from public affairs in the V. Gendarmerie District.

¹⁸ Szeged did not elect a new mayor in the spring and summer of 1944. Running the office of the mayor was the responsibility, as temporary acting mayor, of deputy mayor Béla Tóth.

That sub-prefects and mayors were not removed was probably due to the fact that most of the local leaders, including the more humanely inclined, proved during the first weeks that they recognized as legitimate the new government and its decrees restricting the rights of the citizens described as Jews. The available documents indicate that most of the leading officials in the countryside, far from preparing their resignation, were ready to take on the new tasks of the new situation even to the extent of taking independent action beyond simply executing the decrees of the government. There were individuals in local administrations who anticipated the government and issued restrictive orders as well as resolutions on a local level. Among them, the discriminative decrees of László Endre were perhaps the first issued deputy-prefect of Pest–Pilis–Solt–Kiskun, the largest county of Hungary, on 21 March, i.e. before Sztójay's cabinet came into office. Endre instructed the chief constables of all the districts "to contact the directorate concerned with the immediate *disconnecting* of the telephones of Jews and suspected communists, and to urge the execution of the matter."¹⁹ The government decree with a similar content, though not about disconnecting Jewish subscribers but about their *obligation to supply information*, as mentioned above, was published in *Budapesti Közlöny* on 29 March.²⁰ Incidentally, within seven to ten days, the chief constables reported the execution of Endre's order.

The so-called ghetto decree on the allotment of Jewish dwellings went into effect on 28 April.²¹ Endre said already on 21 March that "considering that Jews usually do not participate in activities of public benefit; nor do they serve in the military, and, in addition, most of the time their occupations do not link them to a permanent place, I regard the legitimate need of a Jewish family for housing as met by a single room." Therefore, in order to meet the housing needs of "our own race," primarily "apartments owned or rented by persons of the Jewish race" will have to be used.²² Referring to this decree, on 1 May, the chief constable of the Kiskőrös district reported that "the Jews in all the villages of my district have been moved into one room per family without exception, and I have distributed the apartments thus vacated among Christian families with legitimate claims."²³ The chief constable of the Kalocsa district received the reports about the execution of the above decree from all the villages in his jurisdiction between 26 March and 4 April.²⁴ The town clerk of Sükösd, interpreting the instructions rather

¹⁹ Pest Megyei Levéltár [Pest County Archives] (henceforth: PML) papers of the sub-prefect of Pest county 18.902/1944. The gendarmerie stations in *Délvidék* received orders even on the day of the occupation to prevent "anti-national elements," including Jews, from escaping. See: E. Sajti, *Délvidék 1941–1944: A magyar kormányok délszláv politikája* [Délvidék 1941–1944. The South-Slav politics of Hungarian governments] Budapest 1987, 217.

²⁰ See Note 6.

²¹ *Vádirat* 1, 244–250.

²² Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár [Bács-Kiskun County Archives] (henceforth: BKML) papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 1800/1944.

²³ PML, papers of the sub-prefect of Pest county 18.913/1944.

²⁴ See Note 22.

broadly, included the building of the Jewish congregation among the apartments to be allotted. At the same time, Dezső Horváth, the town clerk of Foktő, did not requisition any apartments because "persons of the Jewish race live, without exception, in modest apartments, mostly in one room, only a few of them in two rooms."²⁵ László Endre issued new decrees on 22 March. These instructed the chief constables within his jurisdiction "to put the procedure of internment into effect without delay against unreliable Jews and other suspected communist elements."²⁶ Under-secretary László Baky issued a confidential decree of the ministry of the interior with similar contents on 31 March.²⁷ Sub-Prefect Endre also instructed the gendarmerie headquarters through the chief constables "to carry out identity checks among passengers at railway stations and at harbours as well as to prevent individuals of the Jewish race from travelling."²⁸ The government decree on travel restrictions imposed on Jews was issued on 7 April.²⁹ A third decree by the deputy-prefect banned persons described as Jews from all holiday resorts, spas, and bathing establishments in the county.³⁰ Incidentally, Endre had been enthusiastically executing the laws against Jews during the previous years, and he had in fact issued an order similar to the latter decree in May 1944, which Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, then minister of the interior declared unlawful and, therefore, null and void.³¹ However, Minister of the Interior Jaross went all the way in supporting László Endre and appointed him under-secretary in the last days of March 1944.

When, on 28 March 1944, the newspapers informed the public that the Jewish question is on the agenda of the cabinet,³² Deputy Police Commissioner Béla Buócz of Szeged composed his decree on "the withdrawal of wireless receivers from persons under the jurisdiction of the Jewish law." "Individuals of Jewish race" were obliged to give up their radios at the police headquarters within 48 hours following the publication of the decree. "I will initiate internment procedures" against those who fail to obey the decree.³³ The decree was published in the newspapers of Szeged on the following day,³⁴ and on 31 March, *Szegedi Új*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ PML, papers of the village of Törökbálint 2.495/1944.

²⁷ OL, K 149-BM res. – file 287 (1943-44), 5999/1944. BM. VII. res.

²⁸ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 1799/1944.

²⁹ *Vádirat* 1, 127–129.

³⁰ PML, papers of Nagymaros village 1335/1944. The decree of the Ministry of the Interior went into effect on 2 May. (*Vádirat* 1, 285–286.)

³¹ Bács-Kiskun Megyei Levéltár – Kiskunfélegyháza [Bács-Kiskun County Archives – Kiskunfélegyháza] (henceforth: BKML-Kf) papers of the mayor of Kiskunfélegyháza 8093/1944. See also: EBJ, 483.

³² *Szegedi Friss Újság*, 28 March 1944, 2.

³³ CSML, papers of the lord lieutenant of Szeged 280/1944. László Endre's series of decrees on 22 March also included "the prohibition of the use of radio receivers of Jews and suspected communist elements" and "taking [the radios] into custody". (BKML, papers of the village of Kecel 2440/1944.)

³⁴ The 29 March 1944 numbers of *Délmagyarország*, *Szegedi Napló*, *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*.

Nemzedék wrote in a long article that "on Thursday [30 March] from early in the morning, masses were crowding the corridors of the police headquarters in the Town Hall." The author of the article found it "a strange attempt that some people practically rushed the pawnshops in Szeged and tried to circumvent the degree by pawning their radio receivers in haste." However, the "vigilance" of the officials at the pawnshops, "shipwrecked" these attempts.³⁵

Buócz probably owed his soaring career to this initiative, to his extraordinary zeal in trying to solve the Jewish question, and to his strict execution of government decrees that were to come. Two months later, he was already working in the capital as superintendent of the provincial police. Remarkably, a government decree similar in content to this provincial initiative, first appeared in the *Budapesti Közlöny* on 7 April.³⁶ That, however, was only about the obligation of Jewish radio owners to supply information on their radios. Later, on 21 April, the government, the minister of defence, and the minister of commerce and communications all issued decrees, which mentioned the requisitioning and delivery of radio receivers.³⁷ According to the information of *Szegedi Friss Újság*, 1079 radios had been delivered to the police by the end of May.³⁸

The initiative of the local authorities also attracted the attention of the ministry of the interior and, in the middle of May, Department VII.a sent a telegram to the provincial police headquarters asking for information: "Certain police headquarters either on their own initiative, or perhaps at the instruction of military authorities, had started collecting the radio receivers in the possession of Jews even before the relevant government decrees were published. It is to be reported by 22 May the latest whether the addressee has in his keeping Jewish radio receivers that the addressee had taken into custody under, and according to the procedure regulated in, other than the decrees 1310/1944 M. E. and/or 217.300/1944 K. K. M."³⁹

Directly after the German occupation, a number of gendarmerie posts in the V (Szeged) gendarmerie district sent to higher authorities reports to the effect that German soldiers were breaking into, and plundering, houses of Israelite families.⁴⁰ Although there was no open investigation in these cases, the German military headquarters were notified. The Germans replied by saying that "the case will not go unpunished; strict orders have been issued to German soldiers to refrain from taking any objects, and anyone not returning these objects to where they have been taken from, will be severely punished."

Until 16 April 1944, four daily newspapers were published in Szeged. Before they were suppressed, *Délmagyarország*, which had the largest circulation, and

³⁵ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 31 March 1944, 5.

³⁶ *Vádirat* 1, 129–132.

³⁷ *Budapesti Közlöny*, 21 April 1944. No. 89, 2.

³⁸ *Szegedi Friss Újság*, 26 May 1944, 4.

³⁹ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 2836/1944.

⁴⁰ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 2029/1944, 2140/1944.

Szegedi Napló merely printed the reports of the Hungarian News Agency without comments regarding the Jewish decrees. The above-mentioned *Szegedi Friss Újság* proved more "reliable" with its articles, and was allowed to continue. The *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* welcomed the measures of the new government with open enthusiasm. Indeed, Mihály Iván, editor of that paper wrote in a private letter to Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa, the far-right president of the chamber of the press: "Now that the time has come for purifying the press, I would like to call your attention to the need for suppressing *Délmagyarország*, a radical Jewish newspaper in Szeged. ... It is also time perhaps to close down *Szegedi Napló*; it should not last longer than *Délmagyarország* ... because it seems quite certain that after the termination of *Délpalesztina* [i.e. *Délmagyarország*] the Jews will all swoop down on *Szegedi Napló*.⁴¹ Iván could not know that Kolosváry had already listed, on 22 March, the "extremely liberal, Jewish-minded" *Délmagyarország* and the "noxious spirited and unnecessary" *Szegedi Napló* among the seven provincial daily papers most urgently to be banned. As he wrote, "right-wing newspapers are published everywhere, so it is not necessary to replace [the banned papers]."⁴² Indeed, *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* multiplied the number of its articles on Jews even during the first days following the occupation. In the wake of the decrees, the anti-Jewish assaults in that paper became even more savage. The editorial on 1 April happily acknowledged that "the deicide of public life has started in Szeged also."⁴³ Although, according to the author of the editorial, the decree of the government hardly, if at all, affected the public offices in Szeged, such as the finance directorate, the regional railway management, and the post-office administration because the second Jewish Law had been executed in the state institutions with the utmost severity and circumspection." However, "several moves have to be undertaken regarding the execution of the decrees" in connection with the municipal authority. Deputy Mayor Béla Tóth did not delay in issuing his resolution based on the government decree No. 1210/1944,⁴⁴ according to which the "employees of the town coming under Law XV/1941" were immediately to report this circumstance to the presidential department.⁴⁵ In the case of persons described as Jews, procedures for retirement were immediately put into effect. That is how, for example, a professor of music⁴⁶, and a municipal assistant clerk⁴⁷ were forced into

⁴¹ Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the State Security Services], V-99.145 people's court trial of Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa. From mid-April, 1944 Kolosváry, as press-commissary with the rank of under-secretary of state, supervised affairs of book publication, newspaper permissions, paper supply and the press chamber.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 1 April 1944, 2.

⁴⁴ *Vádirat* 1, 66–69.

⁴⁵ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4173/1944.

⁴⁶ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4832/1944.

⁴⁷ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4831/1944. "Having returned from his deportation," the former assistant clerk petitioned, on 19 February 1945, for the annulment of his retirement and to be reinstated in service. His request was granted by a resolution

retirement. The municipal auditing office received special instructions from the director of the auditing office of the ministry of the interior on 5 April to have its officials declare their ancestry.⁴⁸

On April 4, *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* found it "simply shocking" that so many lawyers "of the Jewish race" lived in Szeged.⁴⁹ In its session on 28 April, the Szeged Chamber of Attorneys was obliged to terminate the membership of 57 Szeged lawyers.⁵⁰

It was again the *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* that noted with great satisfaction that "the Jewish telephones in Szeged had been switched off and put out of operation one after the other," but found it difficult to understand why the list of Jewish subscribers had not been published.⁵¹

Government decree No. 1240/1944 obliged Jews to wear a distinctive sign from 5 April. On 6 April, "a Christian Hungarian" expressed his surprise in the columns of *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* that "those of weaker heart turned to our Israelites with sincere sympathy because of the wearing of the yellow star."⁵² This was an indication of the fact that there were people in Szeged who sympathised with those having to wear the star.

On 13 April, *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* discussed the Jewish question on a whole page. The pretext was that "more than four thousand Jews are wearing the yellow star in Szeged."⁵³ We are told that "the wise prescribers of the measure" did not have the yellow stars sewn on "in order to indicate who the Jews are, but in order to have their separation from Christian Hungarian society manifested in a visible form for the hopefully short time before the Jewish question is finally solved at home as well as in the other European countries."

According to the April 12 decree of the Ministry of the Interior, those who failed to wear the distinctive sign were to be interned immediately.⁵⁴ According to the report in *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* the police had carried out the first "yellow star raid" on 16 April, and the six Jews who had ignored the decree were fined from two to six thousand *pengős*. In the future, however, "evaders" would be interned.⁵⁵ To be sure, the Szeged police applied more lenient punishment compared to the text of the decree, which prescribed internment, but the amount of the fine certainly does not show any benevolence on the part of the authorities.

dated 17 March 1945. Simultaneously with the forced retirements, on 3 April 1944, the lord lieutenant received the first application for an appointment "to the post of an assistant clerk vacated in connection with the Jewish Act." In the mayor's office, the applicant's name was put down. (CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 10.643/1944)

⁴⁸ CSML, papers of the Szeged Auditing Office 43/1944.

⁴⁹ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 4 April 1944, 3.

⁵⁰ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 6756/1944. *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* published the list of the Jewish lawyers on 30 April 1944 (p. 7.).

⁵¹ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 5 April 1944, 4.

⁵² *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 6 April 1944, 4.

⁵³ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 13 April 1944, 4.

⁵⁴ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 5630/1944.

⁵⁵ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 16 April 1944, p. 9.

The chief constable of Kalocsa, informed on 17 April that the pharmacist of Uszód who was described as a Jew, did not wear the "yellow sign," asked the gendarmerie post in Kalocsa to "put detention into effect in the case."⁵⁶ According to the report, the pharmacist did indeed not wear the yellow star during the first day, but then he himself had reported at the parish hall to inquire what he should do for he was engaged in counter-revolutionary activities in 1919 and had, therefore, been granted exemption. The village notary and the village mayor "could not exactly resolve whether he should or should not wear the sign. Therefore they decided that he should wear it because otherwise he might get into trouble."⁵⁷ The magistrates of Uszód were right. On 16 April a similar report arrived to the chief constable of Kalocsa from the village Öregcsertő.⁵⁸ Dr. vitéz Kálmán Egedy, the chief constable recently transferred from Monor⁵⁹ decided, despite the deposition of the accused that "I was not wearing the star in the prescribed manner because I had my head covered with a shawl on account of the rain and maybe the part of the shawl hanging down covered the star," that this mother of four should be placed "under police surveillance," and should be fined 1000 pengős. The decision could not be appealed.⁶⁰

The strict "yellow star raids" of the provincial police headquarters could be explained by the fact that, on 15 April, the provincial police superintendent gave orders to "immediately conduct a raid", complementing his order on 20 April: "I want every authority to report to me weekly on when raids were made to check whether the Jews are wearing the distinctive sign, and, as the result of the raid, against how many persons action concerning petty offence and internment proceedings have been commenced."⁶¹ Before 26 May, four individuals were interned at Kiskunfélegyháza as a result of the tightened controlling measures taken every day or every other day. Most of the raids, however, yielded no "results." It was probably due to this that the provincial superintendent ordered that the "raids will have to continue ... but there is no need to report them."⁶²

On 6 April, on being informed by Deputy Clerk László Temesváry, the head of the department of housing, that residents of Szeged were moving *en masse* to the farms around the town, and presuming that the persons in question must be Jews, Béla Tóth, deputy mayor of Szeged, wrote and, on the following day, published in the Szeged newspapers the following announcement: "For the accom-

⁵⁶ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 2277/1944.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 2577/1944. Incidentally, of the 1614 inhabitants of Öregcsertő only six were described as Jews.

⁵⁹ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 2459/1944.

⁶⁰ See Note 56.

⁶¹ BKML-Kf papers of the Kiskunfélegyháza headquarters of the Hungarian Royal Police 1183/1944.

⁶² *Ibid.* The detectives continued the raids at Kiskunfélegyháza until 5 October. It was only once, on 21 June, that they found two hiding families (from Budapest and Makó), who were not wearing the yellow star; all of them were taken to the collection camp in Szeged established for Jews caught after the deportation.

modation of the victims of possible bombing raids, I hereby order that Jews obliged to wear the distinctive sign not leave their apartments in the inner area of the town, and those who have already moved to farms in the periphery, shall move back to the town within three (3) days! Whoever fails to act in accordance with this decree of mine, will have their apartments requisitioned on the basis of government decree No. 100/1943, and I will propose to the Szeged headquarters of the Hungarian Royal Police that they be interned."⁶³

It is characteristic of the tense public atmosphere that under the influence of the announcement, *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, in addition to printing the announcement, dedicated a special article to the subject, in which, without reference to any factual information, expressed indignation at "having again to face another, remarkably conspicuous Jewish peculiarity. For the Jews have practically invaded the farms around Szeged: they have fled there, and they have moved a considerable part of their wealth there, and from the Hungarian farms around Szeged they couldn't care less about the rest of the world!"⁶⁴ Deputy Mayor Béla Tóth gave special instructions to the leaders of the administrative authorities to make a list of such Jews who had moved to the peripheries without permission, and appealed for help to the Szeged police headquarters. However, the reports of the detectives and the police officers claimed that no Jews had moved to the twelve villages around Szeged that they had checked. Deputy clerk Temesváry, whose letter of 5 April initiated the detective operation, also reported that "Jews are not renting apartments, nor are they dwelling at present" in his administrative jurisdiction or "on the farms in the areas of Rösztke and Szentmihálytelek police districts."⁶⁵ There was one single problematic case in Szeged-Felsőközpont, but even in that case the authorization was under way since the person in question had moved in with a sibling in Szeged-Balástya.⁶⁶

Under-Secretary László Baký specifically instructed the local administrative authorities, by order of the ministry of the interior No. 167.089/1944.VII.b., to dissolve the Hungarian Zionist Association and all the branch associations and formations belonging to it, as well as all other Zionist organizations operating under whatever name immediately.⁶⁷ Deputy mayor Tóth established from his files that this measure had been put into effect following the decree of the Minister of the Interior in 1940 ordering the dissolution. To be sure, a later decree in 1943 again permitted the operation of the Hungarian Zionist Association, but no one in Szeged intimated that the Association had been reorganized. In any case, Tóth instructed first degree administrative authorities to find out whether such an organization had been founded.⁶⁸ The head of the police station at Kiskunfél-

⁶³ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4808/1944, papers of the lord lieutenant of Szeged 332/1944.

⁶⁴ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 7 April 1944, 2.

⁶⁵ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4808/1944.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ CSML, papers of the lord lieutenant of Szeged 361/1944.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

egyháza recorded as early as 3 April that he had informed the mayor of Kiskunfélegyháza "in person, by word of mouth," that the Zionist Association had no local group in the town.⁶⁹ The measure was taken before the national decree "thanks" to László Endre, who, as deputy-prefect, issued a similar order on 21 March.⁷⁰

On 16 April 1944, government decree No. 1600/1944 was published in *Buda-pesti Közlöny* obliging "all the Jews in the country" to declare "their property at the time of the present decree going into effect until 30 April 1944" with the local finance directorate.⁷¹ On the basis of this decree, real estates, securities, stocks, gold and platinum alloys, jewelry made of these metals, precious stones had to be declared, and, at the same time, these securities and assets had to be deposited at some financial institution. The raw material and stockpiles, as well as the business and working equipment of trading and industrial companies had to be declared, too. This government decree amended the earlier decree No. 38.781/1944 issued by Minister of Commerce and Communications Antal Kunder on 29 March, which provided that "in cases where the preservation of stockpiles in Jewish businesses is not warrantable for some reasons, the stockpiles in the said businesses are to be preserved by the locking-up and sealing of the business."⁷² On 8 April, the deputy mayor of Szeged instructed in a decree "the first-degree industrial authority to immediately sequester the stocks of woodenware in Jewish businesses."⁷³ The sequestration of the stocks of woodenware was put into effect by the relevant authorities by 11 April.⁷⁴ Béla Tóth, however, was compelled to issue another resolution, when he received instructions from the ministry of commerce and communications with reference to decree No. 1600/1944 M. E. to the effect that the previous telegram was null and void, and §10 Section 3 of government decree No. 1600/1944 was to be regarded as normative. Thus the resolution absolved the stockpiles of the Jewish dealers in wood in Szeged from the strict sequestration and charged them with the duty of registration "only."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, on April 21, decree No. 50.500/1944 K. K. M. made "remodification" necessary by sequestering the stockpiles and business equipment in the businesses of Jewish merchants.⁷⁶

Upon receiving, on 24 April, the 2,000+2,000 printed forms necessary for the declaration of the property of the Jews, the Szeged finance directorate immediately sent them to the mayor.⁷⁷ Deputy Director Dr. Lajos Mészáros even ob-

⁶⁹ BKML-Kf papers of the Kiskunfélegyháza headquarters of the Hungarian Royal Police 952/1944.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Vádirat* 1, 170–181.

⁷² CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4510/1944.

⁷³ CSML, papers of the Engineer's Office of Szeged 64/1944.

⁷⁴ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 4510/1944.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Vádirat* 1, 204–206.

⁷⁷ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 5396/1944.

served that "the declaration forms are to be handled in the way established for salary forms." That is, form No. I. cost 1 *pengő*, No. II. 50 *fillérs*.

The §3 of government decree No. 1600/1944 on the duty to register realties was probably the basis for the instructions on April 20, which ordered the Central Council of Szeged Jews to compile a list, by district, of the apartments rented or owned under any title by Jews or by persons described as Jews in the territory of the town of Szeged.⁷⁸

In order to assure the uniform execution of the decree on the declaration of property, Police Commissioner Béla Buócz of Szeged issued his special order for his subordinates on 30 April.⁷⁹ The §1. Section 3 of government decree 1600/1944 decreed that pieces of furniture, clothes, and household objects for personal use under the value limit of 10,000 *pengős* were not to be declared. The value limit of exemption was raised by 3,000 *pengős* for each relative living in the same household as the person making the declaration. In his special order, Béla Buócz "made clear" what was meant by objects for personal use by listing clothing and household objects.⁸⁰

Buócz demanded thoroughness and unrelenting strictness from his subordinates while executing the order. His instructions included the following: "If the necessity to search women arises, the persons in question shall be taken to headquarters so that a woman can perform the body search, ... I will immediately and most severely punish not only deliberate negligence, but negligence due to love of comfort, carelessness, misinterpreted humanism, and fear." The remarkably stern tone of the order would seem to invite the inference that Buócz, probably afraid that his subordinates might perhaps apply more lenient treatment during the execution of his order, wished to deter them from "negligence" of this kind. Unfortunately, the incompleteness of the available sources renders it impossible to establish how well founded his apprehension was, or how the execution of the order followed prescriptions.

The minister of commerce and communications ordered the sequestration of the stockpiles and business equipment belonging to Jewish businesses on the authority of §10 Section 4 of decree No. 1600/1944. M. E.⁸¹ The 26 April issue of

⁷⁸ OL, Microfilm Archives Series I, Box 30, Title 72, p. 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸⁰ The objects listed in the extraordinary order are the following: a) simple pieces of bedroom and dining room furniture. "Maximum one large and one small pillow, one eiderdown quilt, and three slips per person can be regarded as exempted." "The equipment of the dining room included the dinner service according to the number of family members, but it was exempted only if the spoons and the handles of forks and knives were not of silver. Furthermore, simple small and large plates, drinking glasses, bowls, according to the number of the members of the family. The set, however, must not be of quality china." b) "By articles of clothing not more than two suits of ordinary clothes, one overcoat, and one winter coat, two hats and at most six sets of simple underwear can be meant." c) "By household articles first of all kitchen furniture and equipment, and instruments of cleaning and personal hygiene are meant."

⁸¹ See Note 76.

Szegedi Új Nemzedék informed its readers that "the Christian commercial world shows great concern about the new situation in connection with the closing of Jewish businesses."⁸² "Claimants for the premises of the closed up Jewish shops are coming forward in remarkably great numbers ... For the time being, of course, there is no question of allotting the closed businesses to anyone ..."⁸³ Thus, for example, Sándor Zsótér and his partner applied in vain on 24 April.⁸⁴

The §3 of the decree clearly declared that only those Jewish businesses could continue to keep open that are needed for the purposes of defence or public supply. Naturally, "reliable Christian specialists" should be appointed to lead these businesses.⁸⁵ The Szeged chamber of commerce and industry proposed that the business of a seedsman be reopened for the sake of public supply. Deputy Mayor Tóth had the seedshop opened, and at the same time had a Christian manager appointed to it.⁸⁶

Decree No. 50.500/1944 K. K. M (of the Ministry of Commerce and Communications) appeared in the *Budapesti Közlöny* on 21 April. At Jánoshalma, at the orders of the chief constable the 26 Jewish businesses of the village were closed immediately, that is, on 22 April.⁸⁷ The register made in Szeged on 26 April contained the list of 257 sequestered Jewish businesses.⁸⁸ And on 29 April, *Szegedi Friss Újság* and *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* reported that 260 Jewish businesses had been closed in Szeged.⁸⁹ At the instructions of the ministry of commerce and communications and the repeated requests of the Szeged finance directorate,⁹⁰ the declarations of the stockpiles of the Jewish businesses in Szeged were sent to the finance directorate from the mayor's office.⁹¹

The Szeged branch of the Arrow Cross Party, with reference to their meeting on the previous day, submitted a petition to the mayor of Szeged on 27 April, in which they listed under seven headings what "measures are urgently to be taken" "in connection with the public social life of the Jews."⁹² The letter was im-

⁸² *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 26 April 1944, 5.

⁸³ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 27 April 1944, 4.

⁸⁴ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 6063/1944.

⁸⁵ For the uniform execution of the decree No. 50.500/1944 KKM, leaders of the local public administration received special information first by cable and later in mimeographed copies. CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 6161/1944.

⁸⁶ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 5979/1944. At the request dated 10 February 1945 of the seedsman described as Jew, the new mayor of Szeged released the appointed manager from his commission saying that he was "bound to hand over the business under [his] management to the proprietor on the basis of the reception inventory, and give him an account of the management of the business."

⁸⁷ BKML, papers of the village of Jánoshalma 4100/1944.

⁸⁸ CSML, papers of the Engineer's Office of Szeged 2357/1944.

⁸⁹ *Szegedi Friss Újság*, 29 April 1944, 3; *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 29 April 1944, 2.

⁹⁰ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 6161/1944, 6653/1944.

⁹¹ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 6161/1944.

⁹² CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged 5948/1944. The seven headings are the following: "1. Jews branded with the yellow star and their children under the age of six can-

mediately forwarded to the police headquarters for an opinion. The reply of Béla Buócz on 9 May indicates that police and administrative organs did not need advice for taking restrictive measures against Jews.⁹³ Jews having already been banned from visiting public baths by decree No. 444/1944. of the ministry of the interior on 2 May,⁹⁴ the deputy commissioner regarded it necessary "with regard to public health" that "they be able bathe in the public bath on a certain day, separated from Christians." Incidentally, the management of the Szeged Turkish baths, in anticipation of the decree of the minister of the interior, made it officially known through *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, on 28 April, that Jews would no longer be admitted in the steam baths.⁹⁵ After the decree was published, the manager, vitéz László Irányi, announced at the meeting of the municipal industrial committee that the Jews were banned from the baths.⁹⁶ He also asked the municipal authorities that, although "the decree made it possible for the owner of the baths to appoint a suitable day and time when the excluded Jews could use the facilities, ... this should not be allowed because the Jews might infest the premises with parasites and thus could spread diseases." The chief municipal medical officer, approving of the ban, suggested on 6 June, when the ghetto was already established, that "shower baths" be erected "within the enclosed space."⁹⁷ It is to be noted here that sub-prefects and mayors were receiving dozens of orders concerning the Jews, and most of them did their best to carry them out to the letter and as soon as possible. This, even when the demands were unrealistic because by early May there was no Jew left to be banished from the public baths. On 5 May, Andor Dobay, deputy-prefect of Csongrád county issued his order, to the district chief constables and the mayors of the towns in the county on the exclusion of Jews from public baths.⁹⁸ The chief constable of Mindszent replied to the deputy-prefect on 11 May that although there were no public baths within his ju-

not patronize either indoor or outdoor baths; 2. Jews cannot appear in public places between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.; 3. During the day, Jews cannot stay in squares and streets designated for walking even for a short time; in other streets and squares they may pass without stopping, hurrying after their business; 4. They can have their affairs conducted in municipal offices only through their official organization or through their agent appointed by the office of the rabbi; 5. The body of municipal officials and other personnel shall be instructed to avoid all intimate manners of intercourse, such as shaking hands, with Jewish parties while discussing official matters with them; 6. Jews cannot have their Christian employees or other agents conduct their personal or official affairs in municipal offices; 7. Jews shall not patronize places of amusement simultaneously with Christians."

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Vádirat* 1, 285–286.

⁹⁵ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 28 April 1944, 5.

⁹⁶ CSML, papers of the mayor of Szeged, 9240/1944.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* The following note, dated 24 June, is written on the back of the paper: "In the meantime the Jewish question has been settled, cognizance taken, ordered to be archived." This means that the Jews were already in the collecting camp in the brick factory, their deportation commencing the following day.

⁹⁸ CSML-Szentes, papers of the chief constable of the district of Mindszent, 1160/1944.

risdiction, he proposed that in the summer the Jews be also forbidden to use the public beaches along the Tisza River.⁹⁹ The number of Jews in the district was, incidentally, 159.

The operators of the sports swimming pool in Szentes (also in Csongrád county) requested, on 13 May, the complete exclusion of Jews. However, the leaseholder of the local hot baths and swimming pool was willing to allow Jews to have "a hot shower."¹⁰⁰ On 31 May, at the request of József Berend, Chief Rabbi, Chairman of the Jewish Council of Szentes, the leaseholder consented that "if the Jews in the ghetto can guarantee the bathing of at least 150 persons, then on one of the days of the week, Friday and Sunday excepted, he can provide steam bath, hot shower baths, and communal pool bath for them."¹⁰¹ Mayor Sándor Kanász-Nagy made his final decision on June 14 and allowed the Jews to use the steam baths on Wednesdays according to the above conditions. When he made this decision, he already knew that two days later the 398 inmates of the Szentes ghetto would be taken to the collection camp in Szeged, to be deported from there.

According to the order of 8 May made by Dr. Buócz, in Szeged "the Jews shall not leave their homes between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., and they shall do their shopping both in open shops and in assorted market places between 10 and 11 a.m."¹⁰² This order is a proof of the ardour of Dr. Buócz. The relevant government order, which allowed two hours for shopping, was published a month later.¹⁰³

The head of the Szeged police headquarters was of the opinion that the municipal offices could be ordered to have the Jews represent themselves in them only through the Jewish Council. Indeed, on 28 April he already announced to the Jewish residents of the town that he would give information in connection with the Jewish decrees only to the agents of the Jewish Council.¹⁰⁴ Deputy Mayor Béla Tóth took the advice and had his resolution published in *Szegedi Új Nemzedék* on 27 May: "As from today, Jews are prohibited to enter the Town Hall!" Only the Jewish Council "had the right to conduct business in offices and get in touch with officials."¹⁰⁵

The leader of the Szeged headquarters of the Royal Hungarian Police meant business when he was threatening the Jews with internment. On 31 March 1944, he was instructed by the order of the ministry of the interior No. 5999/1944. VII. *res.* to "take into custody all proven suspected communists as well as leading persons of left-wing movements, and left-wing persons who jeopardize public

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ CSML-Szentes, papers of the mayor of Szentes, 1581/1944.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 9 May 1944, 3.

¹⁰³ *Budapesti Közlöny*, 4 June 1944, 2. No. 125. Government order No. 1990/1944 on restricting Jews' shopping to certain times of the day. The similar resolution of the mayor of Makó, probably inspired by the example of Szeged, appeared in the local newspaper on 25 May.

¹⁰⁴ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 29 April 1944, 3; *Szegedi Friss Újság*, 29 April 1944, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Szegedi Új Nemzedék*, 27 May 1944, 5.

safety."¹⁰⁶ On the grounds of that order, the Szeged police headquarters arrested 170 individuals in April 1944 and handed them over within a few days either to the department of penitentiary and vagrant affairs of the Budapest police headquarters or to the internment camp at Bácsstopolya.¹⁰⁷ One of the criteria of unreliability, although not spelled out in as many words in the text of the order, must have been religion because next to the names of 124 persons, i.e. over 70% of 170, "relig. Israelite" was added. This is how, for instance, grocer and corn dealer Mátyás Fenyő, one of the wealthiest and most respectable merchants in Szeged, a former member for years of the municipal board, was locked up in the cellar of the Town Hall and deported to the internment camp at Bácsstopolya. According to Fenyő's recollection and contemporary documents, on 17 April two detectives called on him with orders to arrest one of the Fenyős, never mind which.¹⁰⁸ Most of the arrested individuals were merchants, lawyers, journalists, and artisans from Szeged.¹⁰⁹

In the Kalocsa district, thanks to the enthusiasm of László Endre, even before the decree of the ministry of the interior, the village magistrates received telephone instructions on 20 March, and an order from the sub-prefect on 22 March, to "intern suspicious Jewish and suspected communist elements."¹¹⁰ The town clerk of Foktő, in his report of 26 March, called attention to the contradiction that contrary to the above, "the chief constable ordered at the district council of officers as well as in his order No. 1798/1944. that all the Jews and suspected communist individuals are to be registered."¹¹¹ As a result of the poorly coordinated instructions, the magistrates in some villages, as, for example, at Dusnok, submitted "proposals to intern Jews." The town clerk of Sükösd made a list of "Jewish individuals over the age of 16," at Bátya even "impeccably Christian" spouses were put on the list. Since the documents keep silent about this issue, it can only be assumed that "internments and placements under police surveillance" before 25 April were performed on the basis of the opinion of the police and gendarmerie.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ OL, K 149 – BM res. – 1943–44, file 287.

¹⁰⁷ CSML, papers of the Szeged lord lieutenant 79/1944.

¹⁰⁸ M. Fenyő, *A deportálások kezdete és vége* [The beginning and the end of deportations]. Manuscript. In the Historical Collection of Móra Ferenc Museum. The manuscript was written early in 1963. For Fenyő's activities in detail, see: I. Zombori, "Egy szegedi polgár kulturális élete," [The cultural life of a citizen of Szeged]. in *A szegedi zsidó polgárság emlékezete* ed. I. Zombori, Szeged 1990, 145–155. In his memoirs, Fenyő makes the following remark concerning Buócz: "My wife went to former police commissioner dr. Buócz, who had been my next door neighbour in Újszeged and more than once had availed himself of my services. He would not even see my wife."

¹⁰⁹ See Note 107.

¹¹⁰ BKML, papers (administrative) of the chief constable of the Kalocsa district 1798/1944. See also Note 27.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

All these decrees and their execution were merely an introduction, the preparation for the radical solution of the Jewish question. "The organization was indeed masterly, this ability to accelerate the process: first by taking away the money as well as the jewels, but leaving a hundred pengős and the wedding ring in the knowledge that there would be plenty of time to take those, too; by expelling the Jew from the chambers and the craftsmen's association; by firing him but allowing him to stay in his home for the time being since he cannot remain there for long anyway; by having Jewish businesses locked up, but ordering the merchants to be at the service of Christian customers for two more weeks behind half-lowered shutters; by standing in their own businesses in semi-darkness, keeping hope on a low flame; by confiscating the bicycle, the radio, but ordering to accept them only in mint condition, so that we should even be worried whether we can surrender them at all; depriving us of our ration coupons with the promise to have others printed, and ..."¹¹³ This is how Mária Ember described the process of having the Jews get gradually accustomed to the decrees, thereby paralyzing their resistance, and keeping hope alive until the very last moment.

¹¹³ M. Ember, *Hajtűkanyar* [Hairpin bend] Budapest 1977, 2nd edn., 130.