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## Bonds Tried by Hard Times: Jews and Christians on Klauzál tér, Budapest, 1938–1945\*

This essay examines local society in Belső-Erzsébetváros, the inner 7th district of Budapest, before the Second World War, and in particular the changes in residential composition brought about by wartime events. Today, Belső-Erzsébetváros is increasingly frequently branded “the old Jewish district” of Budapest. One main goal of the article is to offer a critical reassessment of this historical image, in part by considering the complexity of the inter-ethnic, inter-confessional and interpersonal relations among local residents in the interwar period. The author analyzes the residential mix of denominationally Jewish and Christian individuals in one particular area of the inner 7th district, namely Klauzál Square, on the eve of the Second World War, and the essay offers possible explanations for the high degree of inter-confessional cohabitation. The analysis is based on the census records of 1941, as well as oral history interviews. The second half of the article concentrates on the way in which the social fabric of the neighborhood was frayed by political and historical circumstances between 1941 and 1945. By late 1945, pre-war patterns had been upset in many ways, and, as post-war sources suggest, the residential composition of local society began to undergo profound and irreversible changes.

### *Introduction*

The new millennium has witnessed the revival of historical “Jewish districts” in several cities of Central Europe. Urban quarters such as Berlin’s Scheunenviertel, Prague’s Josefov, or Krakow’s Kazimierz have been increasingly rediscovered as embodiments of a Jewish past.<sup>1</sup> As for their residential composition, these

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1 For the Jewish past of the Scheunenviertel, see Verena Dohrn et al., ed., *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939. Charlottengrad und Scheunenviertel*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010). For the the process of the Scheunenviertel’s recent reinvention, see Kirsten Küppers, *Marketing mit Davidstern*. <http://www.hagalil.com/czech/festival/oranienburg.htm>, accessed December 17, 2012. For the early transformation of fin-de-siècle Josefov, see Cathleen M. Giustino, *Tearing Down Prague’s Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics around 1900* (Boulder: East European Monographs; New York: distributed by Columbia University Press, 2003). For the past transformations as well as the current revitalization of Kazimierz, see Monika A. Murzyn, *Kazimierz: Środkowoeuropejskie doświadczenie rewitalizacji/The Central European Experience in Urban Regeneration* (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2006); also Marta Smagacz, *The Revitalization of Urban Space. Social Changes in Krakow’s Kazimierz and the Ticinese District in Milan* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus–Pisa University Press, 2008).

areas have in fact long ceased to be Jewish quarters, and in some cases even the historical accuracy of the name is questionable. In any case, World War II and the Holocaust led to the almost complete disappearance of the Jewish population, and the long decades of state socialism brought about the social re-stratification or depopulation of these areas, usually accompanied by physical decay.

Belső-Erzsébetváros, the inner section of Budapest's 7th district, has been similarly redefined during the past fifteen years as *the* historic Jewish quarter of Budapest. One of my aims in this article is to challenge the increasingly pervasive historical stereotypes being attached to Belső-Erzsébetváros as the "old Jewish district" of Pest, and to contribute to a more accurate understanding of the area's composition in the past. As part of this endeavor, it is my explicit goal to show inter-ethnic, inter-confessional and interpersonal relations in all of their complexity. I will concentrate on one striking aspect of that complexity: the mixing of Jews and Christians in one area of the inner 7th district of Budapest on the eve of World War II.

The chosen location is Klauzál tér [Klauzál Square], until recently the only square in the densely-built inner 7th district. This space is, in my opinion, representative of the surrounding urban quarter of Budapest in several ways. Set against the background of contemporaneous events, I will analyze the composition of Klauzál tér households in 1941 based on the data provided by the national census of that year, with a special emphasis on the forms of denominational mixing.<sup>2</sup>

I will attempt to offer possible explanations for the surprisingly large proportion of apartments shared by Jews and Christians in the sixteen residential

2 Questionnaires/forms of the 1941 census were filled out apartment by apartment, and contained detailed information on the apartment (e.g. number and type of rooms, infrastructure etc.) and the main parameters of its residents (i.e. their status in the household, occupation, marital status, religion, citizenship, ethnicity, mother tongue, and the date the resident moved into the apartment in question). The Klauzál tér questionnaires, sorted by buildings, are preserved in the Budapest Főváros Levéltára [Budapest City Archives], hence BFL. See census forms of the 1941 national census by apartments [*Az 1941. évi népszámlálás lakásíve*], Budapest, Klauzál tér, buildings No. 1–16. BFL IV. 1419. j. (1–4 Klauzál tér: census area division (*számlálójárás*) 512/II; 5 Klauzál tér: census area division 519/a; 6–7 Klauzál tér: census area division 519/b; 8–9 Klauzál tér: census area division 518/II; 10–13 Klauzál tér: census area division 518/I; 14–16 Klauzál tér: census area division 514/II.) Data from the Klauzál tér questionnaires of the 1941 census have been entered into a database of my own. Any further mention of Klauzál tér apartments and their residents will be based on this database and the source material referenced above. I would like to thank András Lugosi, historian and archivist in the Budapest City Archives and an expert of interwar sources, who guided me through the census material, and with whom I could always discuss the problems that arose during my research. I would also like to thank Emese Gyimesi and Dávid Csillik for their assistance in building my database.

buildings surrounding Klauzál tér. I will constantly refer to the broader context, calling attention to long-term processes such as assimilation and the traditions of a characteristic urban neighborhood as well as developments which had immediate and often permanent effects on the composition of the inner 7th district, such as the discriminative laws passed by the Hungarian parliament from 1938 onwards, Hungary's entry into the war, the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944, and the ghettoization measures introduced later that year.

The rediscovery of former “Jewish districts” in Central European cities began in the last decade of the twentieth century, and was in most cases related to the profound changes brought about by the political transition of 1989–1990. Following the collapse of state socialist systems, new conditions emerged in almost every field related to urban development, and permitted the physical and symbolic reinvention of hitherto neglected urban spaces in the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

The physical revival of former “Jewish districts” has been accompanied by the construction of historical narratives and the refashioning of the historical images of those neighborhoods. The process has sometimes revolved around *reinvention* rather than *reconstruction*, evoking the past character of a particular district according to the needs of the present.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the former ethnic character is irrevocably gone; even if those areas undergo a profound social transformation, their pre-war Jewish residents will never return, and it is typically not the descendants of former Jewish residents who come to repopulate districts such as Krakow's Kazimierz or Berlin's Scheunenviertel. The “Jewish” character of these old-new districts thus has to be vested in something other than residential composition.

As part of a branding strategy to make these quarters unique and touristically attractive, Jewish monuments are preserved, Jewish histories are presented in a professional way (as in Josefov), and Jewish cultural traditions are revived for the sake of today's consumers. When, as part of a more general gentrification process, the neighborhood acquires new cultural and entertainment functions, the Jewish aspect may become more and more pronounced, marked by Jewish festivals, music performances, specialized bookstores and publishing, and

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3 For a comparative study of the renewal and reinvention of historic Jewish districts in Central Europe see Monika Murzyn-Kupisz, “Reclaiming Memory or Mass Consumption?” in *Reclaiming Memory: Urban Regeneration in the Historic Jewish Quarters in Central Europe*, ed. Monika Murzyn-Kupisz et al. (Krakow: International Cultural Centre, 2009), 363–96.

4 This aspect is strongly stressed by Monika Murzyn-Kupisz, “Reclaiming Memory or Mass Consumption?” and also Magdalena Waligórska, “Spotlight on the Unseen: the Rediscovery of Little Jerusalem,” in *Reclaiming Memory*, 99–116.

the revival of various forms of Jewish theatre (as in Kazimierz and Belső-Erzsébetváros).<sup>5</sup> The area becomes a *lieu de mémoire* for those who want to remember, and a place of identification for those who feel they can personally relate to Jewish traditions. The fact that identification is often based on a false or at least strongly “edited” image of the past does not hinder the blossoming of the remembrance industry.

Similarly to its counterparts in other Central European cities, Belső-Erzsébetváros has been the object of historical reinvention in many ways. In the past fifteen or twenty years, it has become increasingly common to refer to the area as the “old Jewish district of Budapest”. Labeling the neighborhood as such offers the possibility of identification and involvement (not only for local residents but also for *non*-residents who cultivate explicitly Jewish identities) and offers rich opportunities for touristic use and city marketing.<sup>6</sup> The inner 7th district, branded as the Old Jewish Quarter, is routinely included in the guidebooks as one of the important sights of Budapest, besides being the destination of a more specific Jewish tourism. Such a reinvention of a historical district, however, harbors inherent dangers. It can easily lead to the creation of an ethnocentric and purifying historical narrative which leaves non-Jews out of the story, and purges the neighborhood’s historical image of its non-Jewish components. That is nothing short of a profound falsification of the historical realities that once characterized Belső-Erzsébetváros, the inner 7th district of Budapest.

Historians do not all agree that Belső-Erzsébetváros (and the adjoining stretch of Belső-Terézváros)<sup>7</sup> can justifiably be called a historical Jewish district at all. Those who do emphasize the crucial importance of the area in the history of “Jewish Budapest,” with its high concentration of Jews from the late eighteenth century to World War II; even more importantly, they emphasize the fact that the area is home to several institutions which have been central to Jewish life in Budapest: the main

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5 For the revival of specifically Jewish cultural venues in Belső-Erzsébetváros, see Eszter Brigitta Gantner and Máttyás Kovács, “Altering Alternatives: Mapping Jewish Subcultures in Budapest” in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. Julia Brauch et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, c2008), 139–58.

6 Erzsébet Fanni Tóth, “Walking the Jewish Past? The Effects of Tourism on the Interpretations of the Budapest Jewish District” (MA thesis, Central European University, Sociology Department, 2008 Budapest: CEU–Budapest College, 2008).

7 Until the late eighteenth century, the area used to lie outside the walls of the city of Pest, and was part of a suburb called Terézváros. After the demolition of the city walls, Terézváros was incorporated in the city; later, after the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in 1873, it became one of the administrative districts within Budapest. Eventually, the southern part of Terézváros split off and became a separate district called Erzsébetváros—the 7th District—in 1882. The area referred to today as “the old Jewish quarter of Pest” includes today’s Inner Erzsébetváros as well as a stretch of today’s Inner Terézváros (see Figure 1).

synagogues of the three major branches of Judaism, various religious schools, prayer houses, a ritual bath, kosher butchers, and kosher restaurants.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the still-functioning institutions, the argument goes, there used to be countless other Jewish venues located in the area.<sup>9</sup> Critical interpretations do not deny the central significance of Belső-Erzsébetváros (until 1882 part of Terézváros) in the history of Budapest Jewry,<sup>10</sup> but they do stress the fact that the neighborhood has never been a homogeneously Jewish area and that Christian churches as well as various ethnic groups have always been strongly represented.<sup>11</sup> They also point out that except for two and a half months during World War II, the area has never been a ghetto in the formal sense.

Even the historical approaches which emphasize the mixed character of Belső-Erzsébetváros and point to the simultaneous presence of Hungarians, Romanians, Jews and other ethnicities and confessional groups tend to treat them as separate entities. While this approach may be accurate for earlier historical periods, it is problematic for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most historical narratives completely miss out on the extremely close *symbiosis* of people and routinely classify them as members of different groups. Equally ignored are the *multiple identities* created by the simultaneous use of different languages, the varying shades of religiousness, and the extent to which individuals of different inherent ethnicities developed an additional Hungarian identity.

My use of the notion “Jewish” needs to be clarified here, as its unconsidered use is thoroughly problematic for this particular period. Labeling people as Jewish

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8 Anna Perczel, “Hogy a negyedben jól lehessen élni” [So that One Can Live a Good Life in this Quarter] and Géza Komoróczy, “Városképműemlék: Pest régi-új zsidó negyede” [Monument of a Townscape: the Old-New Jewish Quarter of Pest], both in: “Belső-Erzsébetváros: harctér” [Inner Erzsébetváros: a Battlefield], ed. and interviews conducted by György Petőcz et al. *Mozgó Világ* 30, no. 11 (2004): 16–8 and 42–6.

9 Komoróczy, “Városképműemlék: Pest régi-új zsidó negyede”; Kinga Frojimovics et al., *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History*. Translated from Hungarian by Vera Szabó, translation edited by Mario Fenyő and the authors (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), 67–200.

10 The inner part of one-time Terézváros evolved as the first significant “harbor” for Jewish immigrants attracted by the city of Pest, and continued to absorb a large part of Jewish migrants throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

11 Vera Bácskai, “A pesti zsidóság a 19. század első felében” [The Jews of Pest in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century], *Budapesti Negyed* 3, no. 2. (1995): 11–12; Gábor Koltai and Attila Rácz, *Ezerarcú Erzsébetváros* [The Thousand Faces of Erzsébetváros] (Budapest: Erzsébetvárosi Önkormányzat, 2011), 31–60; Tamás Szakály, “Tér, történelem, társadalom: Belső-Erzsébetváros története a városegyesítéstől” [Space, History, Society: the History of Inner Erzsébetváros since the Unification of Buda, Pest and Óbuda] (MA thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, 2010), 6–21.



Figure 1. Map of the inner city of Budapest, with “the old Jewish district of Pest” highlighted.<sup>12</sup> Edited by the author

retrospectively, on the basis of their formal religious affiliation and especially on the basis of their origins, may be misguided on several grounds and amount to the denial of those people’s own chosen identities.<sup>13</sup> The anti-Jewish laws of 1939 and 1941 in Hungary were based precisely on that kind of denial: they lumped together diverse groups of people often by nothing else than legally imposed racial criteria. Some of these individuals indeed had strong Jewish identities. Some of them, although still formally Jewish (i.e. belonging to the *izraelita* denomination), were thoroughly secularized and would have long left their Jewish identities behind if the intensifying anti-Semitism of the era had not constantly reminded them of their roots. Many other people classified as Jewish by the racial laws of 1939 and 1941 were not even Jewish by formal criteria; they had been baptized as Christians earlier or were born into families who were already members of Christian denominations.

Calling everybody who suffered from anti-Jewish persecution Jewish calls into question several victims’ own identities, and denies—in retrospect—their

12 Source: [http://jewishwebindex.com/Hungary\\_-\\_Street\\_Map\\_of\\_Budapest.jpg](http://jewishwebindex.com/Hungary_-_Street_Map_of_Budapest.jpg), accessed December 17, 2012.

13 For the treatment of the problem, see e. g. Gábor Gyáni, “Image versus Identity: Assimilation and Discrimination of Hungary’s Jewry,” *Hungarian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 153–162; Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 44–8.; András Gerő, “Új zsidó múlt” [New Jewish Past], in András Gerő, *A zsidó szempont* [The Jewish Point of View] (Budapest: PolgART, 2005), 105–8.

freedom to reconsider their identity during their lifetime. In his monograph on the Budapest ghettos of 1944/1945, Tim Cole uses the word “Jewish” in quotation marks *all the way through the book*—for the reasons I outlined above. With his words: “I can’t make those dead live again, but I can give those killed as Jews’ their freedom to choose their own identity.”<sup>14</sup>

In this study, as a working solution, I will take the denominational categories of the 1941 census at face value and interpret them as rough indicators of Klauzál tér residents’ affiliations. I will use the terms Jewish, Roman Catholic, Lutheran etc. without quotation marks, and I will comment on these categories wherever necessary. I am aware that classifying someone as “Catholic” in this period may be just as problematic as classifying someone as “Jewish”; many Christians’ religious affiliations were also fading into mere formality by 1941, no matter how heavily Christian values were stressed in the official discourse of the era. In most cases, I will not be able to say anything certain about individual identities because my sources do not permit such conclusions. But I will attempt to draw attention to attributes that, in my interpretation, are indicative of assimilation, secularization, and the weakening of religious identities, or conversely, mark strong religious ties, group cohesion, and/or exclusionism.

The picture that unfolded in front of my eyes while I was analyzing the Klauzál tér questionnaires of the 1941 census surprised me in many respects. The fact that at the outbreak of World War II this area had a high concentration of Jewish residents was obviously no breathtaking news. The neighborhood had had that kind of reputation ever since Belső-Erzsébetváros had begun to take shape and acquire its urban character nearly a century before. That reputation can be confirmed statistically by early twentieth-century population census figures, especially if the 7th district is broken down into smaller units. In the immediate Klauzál tér (then called István tér) area, 51 to 80% of the population was Jewish in 1900.<sup>15</sup> The overall proportion of “Israelites” within the 7th district was 35.8% that year (compared to the Budapest figure of 23.6%). Although no such detailed maps are available from the censuses of 1910, 1920 and 1930, the overall figures for the 7th district can be determined in those years: 38.5% of the district’s residents belonged to the Jewish faith in 1910, 39.1% in 1920, and

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14 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 48.

15 See the map titled “Az izraeliták eloszlása” [Distribution of Israelites], in József Kőrösi and Gusztáv Thirring, *Budapest fővárosa az 1901-ik évben: A népszámlálás és népleírás eredményei* [Budapest in 1901: Results of the Census], vol. 2 (Budapest: Grill, 1905), 56–7.

36.3% in 1925. (The Budapest percentages for Israelites in the same years were 23.1, 23.2 and 21.6 %, respectively.)<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the area was not purely Jewish but denominationally and ethnically mixed was not such big news either; as pointed out earlier, sober commentators have always emphasized it, and historians of the area today rarely miss to point out the neighborhood's compound character. (The figures quoted above in themselves indicate that in the same periods, 61 to 64% of the 7th district's population belonged to Christian denominations, and even in the most densely "Jewish" areas, non-Jewish residents made up 20 to 30% of the population.)

What I found striking during my research was the *degree and intensity* of coexistence among Jews and Christians in semi-public and private spaces. The mixing of various groups in public spaces did not seem so surprising; interactions on the square, in the street or in the market hall are, after all, understandable in a traditionally complex neighborhood. However, the close mixing *within buildings* and, even more importantly, *within individual apartments* was something I would not have expected, and something I felt called for explanations.

The 1941 census was taken at a sinister moment for the population of Belső-Erzsébetváros. The first and second anti-Jewish laws had strongly determined the atmosphere since the late 1930s. They heavily affected the local population economically, depriving many people of their property, means of living, career options, and educational opportunities. The second of these, Act XV of 1939, defined the category of "Jewish" on racial grounds; its stipulations therefore affected several local citizens who were Jewish by origin but not by religious affiliation. The third anti-Jewish law was passed seven months after the 1941 census had been taken.<sup>17</sup> The latter piece of legislation interfered with the most private human relations and potentially affected the most private spheres; for example, it forbade new marriages between racially defined Jews and non-Jews, and also forbade sexual relationships between Jewish men and Christian women. Even if we consider that the state of affairs recorded by the 1941 census *preceded*

16 Gusztáv Thirring, *Budapest főváros demográfiai és társadalmi tagolódásának fejlődése az utolsó 50 évben* [The Demographic and Social Stratification of the Capital City Budapest in the Past 50 Years], Statisztikai Közlemények 70, vol. 2 (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Statisztikai Hivatala, 1935), 43.

17 The Hungarian pieces of legislation referred to as anti-Jewish laws in historiography were clearly discriminative in intent but did not always betray that intent in their names. For the full texts of the so-called anti-Jewish laws (Act XV of 1938, Act IV of 1939, Act XV of 1941, and Act XV of 1942) see *Ezer év törvényei* [Laws of One Thousand Years], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=1&k=5> (1918–1945), accessed December 4, 2012.



the passing of the third anti-Jewish law of 1941, in the reigning atmosphere, with the second anti-Jewish law already in effect, it is not at all self-evident why Christians would continue living with Jews in the same apartments as sub-tenants or vice versa, why they would at all choose a neighborhood with a strongly Jewish reputation, why Christians would serve as housemaids in Jewish households, and why Christians would continue to work for small Jewish-owned businesses in such large numbers.

*Apartments Shared by Jews and Christians: Mixed Household Structures on Klauzál tér in 1941*

When examining Klauzál tér apartments and their residents in 1941, one finds that, with three exceptions, 23 to 63% of the buildings' apartments were shared by Jewish and Christian tenants. The types of denominationally mixed households varied; the nature of mixing and the reasons for Jewish and non-Jewish cohabitation may have been different in each and every case. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify certain main types of mixed households in the buildings around the square. In the following, I will attempt to create a rough typology; the brief descriptions of some individual households are meant to serve as illustrative examples.

Table 1. Ratios of denominationally Jewish, Christian and mixed apartments in Klauzál tér buildings, house numbers 1–16<sup>18</sup>

House number	Klauzál tér															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Number of purely Jewish apartments	5	0	3	4	9	4	2	2	8	6	1	1	8	2	11	4
Number of purely Christian apartments	5	13	7	7	9	3	5	7	9	18	7	4	13	14	9	6
Number of mixed Jewish–Christian apartments	4	6	9	2	10	7	1	4	6	7	8	4	10	2	10	17
Ratio of mixed apartments	29	32	47	15	36	50	12.5	30	26	23	50	44	33	11	33	63

18 Not counting the units which functioned purely as businesses, i.e. shops, workshops or storage spaces..

A) One of the most common combinations was represented by Jewish families sharing their apartments with their Christian housemaids. The practical purpose of this widespread arrangement was common knowledge at the time: as opposed to members of the family, the Catholic or Protestant maid did not have to observe holidays or live according to religious rules, and thus could do housework and other chores during the Sabbath. In some Klauzál tér buildings, this pattern seems to have been almost the rule: for example, in 11 Klauzál tér (the building that included one of the major municipal market halls of Budapest), seven of the eight Jewish households employed live-in Christian maids. The fact that even a rabbi, living in another building (6 Klauzál tér) with his wife and five daughters, shared his family apartment with a Roman Catholic housemaid suggests that the practice was considered to be perfectly acceptable and was tacitly sanctioned by religious authority. (The same rabbi, Árpád Schwarcz,<sup>19</sup> also complemented his income just like any common folk did on Klauzál tér at the time: an additional subtenant and his wife, both Jewish by religion, rented space in his apartment.)

B) The degree of mixing was more pronounced when Jewish families rented out some of their apartment space to Christian subtenants, or the other way round: Christian residents sublet parts of their apartments to Jewish subtenants. For example, in a relatively simple household structure in 12 Klauzál tér, a Jewish family, consisting of a baker, Ármin Moskovits, his wife, his mother-in-law and his four daughters (one a seamstress by trade, another a corset maker, and the two youngest, schoolgirls), one of the rooms was rented out to a Calvinist subtenant—a factory worker—and his Catholic wife. In 5 Klauzál tér, a Jewish family consisting of a sales assistant, Ernő Nagy, his wife (furrier by trade), his child, and his tailor father rented out one of their rooms to a Roman Catholic couple: a carpenter and his wife. In addition, the family employed a live-in Greek Catholic housemaid.

An example of the reverse case—where Christian tenants sublet their rooms to one or more Jewish subtenants—was an apartment in 5 Klauzál tér. The head of household was a Roman Catholic shoemaker, Márton Perennei, who used one of the three street-facing rooms of his large apartment as a workshop. He and his wife shared their place with a Roman Catholic relative and his Catholic spouse, but also rented out one of the rooms to a divorced Jewish woman.

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<sup>19</sup> All the names used in this text are fictitious, in accordance with Act LXIII of 1992 on the protection of personal data, currently in effect in Hungary.

The latter woman's occupation was listed as housewife (*báztartásbeli*), but not housemaid or domestic servant (*báztartási alkalmazotti*), and her status in the household was listed as subtenant. Nonetheless, we can assume that she helped out in the household just like female relatives—mothers-in-law, widowed sisters etc.—often did in apartments where no live-in maids were employed.

Even though these apartments were relatively spacious by local standards and the general Budapest standards of those times, the physical closeness of people in these households is striking. Subtenants in such apartments usually used the same kitchen and bathroom as the main tenant and his or her relatives, and, due to the usual layout of the larger apartments on Klauzál tér, rented one of the rooms adjoining the rooms used by the family, the two sections being separated by a door. The main family and the sub-tenants were thus literally in hearing distance of each other, not to mention the constant and unwitting involvement in each other's lives. We can assume that in such households and subleases, denominational differences and origin did not matter very much for people who shared the same apartment, otherwise they would not have chosen to live in the same space in such close proximity.

Middle and lower-middle-class households on Klauzál tér were often quite populous in 1941, as we have seen in the cases quoted above. Living conditions among the working class on Klauzál tér were even more crowded; the apartments of workers, and sometimes those of poorer craftsmen and -women, often resembled mass dwellings. Modest one-room-and-kitchen apartments frequently housed eight, ten, or even more people: the main tenant and his or her relatives plus several subtenants, some of whom were renting only bed space. One of the inner-courtyard ground floor apartments in 10 Klauzál tér, for example, housed a remarkably complex group of people: the main tenant and his wife were Catholic; one of their subtenants was Calvinist whose ethnicity (*nemzetiség*) was listed as Gipsy (*vigány*); another subtenant was listed as Israelite by religion and Jewish by ethnicity;<sup>20</sup> and there were further four bed renters who were all Catholic by denomination and Gipsy by ethnicity. These eight people shared a place consisting of one room and a kitchen.

Such overcrowded apartments were typically located on the ground floor in the back sections of courtyards, but not exclusively. Necessity sometimes also turned higher-prestige apartments into mass dwellings; their residents had

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20 This was an exceptional case and probably a mistake on the census form. As opposed to, for example, interwar Czechoslovakia, choosing "Jewish" as one's *ethnicity* was theoretically not possible in Hungary in the Horthy era, paradoxically not even at the time of the racial laws.

probably seen better days earlier in life and, judged by their occupations, can in no way be considered lower class by interwar standards. Jewish and non-Jewish mixing occurred on this level, too. In one of the pretty three-bedroom apartments on the second floor of 6 Klauzál tér, the main tenant, unmarried seamstress Margit Weinfelder, shared one room with her mother and her typist sister; all three were Jewish by religion. The rest of the apartment, who knows in what order, was used by two Jewish subtenants, both shop assistants; the wife of one of them; two female relatives of the main tenant, both Jewish; a Catholic subtenant who was employed in the Hotel Royal; a Lutheran shoemaker, his Calvinist wife and their child; and a further Roman Catholic female subtenant whose occupation was listed as “housekeeper presently without a job.” The household was thus home to altogether thirteen people, which was rather far from the middle-class decency a three-bedroom home would originally represent.

C) Special attention should be paid to those apartments where domestic life and business were combined in a traditional and patriarchal – or sometimes matriarchal – way. This setup seems to be a very characteristic household formation on Klauzál tér. When it comes to the occupational profiles of Klauzál tér residents, it is clear that the fashion trades were dominating the scene. As the detailed answers on the 1941 census sheets show, master tailors tended to rent spacious apartments which also functioned as their businesses, and often combined family residence and workshop in traditional ways. In such apartments, one or two of the large and well-lit rooms, overlooking the street and accessible from a hallway, was used as dressing room and workshop. According to the 1941 census questionnaires, some of the master’s apprentices and employees also lived permanently the apartment, while some of the rooms were used by the tailor and his family themselves. This pattern was in no way a unique feature of Belső-Erzsébetváros, neither was it specific to tailors’ households; indeed it was fairly common practice among craftsmen in Budapest between the two world wars.<sup>21</sup> In 13 Klauzál tér István Homonnay, a Calvinist gentlemen’s tailor, thus declared his three-bedroom apartment—complete with kitchen, hallway, bathroom and maid’s room—on the

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21 For the the common combination of home and workshop, and for the training of the majority of apprentices in such domestic conditions see Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *A haszónból élő kispolgár: kisiparosok és kiskereskedők a két világháború közötti Magyarországon* [The Profit-Oriented Petit Bourgeoisie: Small Craftsmen and Retailers in Interwar Hungary] (Debrecen: Multiplex Média–Debrecen University Press, 1998), 203–5. According to L. Nagy, 47 percent of Budapest craftspeople worked in their homes in the late 1920s, and only 53 percent of them had workshops elsewhere.

census form to be “part dwellings, part workshop,” home to his family members, his apprentice and an additional subtenant, seamstress by trade. Children of the family were often trained in the fashion trades too, and so the grown-up sons and daughters were active as employees in the family workshop.

One of my interviewees from Klauzál tér (born 1926), daughter of a tailor and a tailor herself, used to live in just such an apartment. She narrated that tailors in the inner 7th district before World War II were in fact *expected* by their clients to rent large apartments in order to create an aura of prestige and elegance; but keeping up their costly three- or four-bedroom flats—which counted almost as upper-middle class standard in the 1930s—was often quite a burden for them and for their families.<sup>22</sup>

The census records confirm her narrative. The great majority of prestigious apartments on Klauzál tér in 1941 were rented by master tradesmen who used part of them as their workshops *cum* fashion salons. We may even find some irony of history here: those grandiose, over-100-m<sup>2</sup> apartments with adjoining parlor-size rooms, bathrooms, toilets, and seven-meter-long and two-meter-wide hallways must have been originally intended for a completely different kind of clientele when they were built back in the late 1800s. Only a few cases can be found among the census records in which higher status professionals or wealthy rentiers occupied the large apartments on the square; one such was a woman doctor, dr. Ibolya Németh, Mrs. György Morgenstern by married name, who ran her private practice in her apartment in 7 Klauzál tér. The only exception was 16 Klauzál tér. This building, constructed in 1907, contained several spacious and modern apartments, and therefore housed a relatively large number of solid middle-class families.

In some cases, some of the subtenants came from the same trade as the head of the household even though the household was not functioning as a business. In such cases, the common profession might have been more important than religious differences; in 5 Klauzál tér we find, for example, a Calvinist shoemaker and his wife among the subtenants of the Jewish shoemaker Salamon Weisz in one of the first-floor apartments.

D) Finally, mixed households included all those in which spouses lived in mixed marriages and other familial bonds existed among denominationally Jewish and Christian individuals. Even though such relationships were few in number on

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mrs. Z. M., July 5, 2011. Interview conducted by the author.

Klauzál tér, they are still notable, given that the neighborhood had the reputation of housing the more or less traditional segment of Budapest Jewry. As we will see from some specific cases, there were several possible variations, all with one thing in common: people living in these relationships were about to face hitherto unimaginable legal intrusions into their *private* lives after the third anti-Jewish law was passed in 1941.

The Klauzál tér cases in 1941 represent a whole spectrum of mixed relationships and familial bonds. In one of the apartments in No. 13 a Jewish waiter was married to a Roman Catholic wife; their grown-up son, optician by occupation, was Jewish by religion like his father was. (According to time-sanctioned custom in Hungary, daughters born in mixed marriages usually followed their mother's religion while sons followed the father's faith. Even though several diversions from this pattern were known, it was followed as the rule of thumb in the majority of cases.) This married couple in 13 Klauzál tér had three Roman Catholic and one Greek Catholic subtenants.

In the same building, a Roman Catholic mother (divorced or widowed, as she used her married name Mrs. Ernő Dornbacher née Teréz Szabó), office clerk by occupation, was sharing her apartment with her student son Gábor, who was listed on the census form as Jewish by religion.

In one of the three-bedroom apartments in 5 Klauzál tér there lived a Roman Catholic tailor, Imre Stein, who apparently fell under the effect of the racial laws: even though he was indicated as Roman Catholic under the heading "Religion," a red letter "i" (= *izraelita*), repeated in black, marked his origins in the same row on the census questionnaire. (Red "i"-s were later additions on the census forms, not entered at the time when the census was taken.) Imre Stein had a Roman Catholic wife, two little daughters (both Catholic), and a Catholic maid whose mother tongue was German but whose ethnicity (*nemzetiség*) was Hungarian. Except for the father, no other members of the household had red "i"-s at their names, i.e. none of them were classified as racially Jewish in or after 1941.

In some cases, one has reason to suspect that grown-up members of the same household were living together as unmarried partners, but contemporary statistics did not leave much room for people to declare that. The closest people came to an open declaration of their partnership took place in the household of a divorced cook, Géza Berger, Jewish by religion. He shared his home with a divorced Roman Catholic waitress called Mrs. Huber. The latter's status on the census form was not "subtenant" but "[person] in shared household" (*közös háztartásban*).

A Jewish-non-Jewish couple living together like that—if we assume they lived together as partners—risked exposure to legal persecution after August 1941, when the third anti-Jewish law (Act XV of 1941) was passed. As some recent studies show, the mere *suspicion* of sexual relationship between Jews and non-Jews could be enough for people to be reported to the police and for the police to start an investigation of alleged “miscegenation,” trying to discover what individuals were doing together in entirely private spaces.<sup>23</sup> In the extreme case, the accused had to prove in court that they had no sexual relationship with each other. Laura Palosuo quotes a case from an oral history interview, recorded for the Raoul Wallenberg Archive in Uppsala after World War II, in which an unmarried Hungarian couple, one Jewish and the other Catholic, were taken to court in late 1941 for “miscegenation.” The couple had three children together, so it was easy to accuse them of having an intimate relationship. Their lawyer, however, advised them both to confess that they, as law-abiding citizens, ceased to have sex after Act XV of 1941 was passed, and refrained from connubial contact in spite of the fact that they were living together. In the end they were acquitted, as the prosecutor did not manage find evidence for the alleged intimate relationship.<sup>24</sup>

### *Attempted Explanations: One Hundred Shades of Integration*

What kind of explanations can be offered for the large proportion of mixed households on Klauzál tér? The first important point is that religious affiliation, as it was declared on a census sheet, only gives us a rough estimate of an individual’s identity, and tells us very little about the actual role religion played in his or her life. Even if we accept that religious *affiliation* in the Horthy era was an important element of one’s identity and self-definition (which was obviously strengthened by the official promotion of Christian values *and* by the institutionalized discrimination against Jews), there were many people, especially

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23 An excellent case study which deals with such a police investigation and the subsequent court case is András Lugosi, “Sztalin főhercege: Kohn báró vacsorái a Falk Miksa utcában a fajgyalázási törvény idején” [Stalin’s Archduke: the Soirées of Baron Kohn in Falk Miksa Street at the Time of the Miscegenation Law], *Fons* 17, no. 4 (2010): 527–76.

24 Laura Palosuo, *Yellow Stars and Trouser Inspections, Jewish Testimonies from Hungary, 1920–1945* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, Department of History–Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2008), 85. Reference for the source of the Palosuo quotes is Raoul Wallenberg Archives, F2C:22, file 553, 7.

in a modern urban environment, in whose lives religion mattered little.<sup>25</sup> Those who appear on the census forms as Israelites by denomination may have been in fact thoroughly secularized and assimilated, and equally secularized may have been those Roman Catholics, Calvinists and Lutherans who lived in the same buildings or households with them. Advanced levels of secularization and assimilation could make the denominational differences unimportant or completely irrelevant for those people who agreed to share apartments on Klauzál tér.

Even if we put aside the thoroughly secularized types, there was a broad spectrum of possible identities barely reflected by the religious categories of census statistics. Within the single category “Israelite,” there were three major confessional groups in Hungary (Orthodox, Neolog and Status Quo Ante),<sup>26</sup> all with their separate traditions and organizations, and within these communities, several individual varieties, shades and choices existed in terms of dress, customs, and the strictness of religious observance. Individual choices often depended on age and generation (second- and third-generation Budapest residents as a rule abandoned the traditional costume, beard, and other distinctive signs of Jewishness even if they grew up in Orthodox families). But they also depended on the strength or weakness of family pressure, and the extent to which a person wished to step out of a predominantly Jewish social environment and integrate into majority society professionally and socially. Even though this kind of integration became increasingly difficult and was in the end institutionally blocked in the Horthy era, the multitude of individual strategies prevailed.<sup>27</sup>

In the light of these considerations, it is in many cases impossible to tell what shade of Jewishness an individual represented if he or she was registered as “Israelite” on a census form in 1941 unless we know more about that person

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25 Authors on the churches and religion in interwar Hungary acknowledge the overall tendency of secularization even when they write about the revivalist movements in Christian churches and the active role their social organizations played. See e.g. László Kósa, „Churches and Religion” in László Kósa ed., *A Cultural History of Hungary in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, transl. by Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina–Osiris, 2000), 204.

26 For the history of the separation of these congregations and their later relations see Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon* [The History of Jews in Hungary], vol. 2 (Budapest: Kalligram, 2012).

27 For anecdotal stories of diverse Orthodox mentalities, see Richárd Ungár, *Új mesék a Dob utcából* [New Tales from Dob Street] (Budapest: Makkabi, 2006). From *Új mesék a Dob utcából*, see for example the stories titled “A menyasszony: Mirjam bász Zelde” [The Bride: Miriam bat Zelde], 48–53, and “Focimeccs a Szent István Parkban” [Football Match in Szent István Park], 91–5.



from another source (e.g. from an oral history interview or a written *mémoire*).<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the composition of Klauzál tér households may, at least indirectly, give us certain clues about the members of these households.

We can assume that the importance of religion in a family's life would be reflected in the denominational homogeneity of the household as recorded in the census forms of 1941. Jewish households in which religious law was strictly observed remained homogeneously Jewish, the only concession being the employment of a Christian housemaid. Such Jewish families, if they sublet parts of their apartments, accepted only Israelite subtenants. Prejudices and self-defense mentalities, however, are other possible explanations. Several purely Christian apartment-workshops—a common enough phenomenon on Klauzál tér in 1941—remained purely Christian because the master craftsman, head of the family business, refrained from employing Jewish apprentices and journeymen and refused to take on Jewish subtenants even if he may not have been particularly religious. Many Jewish workshops apparently followed the same exclusionist policy with regard to Christians, but that does not necessarily tell us either how pious the master and his family actually were.

All that said, my actual concern here is not homogeneity but mixing. In any case, the presence of Jewish employees and subtenants in predominantly Christian households and of Christian employees and subtenants in Jewish households implies a degree of openness on all sides. It also indirectly indicates attitudes which were at least lenient towards certain religious rules; it must have been practically impossible, for example, to keep strictly kosher in a mixed Jewish-Christian household if all parties had access to the same kitchen.

Some remarks still have to be added here regarding residential standards and norms. Obviously, the standards of residential space were different in interwar Budapest from the standards of today. This is particularly true in a predominantly lower-middle-class area like the inner 7th district. Expectations of privacy in that historical era seem to have been much lower, and necessity could radically overwrite whatever expectations there were. As historical studies suggest, and as a multitude of Klauzál tér examples demonstrate, “decent” families living with their children—often grown-up children—in one or two rooms and subletting the remainder of their rooms to either relatives or strangers was a fairly common

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28 See e.g. Marianna Weisz Mandel, *Mi lett volna, ha...?* [What Would Have Happened If...?] (Budapest: Aposztróf, 2010.) The author of this *mémoire* used to be a Klauzál tér resident herself between 1935 and 1941. In her book she tells the story of her family, all of whose members are identifiable on the 12 Klauzál tér census questionnaires from 1941.

thing to do in Budapest between the two world wars. Around 1941, an estimated 25 per cent of families shared their residence with strangers<sup>29</sup> (subtenants or bed renters). This practice was considered socially acceptable in broad segments of the middle and lower middle class, and was usually the first solution that came to mind in certain situations like widowhood or unemployment.

All that said, the picture captured by the 1941 census might be in some ways special. Existential pressure may have played a part, too, in people's willingness to take on subtenants from different religious backgrounds. Jewish craftsmen and professionals who lost their jobs or businesses as a result of anti-Jewish legislation could not afford to be too selective; they badly needed subtenants to supplement their income, and were often willing to accept Christians as a result. This may be inferred from the presence of Christian subtenants in several Jewish households on Klauzál tér, because the pattern was particularly common where the head of the family was unemployed. Denominationally Jewish widows and single women acting as heads of households – women who frequently pursued trades themselves – appear to have been the least choosy when it came to rooming subtenants. Some of them kept a whole stable of subtenants that included Christians and Israelites, single persons and married couples, and men and women, as is demonstrated by the case of Margit Weinfelder quoted earlier.

The introduction of labor service for Jewish men in Hungary<sup>30</sup> was to become another pressure that pushed Jewish families to take on subtenants, especially after the breadwinner(s) were called up for extended periods of service and were away from home for months or years. The Defense Act (II of 1939) caused Jewish men to be conscripted in larger numbers from June 1940,<sup>31</sup> but this fact is not reflected explicitly in the 1941 Klauzál tér census forms (census questionnaires were filled in on January 31, 1941).

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29 Vera Bácskai, Gábor Gyáni and András Kubinyi, *Budapest története a kezdetektől 1945-ig* [The History of Budapest from the Beginnings to 1945] (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2000), 224. For a more detailed treatment of the problem of subletting in the Horthy era, see Gábor Gyáni, *Bérkaszárnya és nyomortelep: A budapesti munkáslakás múltja* [Tenement Block and Shanty Town: a History of Working-Class Housing in Budapest] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1992), 178–85.

30 On the introduction of labour service, see Randolph L. Braham, *The Wartime System of Labor Service in Hungary: Varieties and Experiences* (Boulder and New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies Graduate Center/The City University of New York and Social Science Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1995), v–x.; see also Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon* [The History of Jews in Hungary], vol. 2 (Budapest: Kalligram, 2012), 574–77.

31 Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon*, vol. 2, 575.

When we interpret denominational mixing within individual households, we definitely have to take personal and professional attachments into account. These attachments could overwrite the differences in background; professional bonds in various trades may have bridged denominational differences or made them irrelevant.

Certain trades can be interpreted as subcultures in which Jewish/non-Jewish encounters were particularly common. The fashion industries so characteristic of the inner 7th district were among these. If a Christian person became a tailor in Pest in the 1930s, he tacitly accepted that his employer, or many of his colleagues or employees, might be Jewish and that his workshop could be located in a “Jewish district”; if he did not like the idea it was wiser to choose another trade. A non-Jewish interviewee, born in 1928 and living on Klauzál tér since 1951, related that her two uncles, both Catholic tailors, used to rent apartments in the inner 7th district—one in Holló utca and one in Király utca—before World War II, because “the neighborhood was the place to be for tailors.” One of Mrs. M. H.’s uncles ran his workshop at home, and the other in a separate shop in Ó utca. Mrs. M. H. later married a tailor herself; her husband had also been raised in the inner 7th district, and at the time of their marriage he was living with his aunt in 16 Klauzál tér. It was obvious from Mrs. M. H.’s narrative, as well as from her unwittingly expressed attitudes, that for her and her tailor uncles, everyday relations with Jewish people were completely normal, and their attitudes toward Jewish colleagues and neighbors were entirely positive.<sup>32</sup>

It is also likely that in a mixed neighborhood where members of the Jewish faith *and* people of Jewish origin represented a critical mass, Jewish/non-Jewish differences simply *did not matter*, or they did not matter more than the differences among Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists; and certainly much less than one would expect in a historical period when public life was thoroughly politicized and permeated by racial ideology. In this sense, the neighborhood around Klauzál tér can be interpreted as a *subculture*, a local subculture in which the strong presence of Jewish people was considered normal, and in which forms of mixing had long traditions. In such a subculture, anti-Semitism was much less of an issue than in other walks of life. People who did not like such a neighborhood moved out or never even moved in, and those who stayed considered the composition of the area something of a given.

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32 Interview with Mrs. M. H., May 10, 2011. Interview conducted by the author.

*A Shattering Microcosm: Forced Changes in the Social Character of a Neighborhood during World War II*

In many ways, however, the picture presented by the 1941 census is the last detailed imprint of a peacetime world that was never to return; local traditions of coexistence were soon to be disrupted by politics and legislation.

In 1941, that micro-world was already shadowed by the war and threatened by the escalation of anti-Jewish discrimination; the anti-Jewish laws were taking increasing economic and occupational effects on the local residents of Belső-Erzsébetváros. Residents of the inner 7th district, around 50 to 60% of whom may be estimated to have been defined as Jewish by Act IV of 1939 and Act XV of 1941, and among whom the overwhelming majority were artisans, shopkeepers, employees of private shops and businesses, office workers, or professionals, must have been particularly hard hit. Indeed, the effect of the anti-Jewish laws is clearly detectable when one reads the 1941 census records for Klauzál tér. When asked about their occupations, respondents who were Jewish by religion very often gave answers such as “office clerk without a job,” “accountant presently unemployed,” “shoemaker currently without occupation” and so on. The census forms were filled in by the respondents themselves (more precisely, filled in and signed by the heads of households), many of whom were Jewish craftsmen and professionals affected by the discriminative laws, and it is not difficult to see in answers like those quoted above an *intentional* statement of what they saw as the temporariness and injustice of their conditions.

Apart from the anti-Jewish measures, the impact of the war became increasingly tangible for the population of the inner 7th district after 1941. After Hungary’s entry into the war, non-Jewish men were called up for military service and Jewish men for labor service. These naturally also affected their families.

Measures were already being taken against Jews of non-Hungarian citizenship in 1941.<sup>33</sup> Belső-Erzsébetváros was one of the areas in Budapest which concentrated Orthodox Jews, and which housed large numbers of Jewish refugees who arrived from Galicia (part of occupied Poland), Slovakia, the Ukraine, and other Eastern European territories by then under German dominance. Many of these Jewish residents of Belső-Erzsébetváros, holding Polish, Czechoslovak, or Romanian citizenship, had in fact originally been

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33 See the chapter “Kamenyec-Podolszki” in Géza Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon*, vol. 2, 623–26.

citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—some of them subjects of the Hungarian Crown—or were descendants of former Austro-Hungarian citizens. These people became citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy’s successor states after World War I, and even though many of them were Hungarian speakers who continued to cultivate a Hungarian identity, they found themselves regarded as unwelcome “aliens” by the Hungarian state after 1920. In 1936, a decree was passed in Poland, as a consequence of which Jews (Polish citizens) living in Hungary lost their Polish citizenship. They were joined by Polish-Jewish refugees coming from Austria after the Anschluss, and further refugees coming from Poland after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939.<sup>34</sup>

From 1936 on, measures were repeatedly proposed to prevent the “influx” of Jews from the surrounding countries. These policies climaxed in the summer of 1941, when Jews with non-Hungarian citizenships (termed *rendezetlen állampolgárságú zsidók*, roughly translatable as “displaced Jewish persons”) were expelled from Hungary in a single organized operation. An estimated 14,000 to 18,000 “displaced Jewish persons”—some of whom were actually Hungarian citizens—were expelled from Hungary in July and August. They were gathered together, transported by train to the Galician border, and handed over to German authorities. Most of these people were soon to become the first mass casualties of the Hungarian Holocaust in a mass murder near Kamenec-Podolski in August 1941, where German SS units were assisted by Ukrainian militia men.

“Displaced Jewish persons” living in Budapest, intended for deportation, were gathered in the synagogue in Rumbach Sebestyén Street in the inner 7th district and at other Budapest locations before being transported to the Ukrainian border. The Jewish families whose citizenship was indicated as non-Hungarian on the Klauzál tér census forms are likely to have been among them. The historian has a strong sense of foreboding when she encounters on a 1941 census sheet for Klauzál tér a Jewish family all five members of which were Polish citizens. Were they all going to die at Kamenec-Podolski five months later? Was it at all possible for them to avoid that fate? According to the census data, 5 and 6 Klauzál tér concentrated a particularly high number of Jewish families with non-Hungarian citizenships. One married couple, according to their answers on the census form, had been living in Budapest since 1908; they were Hungarian

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34 Tamás Stark, *Zsidóság a népszokásokban és a felszabadulás után, 1939–1955* [Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust and after World War II, 1939–1955] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1995), 14–5.

by mother tongue but they declared Polish to be their citizenship. Man and wife in another apartment in Klauzál tér 5, both Jewish, were Hungarians by native tongue but they were both Turkish citizens.

The German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 brought about an immediate deterioration in the position of everyone legally classified as Jewish in Hungary. After a series of humiliating discriminative measures, such as being obliged to wear the yellow star of David (April 1944), ghettoization soon began in towns and cities outside Budapest, followed by the organized deportation of Hungary's Jewish population. As a result of the publication of the so-called Auschwitz records, international protest, and other factors, Admiral Miklós Horthy stopped the deportations in July 1944, and the legally-defined Jewish population of Budapest was eventually saved from mass deportation. Many of them, however, fell victim to other atrocities later.

In Budapest, the ghettoization of the Jewish population in June 1944 took an untypical form. Instead of declaring one particular area of the city to be the Jewish ghetto, a mayoral decree ordered that all Jews in Budapest must move into so-called yellow-star houses (buildings designated specifically as Jewish places of residence). A list of buildings, by district, street and house number, was published on June 16, designating buildings in all districts of the capital city. The spatial distribution of yellow-star buildings turned out to be rather uneven: the majority of them were located on the Pest side of the city, and their concentration was particularly high in the areas where the proportion of the Jewish population of Budapest tended to be the highest, namely in the 5th, 6th, and 7th districts.<sup>35</sup>

According to that logic, one would expect Klauzál tér to have been heavily affected. And indeed, in the June 16 order, five buildings (out of sixteen located on the square) were designated as yellow-star buildings: Klauzál tér nos. 1, 3, 4, 6 and 9 (see Figure 2).<sup>36</sup>

The first ghettoization decree, however, was thoroughly revised within a few days. As Tim Cole showed in detail, several buildings designated as yellow-star houses were deleted from the list between June 16 and June 22 and several new ones were added, as a result of petitions filed by residents and owners of the

35 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 105–15.

36 *Polgármesteri rendelet* [Mayoral Decree] No. 147.501-147.514/1944-IX. *Fővárosi Közlöny*, 1944. No. 30 (June 16). Appendix, 1–8. For yellow star buildings designated on Klauzál tér, see page 4. Many adjacent buildings in neighbouring streets, some practically overlooking Klauzál tér, were featured on the list as well, but for the purposes of the present study, and for reasons of consistence, I will not include them because they were not Klauzál tér addresses *per se*.

buildings in question. Budapest authorities were in fact flooded with petitions after the ghettoization order of June 16, 1944 had been issued: the petitioners were both Jews and Christians, some of them mixed-marriage spouses.<sup>37</sup> The motivations of the petitioners varied: non-Jewish owners often wanted their buildings removed from the list; so did non-Jewish residents who did not want to leave their homes (according to the first version of the concept, non-Jews were all supposed to move out of the designated yellow-star buildings); in other cases, the petitioners were Jewish residents who did not want to move, and therefore wanted their buildings to be declared yellow-star houses.

On June 22, a new order of the Mayor was published in *Fővárosi Közlöny* naming the buildings added to and deleted from the June 16 list. As a result of protests and requests, the list of yellow-star buildings published on June 22 ended up being significantly different from that published six days earlier. Another result of the petitions (some of which were filed *after* the final list of designations had been published on June 22) was a more practical solution for “mixed” buildings: Christians were permitted to stay in their homes, even in designated yellow-star houses, if they wished to do so, while Jews were not allowed to remain in non-yellow-star houses after June 22.<sup>38</sup>

As far as Klauzál tér was concerned, three further buildings were added to the existing list of yellow-star houses on June 22, namely Klauzál tér nos. 5, 15 and 16 (see Figure 2). That meant that eventually 50% of residential buildings on Klauzál tér became yellow-star houses – a very high proportion compared to the figures for designated houses in the 7th district as a whole and even compared to any other street or square within the inner 7th district.

The story of the first phase of ghettoization seems to reveal, implicitly at least, important facts about local ties, and the attitudes of local residents living on Klauzál tér. As pointed out before, the addition of further houses to the list of yellow-star buildings was most frequently the result of owners’ and residents’ petitioning. So was the deletion of particular buildings from the list. So the addition of Klauzál tér 5, 15 and 16 to the previous list of numbers 1, 3, 4, 6 and 9, and the fact that none of the earlier designated yellow-star houses were cancelled from the list until June 22, show that there was a fairly high “demand” for yellow-star designation, while occupants seem to have shown a relatively low resistance to their building becoming a yellow-star house on the square.

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37 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 131–56.

38 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 154–55.

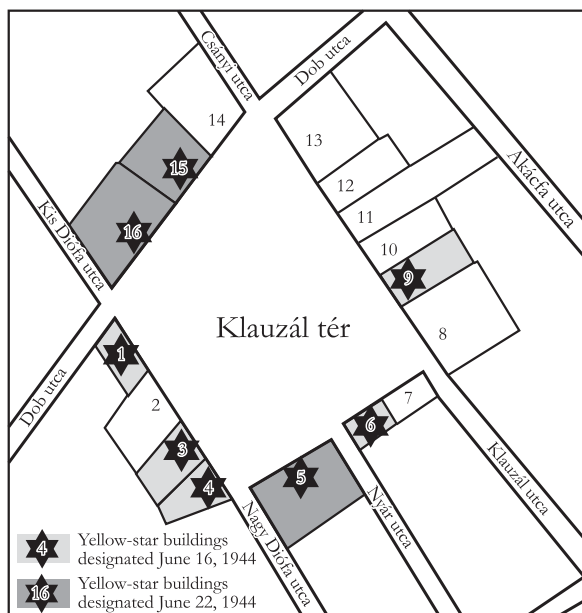


Figure 2. Yellow-star houses on Klauzál tér (designated on June 16 and June 22, 1944).

Map by the author and Trephneor

Some of the reasons seem to be obvious. As I have shown earlier, Klauzál tér, and of course the whole neighborhood around it, had a long-standing reputation of being fairly “Jewish,” that is, of having a high concentration of Jewish residents. The surviving forms of the 1941 census offer us a rare chance to determine the numbers of those who were denominationally Israelites on the micro level, that is, on the level of individual buildings and apartments. If we consider religion alone, as declared by respondents on the 1941 census forms (disregarding the “Jewish” status imposed upon people by racial law), it is clear that a fairly high proportion of residents in the Klauzál tér houses were denominationally Jewish at the time Hungary entered World War II.

These proportions more or less match the range characteristic of this part of the 7th district. If we count the main tenants, who were most often also the heads of households, we find that the actual percentages differed from building to building; Klauzál tér 6 led the list, with 79% of the main tenants being Jewish.<sup>39</sup> In most cases, the denomination of the head of household (“*izraelita*”) would be indicative of the religion of the whole family, although as

<sup>39</sup> This figure matches Beáta Fabó’s count for that building; she mentions the percentages of Jewish tenants within some of the Klauzál tér buildings in her article. See Beáta Fabó, “A Klauzál tér,” in *Kismező, Nagymező, Broadway: Város történeti tanulmányok*, ed. Mária Kemény (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 2009), 78.



late as 1941 the equation between two should no longer be *automatically* assumed. The denominational composition of the individual households was of course usually more complicated than the denominational status of the main tenant's immediate family; as I have also shown above, several other residents—e. g. housemaids, sub-tenants, bed renters, apprentices, distant relatives etc.—lived in the Klauzál tér apartments with the main tenants and their immediate families.

The percentage of denominationally Jewish residents in the Klauzál tér houses, according to the census forms, varied between 24% and 70%. We can assume that Jewish presence continued to be similarly high on Klauzál tér, or even surpassed the 1941 percentages in June 1944 when yellow-star buildings were about to be designated all around Budapest. In fact it was probably higher, because in 1944 all those residents who were legally defined as Jewish *on racial grounds* were added to the denominationally Jewish when authorities determined the proportion of “Jews” within residential buildings in Budapest.

All in all, many of the buildings on Klauzál tér in June 1944 had a good chance of being designated as yellow-star houses on the basis of their resident populations. Yellow-star houses, at least in principle, were supposed to be designated on the basis of two main principles: the ownership of the building and the composition of the tenants. If the owner was Jewish, and/or if the majority of the tenants living in the building fell into that legally defined category, the building had a good chance to be declared a yellow-star house. (The actual practice, however, was much more confused and inconsistent.)<sup>40</sup>

Sources clearly suggest that, in comparison to other Budapest districts, the legally non-Jewish residents of the 7th district were particularly willing to stay in their old homes even if their buildings were designated as yellow-star houses. According to Tim Cole and his sources, at the end of November in 1944, 144 of the 7th district's 162 yellow-star houses were partially occupied by non-Jewish tenants.<sup>41</sup>

As far as Klauzál tér is concerned, I can only attempt to offer explanations for that high level of persistence. In the case of Klauzál tér itself the quality of housing, the relative prestige of the location and the pleasant environment could all play their part. Klauzál tér was a far more pleasant place to live than its

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40 The Jewish to non-Jewish ratio within residential buildings was not assessed on the basis of the 1941 census, obviously because by 1944 such a survey had to be based on racial rather than denominational criteria. So at the beginning of June 1944, Budapest authorities carried out a rapid survey which involved every residential building in the city; caretakers were required to supply data to the authorities about their buildings' residents, and so had a central role in the survey.)

41 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 154.

immediate neighborhood: it offered a green park and nice views, and five of its sixteen buildings had well-lit apartments overlooking the streets on two sides. It can be assumed that several Christian tenants preferred to stay in their well-situated apartments rather than move to uncertain locations somewhere else in the city.

Furthermore, the economic profiles of Klauzál tér residents were often closely tied to the locality. As I have shown earlier, the inner 7th district had a high concentration of tradesmen in general, most notably those in the fashion industry. Tailors, shoemakers, lingerie makers, hatters and furriers represented a high proportion of local artisans and businesses. In such an environment, people pursuing the same trade nearby were not necessarily rivals. They rather constituted a network, allowing tradesmen to refer clients to each other and providing a constantly available pool of labor. Certain Klauzál tér buildings concentrated tailors and seamstresses in striking ways; in 5 and 6 Klauzál tér, for example, there were 18 of them in 1941, master tailors sometimes literally next to each other on the same floors of the building. It is quite notable how Jewish and Christian tailors and their families also lived as next-door neighbors in other buildings. For example, in 13 Klauzál tér in 1941, the Calvinist tailor István Homonnay—mentioned earlier in this article—was the next-door neighbor of a Jewish master tailor named Emmánuel Bergmann. Their living conditions were fairly similar—both rented large, three-bedroom apartments—although while Homonnay’s household seems to have been fully trade-oriented, Bergmann’s grown-up daughters were office employees, representing a more upwardly mobile variety.

Trade networks presumably offered mutual assistance in the situation created by the anti-Jewish laws, in which several independent master artisans lost their businesses in the course of 1939–1941. Their fellow-tradesmen could offer them employment or provide work for members of their families. Assistance by fellow tradesmen must have been particularly vital at a time when Christian heads of families and grown-up sons were being conscripted for military service, and Jewish men were being called up for labor service. The women and adolescents left behind had to take the place of the conscripted men, and if they had experience in the same trade, they could potentially find work, if they needed it, through intra-trade connections.

The above considerations may be hypothetical, but they can help explain why Christians in the inner 7th district seem to have been so reluctant to move out of the neighborhood in 1944. Having to leave one’s apartment in 1944 could mean losing one’s clientele, and also losing immediate contacts with fellow tradesmen, suppliers, and actual or potential employees such as journeymen and apprentices.



Figure 3. The walled-in ghetto in the inner 7th district<sup>42</sup>

One has to be careful, however, not to draw an entirely idealized picture. The discussion of professional relations raises an issue that may represent a more problematic side of Jewish-non-Jewish relations in and around Klauzál tér. Under the second and third anti-Jewish laws, several shopkeepers and artisans lost their licenses or could not renew them after they expired in 1939. Christian practitioners of the same trades obviously benefited from the decrease in competition. In the case of retailers, non-Jewish applicants could apply for the rental contracts of shops lost by Jews. These are, however, hypothetical considerations; as the census records show, the great majority of shops around Klauzál tér were still owned or rented by denominationally Jewish persons in early 1941.<sup>43</sup> Further research is needed to find cases in which Jewish shopkeepers on Klauzál tér lost their businesses as a result of the anti-Jewish laws; neither have I encountered any documented cases of Jewish shops on Klauzál tér taken over by Christians.

42 Source: 8935.1944. BM. The Hungarian Ministry of Interior's Official Map of the Budapest Ghetto. <http://h2oreuse.blogspot.hu/2008/06/budapest-jewish-quarter.html>, accessed December 17, 2012.

43 Street-level shops and other kinds of businesses were registered on the same kind of form as apartments in the 1941 census, and in many cases the shopkeepers were recorded on the forms as tenants, with all their personal parameters, including religion, as if they had been residents.

The reluctance of non-Jewish residents' to leave their locality in the inner 7th district can be indirectly evidenced by the circumstances of final ghettoization, that is, the setting up of the walled-in Pest ghetto in late November 1944. It is particularly telling that the ministerial decree ordering ghettoization threatened local Christian residents with labor camp service and internment if they did not move out of the ghetto area.

[...] whilst the cooperation of non-Jews forced to relocate was being sought through the provision of alternative properties and limited compensation, their cooperation was also being guaranteed through a mixture of propaganda and threat. The ghettoization decree concluded with an appeal from the interior minister for “non-Jews” affected by the decree to play their part in the war effort. “I expect the Christian inhabitants to obey my decree with understanding and self-sacrificing spirit, thereby helping to solve finally the hitherto neglected Jewish question.” *And this appeal was backed up by the threat of state-sanctioned punishment. For the non-Jewish inhabitant who failed to comply with state demands for relocation, the punishment was to be the transportation of the head of the family to a labor camp and the internment of all family members.* [My italics, E. Sz.] Thus the forced relocation of “non-Jewish” inhabitants from the ghetto area was about both carrot and stick. This differed radically from the treatment of non-Jewish requests to remain in yellow-star houses [earlier] in 1944.<sup>44</sup>

In my opinion, the threat of such harsh measures strongly suggests that the lawmaker or the issuer of the decree expected people to disregard, bypass, or sabotage the order. In this case, the minister's appeal was targeting the non-Jewish population of the inner 7th district, people who clung to their history of staying in place even if that meant living in yellow-star houses, and did so in the highest numbers in the whole of Budapest between late June and late November 1944.

But non-Jewish residents of the ghetto area did have to move out in the end, and some of them never returned to that part of the 7th district. Neither did those Christians who were killed in action, fell victim to the war, died in air raids, or were captured by the liberating Soviet troops after the siege of Budapest to be transported to the Soviet Union. And neither did several residents determined Jewish by the racial laws of 1939–1941: those who perished in labor service, those who were deported and did not survive, those who were gathered from

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44 Cole, *Holocaust City*, 215, quoting J. Lévai, *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry* (Zurich: The Central European Times Publishing Company, 1948), 375.

the streets by Arrow Cross groups and killed, those who were driven in death marches to the Western borders of Hungary, and those who went missing during the winter of 1944/1945. Together with all those who committed suicide, or died of disease and starvation in the ghetto during the siege of Budapest, a substantial part of the inner 7th district's 1941 population would disappear from that area forever.

### *Summary*

The wartime story of Belső-Erzsébetváros reveals something very important about the shared fate of its residents, whether they were Jewish or non-Jewish in terms of legal definition. If we stop interpreting pre-war Belső-Erzsébetváros as a “Jewish district,” and, as I have attempted to do in this study, understand the density of Jewish-non-Jewish relations in that urban area, we come to understand that the politics of persecution was far from being an exclusively Jewish concern. It is rarely discussed in narratives of the Hungarian Holocaust that anti-Jewish legislation often also negatively affected non-Jews. Even though the people in question were not the intended targets of persecution, a large number of them experienced injustice and disruption in their lives, and suffered personally from the effects of discriminative legislation and then the anti-Jewish policies of 1944/45.

Belső-Erzsébetváros exemplifies such experiences in a concentrated way. The enforced designation of yellow-star houses, a large number of which were located in the inner 7th district, disrupted the lives of many Christian residents, namely those who moved out of their homes during June and July of 1944. Even if “pragmatic” solutions eventually allowed several Christians to stay, and were content with the separation of Jewish and non-Jewish people within the same building, many families nonetheless changed residence. After the “big” ghetto was set up in November 1944, there was no longer any choice: tens of thousands of Belső-Erzsébetváros's non-Jewish residents were forcibly relocated to make way for those who were to be crammed into the ghetto.

Long-time domestic relations were often upset during 1944: for example, Christian maids and housekeepers, many of whom had been living with Jewish families for several years almost as family members, taking care of both the household and the children, were not allowed to stay with their employers after yellow-star houses were set up. These women, especially the elderly ones, often had nowhere to go – as is mentioned explicitly in one of my oral history

interviews.<sup>45</sup> Apprentices and employees living in craftsmen's households were forced to leave in a similar way if denominational differences made separation unavoidable.

The anti-Jewish measures and later the principles of ghettoization affected everyone who lived in mixed marriages and mixed families. When the head of a family lost his living or was conscripted for labor service, his non-Jewish relatives also suffered. The ghettoization concepts were designed to artificially separate family members on racial grounds. The anti-Jewish law of 1941 had forbidden new marriages between Jews and non-Jews, but at least did not annul already existing mixed marriages. Ghettoization orders, however, beginning with the creation of yellow-star buildings in June 1944, in theory required spouses to move apart if one of them was a Christian and the other one was considered to be legally Jewish; the same orders required a "half-Jewish" child, born from a mixed marriage and considered legally Jewish, to separate from his or her Christian parent, step-parent or grandparent, and conversely for a legally Christian child. In practice, couples often refused to separate and parents stayed together with their children; some people petitioned the authorities to be able to do so, and many simply ignored the law.

The historian is intrigued by the subsequent fate of her heroes and heroines from 1941. What happened to them all? Did Zsigmond Hauser and his family all die in Kamenec-Podolski? Did István Homonnay move out of his grand apartment when all non-Jews were forced to move out of the ghetto? Did he say goodbye to his next-door neighbor and colleague Emmánuel Bergmann? Did he ever manage to move back? Did Imre Stein die as a Jew, in spite of being a baptized Roman Catholic, leaving his Christian wife and two daughters behind? Did Mrs. Huber lose his Jewish partner during the war, and did she return to live on Klauzál tér afterwards? Later sources often provide the answers, reflecting the losses and implying much about individual fates. The records of the 1945 census,<sup>46</sup> for example, betray the changes in the resident communities of Klauzál tér buildings. While a surprising number of the 1941 families, including several Jewish families, can be identified in the 1945 census documents, it is obvious at closer inspection how many of those families had lost some of their members during the war. In the case of certain buildings, newcomers clearly dominate the 1945 lists of tenants.

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45 Interview with Mrs. Z. M., July 5, 2011. Interview conducted by the author.

46 For the lists of main tenants and for individual census questionnaires in the Klauzál tér buildings, recorded in the census of 1945, see BFL IV. 1419. n.

A systematic comparison of resident communities in 1941, 1945 and 1970 will be the subject of another study; as I am going to show, there were even further-reaching changes to come in the postwar period. But it was clearly the Second World War and the Hungarian Holocaust that triggered off the neighborhood's profound transformation in terms of population and social character.

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