

# Final Report

Programme area:  
Academic Jewish Studies\Doctoral Fellowships

Title:  
Doctoral fellowship on the topic 'The University of Pecs as a refuge for Jewish students from numerous clauses till numerus nullus (1919-1944)'

Grant No:  
008/06

Name of Grantee:  
Mr Szabolcs Fekete

Amount of Grant:  
£4,000

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## 1. Introduction

I applied for the grant to investigate the history of the Arts Faculty of the Royal Elizabeth University of Pécs (now University of Pécs) between the two world wars as my PhD thesis. My major objectives were as follows:

- Outlining the arts students socio-economic profile and to specify the area (geographic and social) of attraction of the Arts Faculty
- Specification of profile of Jewish students at the Faculty, as this university was a major refugee for Jewish students after the Numerus Clausus Act was passed in 1920.

The Grant was indispensable to achieve above objectives within acceptable period of time.

My thesis (written in English) is now under preparation, and scheduled to be ready till late July. The final version will be sent to the grant maker once it is finalized.

I applied to receive 8000 GBP, I was awarded a total of 4000 GBP, consequently some of planned activities could not be fulfilled or fulfilled totally.

For administrative reasons, I was able to receive the grant with some few months of delay, therefore I applied for and received 6 month extension, and my grant period ended in February 2008.

## 2. Description of activities

Academic background of the project: The Elizabeth University of Pecs in South-Western Hungary was the successor institution of the Elizabeth University of Pozsony (Bratislava, now in Slovakia), founded in 1914 and transferred to Pecs after the dismemberment of historic Hungary in 1919-20. The post-war years were marked by a violently anti-Jewish backlash, officially supported by the government initiating the 'Christian Course' regime, one of the first major measures of which was the infamous numerus clausus law implemented since 1920/21. The law was severely applied in Budapest, while it was more or less ignored or paid lip service to in the provinces, most remarkably at the University of Pecs, which was particularly eager to admit Jewish students - among other things for lack of a large, gentile, clientele of its own.

While in Budapest the proportion of Jewish students fell from 40 % in 1918/19 to quasi-nil in 1919/20 and 7,9 % in 1920/21, in Pecs during 1920/21-1924/5 it was 14 % in Law, 33 % in the Arts and Sciences and as much as 59 % (1) in Medicine - a proportion never observed in any Hungarian institution of higher education before that time. Pecs acted thus as a refuge for victims of the numerus clausus and this function was maintained to some extent till the Nazification of the country starting in the late 1930s. My research focused on the student body of the University throughout the period via the systematic prosopographic survey.

Activities proposed and taken:

1. *Prosopography of students (place of birth, family background, religion, secondary education, age of entry, academic achievement, etc.). Sources : university archives*

This was the most human effort-intensive part of the project. It was not intended to include all students ever attended to the University. At that time, three schools operated at the University: Arts, Law and Medicine. The approximate number of students between the investigated period (190-1940) were as follows: Arts faculty (1000 students), Law (12000 students), Medicine (6000 students).

Data were collected from registration books, which usually contained the following data of each student: name, place of living, data and place of birth, name and occupation of father, religion, place, type and results of secondary schools, results during university studies, study major s (where applicable), results and theme of doctoral studies. All other data needed for scientific investigation were construed from these basic data.

As my thesis is focusing on Arts students, my intention to include all students had to be done, so all students (about 1000) ever attended to the Arts faculty in that period, were recorded.

For Law students: it was neither possible (not intended) to include all students (their number exceeded 10.000), therefore the following procedure was applied: I recorded all Jewish students (roughly 7%) and similar portion of non-Jewish students, which set of students were later statistically weighted accordingly to be able to do exact scientific analyses. From law students, about 2500 students were recorded.

Medical students: though this faculty hosted most of Jewish students (at least in terms of proportion), due to the unavailability of archives in 2007, taking data is not yet finished. It may be ready by mid May 2008.

As self-evaluation, I do think this part of the project (apart from the inability to establish the medical students' database in time) was achieved as planned

The outline of most basic scientific investigations concerning Arts students is attached under Brief description of scientific findings section. A more specific investigation of Jewish students will be included in the thesis in a narrative format.

The databases compiled are attached in pdf format with this report.

2. *Research on intellectual careers, opposing Jewish and Gentile students (professional activities from the beginning to the end, including the period of Nazification and Communism, official appointments, public distinctions, scholarly or scientific activities, publications). Sources : professional lists (of 'professional chambers'), national bibliographies (like that of Gulyas), university almanachs, lists of state and privately granted prizes*

The idea behind this objective was to find out what role of the contemporary University in Pécs played in the training of the intellectual elite. The procedure was to compare the database of persons indicated as person of distinction in numbers of sources (various almanacs, encyclopedias, other reference books). As I had a full database of Arts students, the investigation was done only for that. The basic result is under Brief description of scientific findings section, the final in-depth analysis will be available in the thesis.

3. *Special research on victims of the Shoah and the fate of survivors under Nazism and Communism. Sources : memoire literature, secondary sources in historical accounts concerning the period, especially the history of the Shoah in Pecs (Jozsef Schweitzer).*

I studied the memoire literature on the holocaust in Pécs, and found a detailed description of what happened and how it was related to the university. The short description is under Brief description of scientific findings section.

4. *Ideological orientation of students and the University : student fraternities, academic authorities, individual professors, etc.*

Political orientation and affiliation of students could only be measured via students' memberships in various fraternities. The registration book of students contained such data, but unfortunately only in the case of law students, which is an incomplete database. Therefore, I was able to make investigations in general. The basic result is under Brief description of scientific findings section, the final in-depth analysis will be available in the thesis.

## Financial report

I received a total of 4000 GBP (2000 GBP for research expenses, 2000 GBP for living expenses). The applied rate of exchange was 380HUF =1 GBP (medial value of the Hungarian National Bank for year 2007).

Calculation of living expenses is based on my real monthly income and expenditure. Please note that in 2007 I was on a three-month long unpaid vacation to prepare for me PhD exam, when the only source of income was this grant.

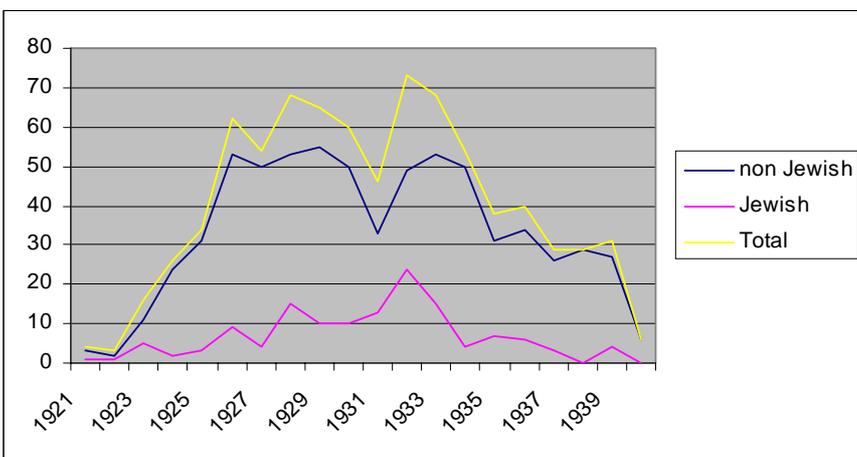
Type of cost	Expenditure in HUF	Expenditure in GBP	Explanation of cost
Research	300.000	790	Compilation of Arts student database, made it ready for SPSS statistical programme (roughly 1000 students)
Research	470.000	1236	Compilation of Law student database, made it ready for SPSS statistical programme (roughly 2500 students)
Research	140.000	368	Taking part and giving presentation in an international conference in Geneva, March 2007 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total research cost</b>		2394	
<b>Co-funded from own sources</b>		394	
<b>Living cost</b>		2000	All monthly living cost included, usually paid from own sources, calculated only for the unpaid leave

<sup>1</sup> Ethno-cultural minorities and new university-trained elites in Eastern and Central Europe during the long 19th century". Geneva University, Switzerland, March 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> 2007.

## Brief description of scientific findings

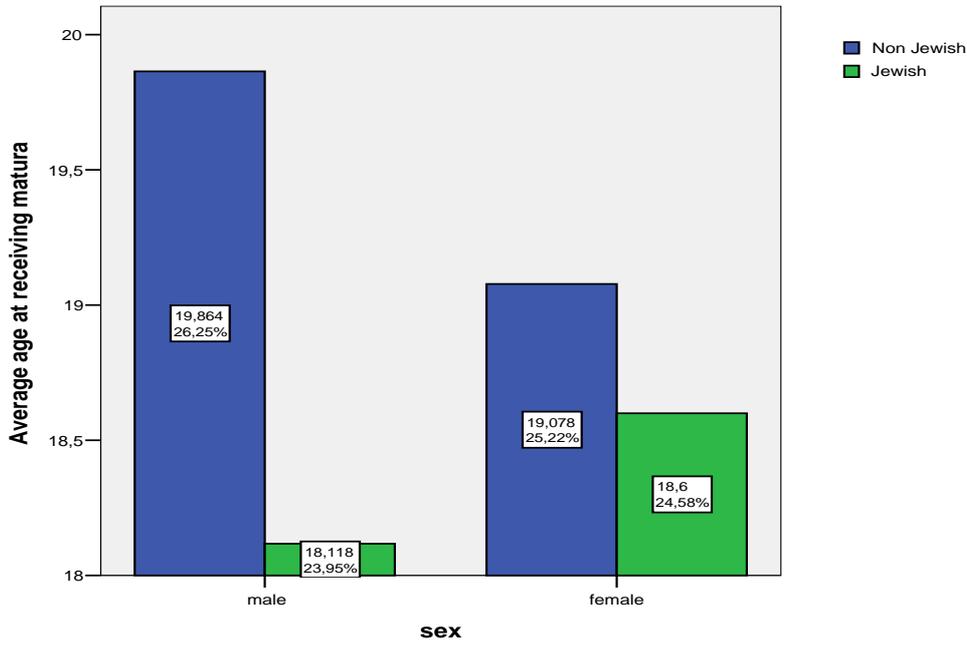
### 1. Basic outline of my research (indicating the descending enrolment of Jews)

This diagram shows the number of students enrolled in the given year by religion (Jewish/non Jewish). What is explicitly visible is the period between 1930-1933 was the years when Jewish students enrollment rose (owing to the ease of anti Jewish acts in 1928), but after 1933, especially to the intensifying anti-Jewish events in universities.

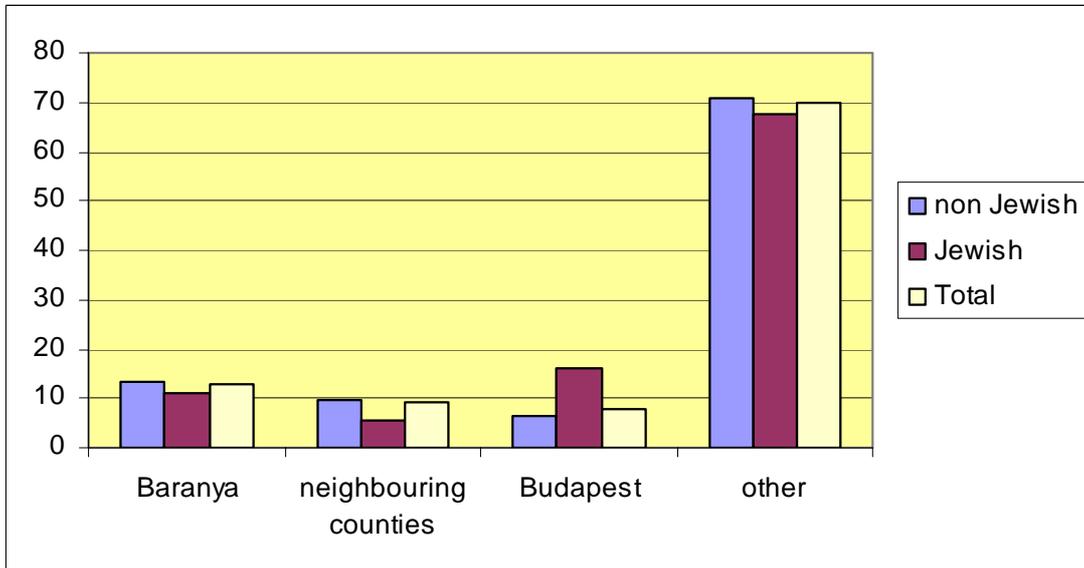


### Average year of receiving Matura.

The diagram shows both in case of male and female, Jewish students earned Matura at a lower age.

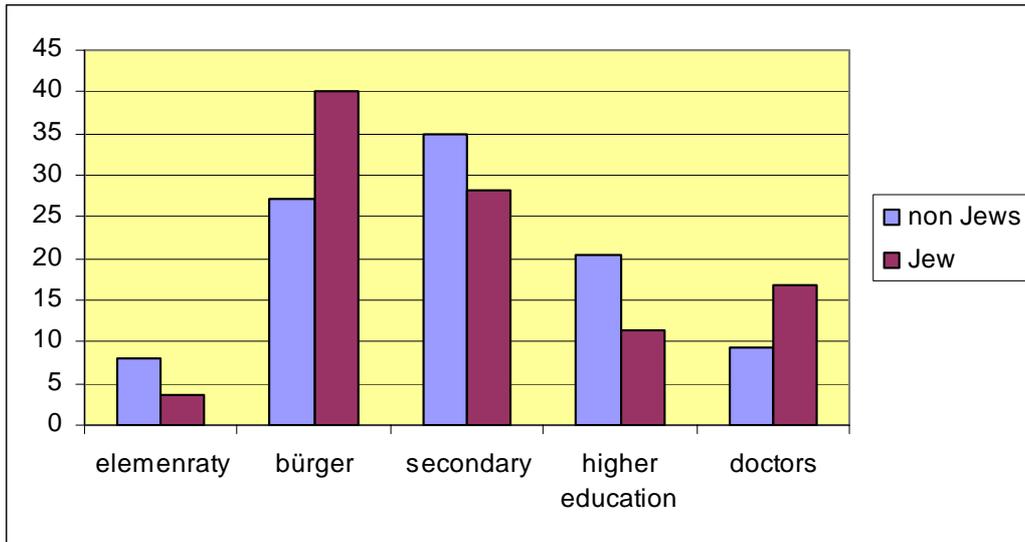


### Place of birth by religion (Jewish/non Jewish)

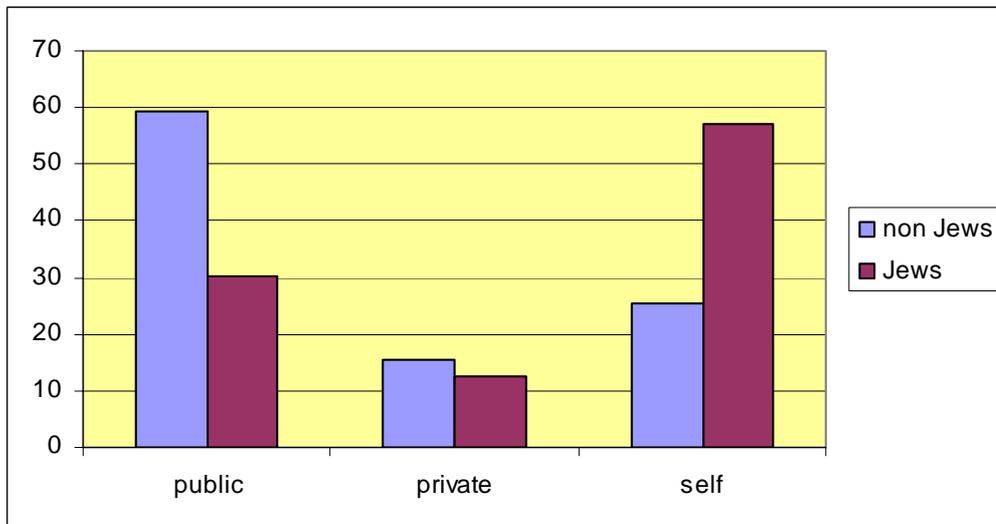


## Main profile of socio-economic status of students by religion

### 1. Father's presumable education



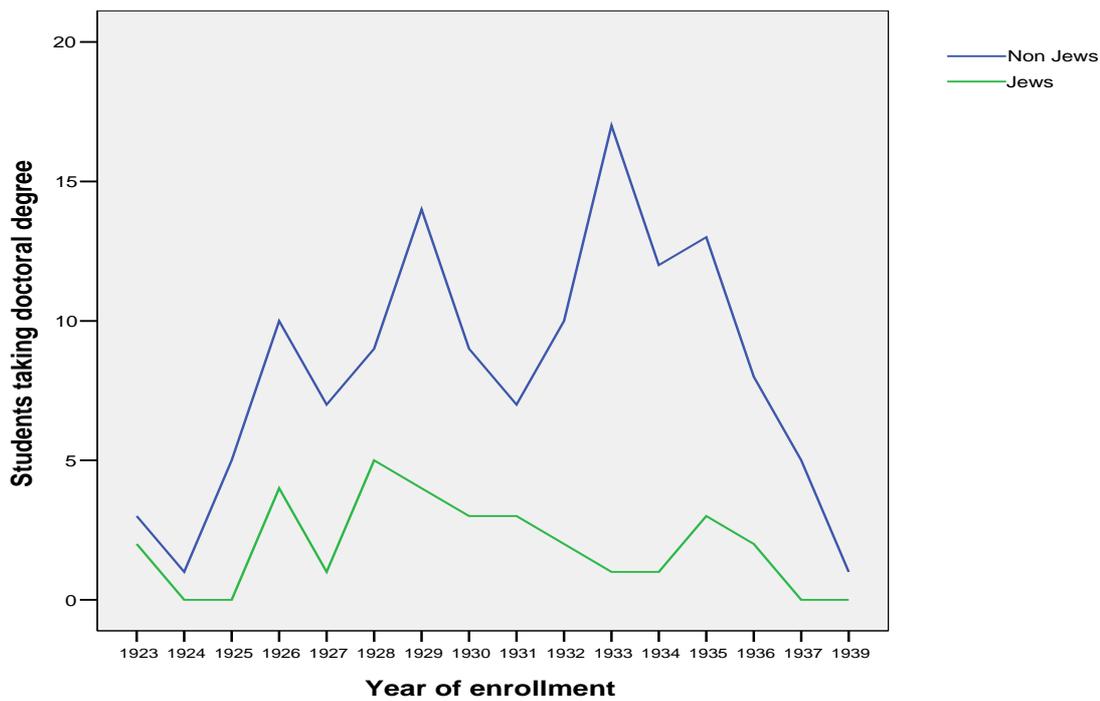
### 2. Father's presumable employer



### 3. Crosstab for father's education and employer

		Non Jewish	Jewish	Total
CSOPISK	elementary, public	.4%		.4%
	elementary, private	4.9%		4.1%
	elementary, self	2.9%	3.5%	3.0%
	bürger, public	10.1%	3.5%	9.0%
	bürger, private	2.2%	1.4%	2.0%
	bürger, self	14.5%	35.5%	18.1%
	secondary, public	22.8%	11.3%	20.8%
	secondary, private	7.0%	7.8%	7.1%
	secondary, self	5.1%	9.2%	5.8%
	higher, public	18.6%	6.4%	16.5%
	higher, private	1.4%	3.5%	1.8%
	higher, self	.6%	.7%	.6%
	"doctors", public	7.1%	8.5%	7.3%
	"doctors", self	2.5%	8.5%	3.5%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2. Database of intellectuals taking degree in the Arts faculty.



Above diagram well illustrates both the number and ratio of Jewish students earning doctoral degree is considerably lower than in case of students not taking doctoral degree.

Basic characteristics of students taking doctoral degree

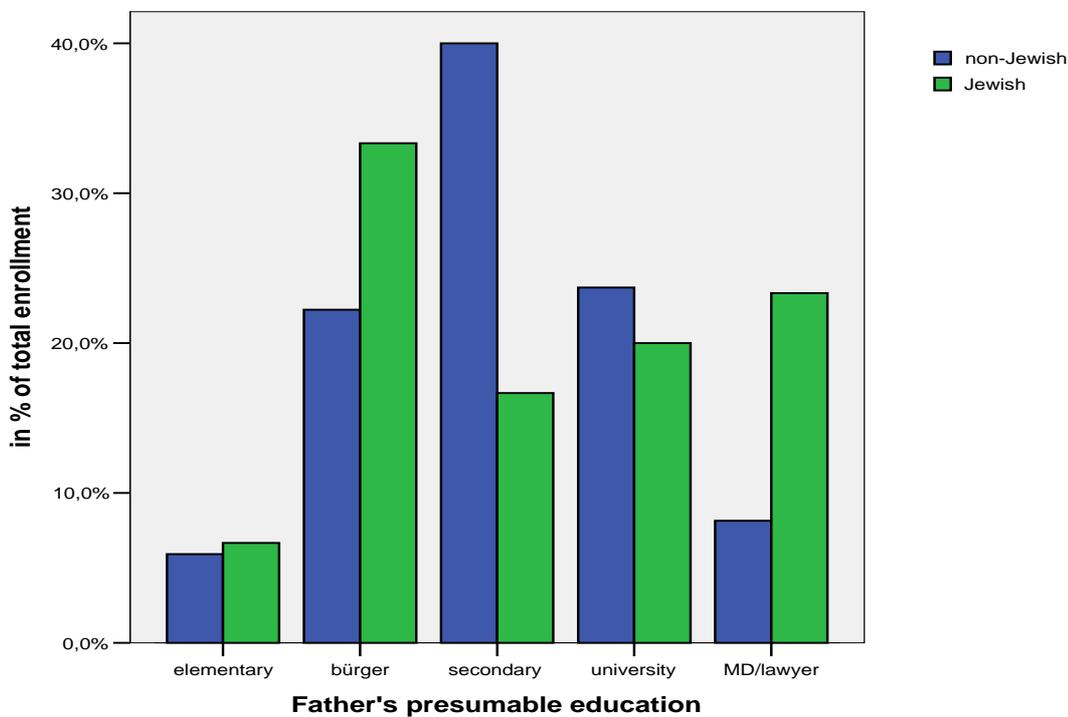
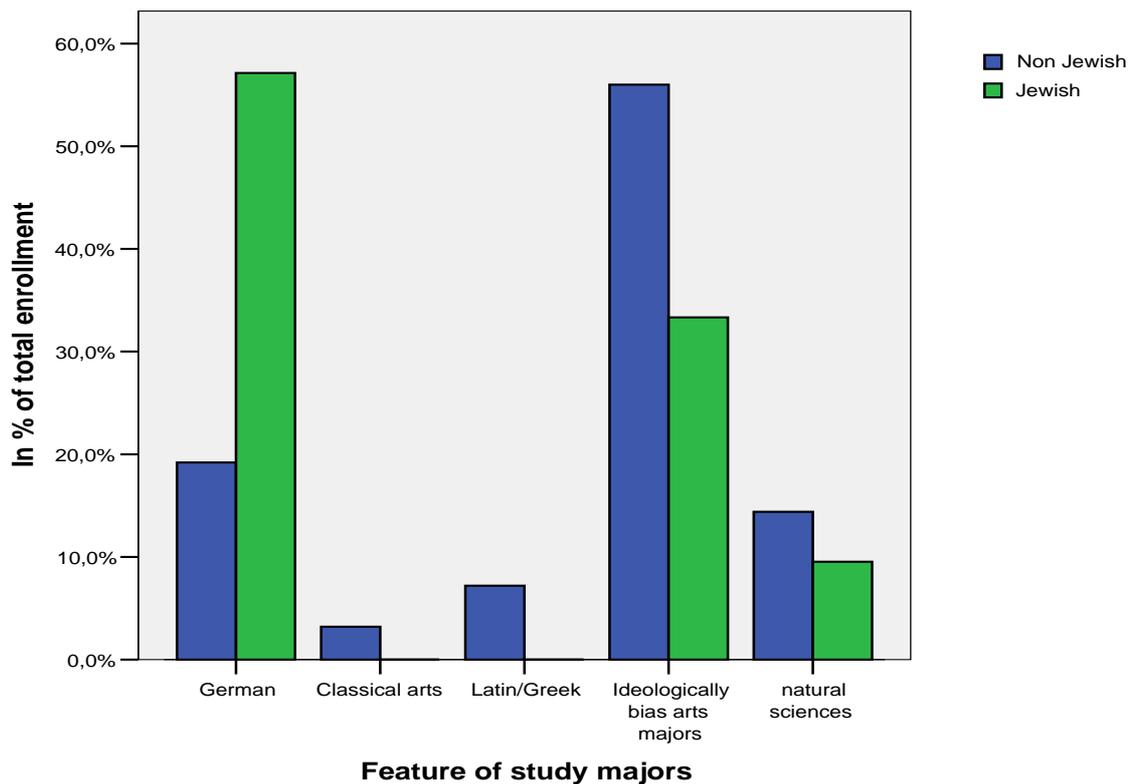


Diagram shows, similarly two important facts for Jewish students:

- The Arts faculty attracted students whose fathers had below-average education,
- And students whose fathers had the most advanced level of education.

## Selection of doctoral major of students by religion (Jewish/non Jewish)



The diagram well illustrates that the Jewish population as a self-defense against intensifying anti-Jewish events and Nazification, tried to prove their trustworthiness and reliability to the country by all means. Students' student major selection shows, the two main groups of study majors were German (literature, grammar, philology) and the ideologically-biased majors (e.g. history, philosophy, pedagogy etc.)

### 3. Holocaust in Pécs

The deportation of Jews in Pécs commenced shortly after the German occupation of Pécs on 19 March 1944. It was led by a Gestapo officer called Auringer, who had ultimate power over the Jewish population in Pécs.

The first act of the occupation power was to seize the local Jewish Congregation's building used as old-men house for old community member. Those who were displaced from the house, were placed at other Jewish families. This building served as the headquarter of the occupation forces.

The Pécs Mayor's Office, till 4 May 1944, elaborated three independent plans to relocate of Jews. First plans preferred solution which entailed the least possible relocation of non-Jews, but soon the possibility to encircle the local Jewish population became the major preference. Finally, the boundaries of the ghetto were soon set on the outskirts of the town, close to the railway station and the airport in order to protect these two strategically important works from air raids.

First plans were to place 3400 Jewish people on the same area where a total of 600 Christian lived before the displacement which meant 3 sqm for each person.

Detentions were soon started partially by pre-made lists and partially by reporting or denunciation. Detentions affected all left-wing persons, independently from the social status and religions, but were mostly focused on wealthy Jewish bourgeois people. On 28 May, the local Jewish Council reported that 54 Israelites and 3 Christian people (who were regarded Jews, according to contemporary regulations) were already missing since the occupation. It was a commonly known fact these people were arrested by the Gestapo and were taken to the local police station, from where later they were taken to Mauthausen.

The placement of Jews (those having to wear the star of David) to the ghetto started 8 May 1944. This forced placement affected non-Jewish people as well, who were forced to leave their houses behind to give place to Jews. The local newspaper "Dunántúl" warned these Christian people not to hamper the efforts of forcing Jews inside ghettos for a more prosperous and clear "Hungarian" life. The newspaper article further read ..... "making this sacrifice" is a national obligation. Finally, the ghetto closed on 20 May 1944.

The city council faced numerous problems. The stocks of shops seized from Jewish owners were claimed by non-Jewish shopkeepers, though local inhabitants were in need of these goods. When on 3rd May 1944, 8 shops were reopened from the 230 closed ones, locals besieged them. Meanwhile the re-allocation of seized Jewish flats got a new impetus. Till early June, some 1200 claims for seized Jewish real estates were reported to the city council, while 70% of applicants had flats.

From local newspapers, we know that a total of 4200 local inhabitants (including 800 Christians) were forced to wear the yellow Star of David. Police raids to find "hiding Jews" were a daily routine, which often resulted in arresting highly respected local people, living this town for decades.

According to regulations of the local authorities, Jews were permitted to buy food and other article between 11am-1pm, which, being a war-time period, practically means, they were not able to buy anything.

The fulfillment of national anti-Jew legislations affected the total of 354 local shopkeepers, 46 lawyers and 16 MDs. In addition, about 1300 Jewish family had to face with uncertainty of existence.

Within the ghetto the ultimate control belonged to the police, while in internal matters the competency was in the Jewish Council's hands, which body kept the contact both with the police and the city council. After German ghetto patterns, a so-called ghetto police was formed, and in order to feed people in the ghetto, common kitchen facilities were set up. Even, the Council set up a ghetto hospital and a hospice house for the elderly. Leaving the ghetto was only possible with special permits, though some people worked outside the ghetto (especially those who had capabilities badly needed outside the ghetto, such as doctors, nurses). General living conditions were very bad, local authorities were reluctant to do anything to improve conditions.

From the so-called ghetto book we know the total population of the ghetto was 2711 people (906 male, 1805 female), the number of children below 10 years was 177.

The compelled life in the ghetto was not long, the inhabitants were to leave the ghetto for the so-called "Lakics" army post till 29 June. This military establishment (at the opposite part of the city) was the place to collect Jews from the city as well as from smaller Jewish communities around the city. We can estimate roughly 4000 Jews were forced to move in. Conditions were even more poorer than in the ghetto. The ration of suicides were rising, brutal treatment from the guards was common.

People with uncertain identities for the local powers (e.g. those living in mixed marriages) were also deported in the army base, where they were interrogated by a committee, which once in a while gave exemptions. The first official instance of the involvement of Germans in the control of local authorities was their participation in this committee. Despite, German did not incline to take any active part in daily Jewish matters.

According to available information, a total of 906 local resident males were deported to Auschwitz, and only a few returned. From Mauthausen about 30 Pécs residents returned.

#### 4. Fraternities

Student fraternities from the late 1910's years took active role in anti-Semitic actions in Hungarian universities. These fraternities had non-negligible role in passing the law resolution on limiting the role of Jews in nearly all areas of life. This law, later acknowledged as the Numerus Clausus Act, implemented in 1920. Iconic leaders of fraternities later become the "reform politicians" taking all measures (street demonstrations, and quite often violent actions against Jews) to oppose the mitigation of the effect of the Numerus Clausus Act, which was proposed by the government as an effect of pressure from Western states.

The most important fraternities of that time were the "Turul" Student Fraternity (turul is a mythical bird, an icon in ancient Hungarian history), MEFHOSZ (acronym of national association of university and college students) and Americana Fraternity (from the name of an ancient Hungarian prince). Naturally, numerous

other fraternities operated at Hungarian institution (mostly organized on a base of professions, e.g. technical intelligentsia organized themselves into the Hungária Fraternity).

These fraternities nearly exclusively were right-winged association, with no hidden anti-Semitism, though we can find a few examples for fraternities of Jews (MIEFHOE ) or left-winged students. The most influential fraternities could easily take their members to the streets when the slightest sign of a measure to ease the situation of Jews was revealed.

The Turul Fraternity, established in 1919 with the aim of uniting right-winged students, but soon this fraternity became the most considerable and violent organization. This fraternity united the most students of law, medicine and arts. Legitimacy of fraternities (especially of the aforementioned three biggest ones) were further enforced by the fact influential members of the professorate openly supported them.

Importance of fraternities was manifold. Besides gratifying violent desires unpunished, more specific advantages were also offered to members, such as meals for reduced priced, financial aids for the poorer, and probably the most important was that members of fraternities could get a job more easily, primarily in state administration.

When the war broke out, Turul members provided information for the army about Jewish students, which information was essential to compile the list of those taken to the east front as labour providers.

In Pécs, the situation was quite similar to the other major university cities in the country. After a few years of relatively calmness in the early thirties, anti Jewish backlash started to intensify. It reached its peak in February 1937, when the dean did not refuse to open the usual ball organized by the Jewish students' association (MIEFHOE). Non-Jewish students (without respect to their membership in fraternities) broke out a boycott against the university and some professors who did not distance themselves from the dean's act. Violent events (physical assaults against Jewish) inside and outside the university were very common for a few days. The restoration of order could only be done with the reinforcement of police forces. These violent attacks did not meet the consent of most Christian people, even Emericana Fraternity called its members not to participate in such events.

Records of student fraternity affiliation was normally recorded in students' study book. But unfortunately in the law faculty only. We have a substantial quantity of student affiliation from the database of law students.

# Official statement



UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

Faculty of Humanities  
Institute of Education

## Statement

*To Whom It May Concern*

In my capacity as the Head of the "Education and Society" Multidisciplinary Doctoral (PhD) School at the University of Pécs, Hungary I hereby confirm that Mr. Szabolcs Fekete, a grantee of *Hanadiv Charitable Foundation Academic Jewish Studies in Europe Grant Programme Doctoral Fellowships* has fulfilled his academic obligations originating from the acceptance of the grant. His activities, during the grant period, included the following tasks:

- giving bimonthly progress report of work done
- consultation with academic advisors on a regular basis
- performing prescribed teaching activity
- giving academic advisors a final presentation on the completion of the sponsored research.

Pécs, March 18, 2008

Prof. Katalin R. Forray  
Head of PhD School  
University of Pécs



H-7624 Pécs • Ifjúság út 6.  
Telefon: +36(72)503-600/4510  
Fax: +36(72)503-600/4221  
E-mail: forray@btk.pte.hu