

THESIS OF PH.D. DISSERTATION

“The redemption of the land is more urgent than the redemption of the people”

The activities of the Hungarian office of Keren Kayemeth LeYisrael in the context of the Zionist newspapers until 1938.

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The Background

I have had a personal relationship with the Keren Kayemet LeYisrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) since I worked for it as an educational representative of the organization in 1997-2003. Distributing educational aids for the deeper acquaintance of Israel and organizing competitions also had an impact on my own interest. In addition to the love, learning and cultivation of the Hebrew language, I wanted to know more about the process of the country's construction, in which various publications of the KKL served as important points, however beyond all these scholarly approach of the subjects is essential. During my studies it was obvious for me that the history of the KKL was dealt by many renowned Israeli scholars, meaning that professional literature is available in Hebrew and in English. In Hungarian, however, apart from contemporary publications, the historical summary of the KKL is lacking, and the Hungarian office does not have any professional literature at all.

The primary aim of my dissertation is to present the operation of the Hungarian KKL office. The number of primary sources I collected and processed, and the relevant professional literature and knowledge which I reviewed, have laid the foundation for this presentation. On the other hand I had a secondary but significant goal: the extension of KKL in Hungarian professional literature, as a historical summary in Hungarian is lacking and there is no professional literature relating to the activities of the Hungarian KKL office.

Sources

I found it important to rely on original documents besides the contemporary press, so I started researching in the archives. In the Hungarian National Archives and in the Budapest City Archives I found the charters of the Hungarian Zionist Organization as a Co-operative, 1911 and the Hungarian Zionist Association, 1927, as well as the protocols of the general assembly together with lists of members of the assembly. I realized that in the Hungarian Jewish Archives apart from some KKL stamps there is no material in the collection - so unfortunately I could not do research here. However, I had the opportunity to research in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, where I collected documents about the KKL's office in Hungary. During my research, I found protocols of meetings of the Hungarian bureau, annual reports, accounts, income and expense certificates, as well as management and membership lists from the time of the establishment of the Pro-Palestine Association of Hungarian Jews (1926). In addition to that, I found extensive correspondence

between the central and the Hungarian offices as well as the individual leaders and members, most of which are in German, and the smaller part is in Hungarian, English or Hebrew. In addition to that, various funds contained periodicals, small books featuring Zionism and the KKL, collections books for children, invitations, circulars, calendars, postcards.

The next layer of resources was the contemporary, primarily Zionist press. Several topics have been dealt with in this field in Hungary, by dr. Attila Novák, dr. Péter Róbert and dr. András Zima. Based on their studies, I was researching various press products, collecting their articles, news, and stories about the KKL. First, the Jewish Review (1911-38) was the focus of my research, which entire collection can be found in the OR-ZSE library. Then going back in time, I processed the Hungarian Zionist Organization. (1909-10), partly from the OR-ZSE, partly from the National Széchényi Library (NSZL). As the catalog did not show, I found it completely accidentally three issues of the newspaper from the 1908 in the Central Zionist Archives. According to this the “*Hungarian Zionist Organization*” newspaper was first published in 1908, although “second issue” is printed on the front page. I was also able to study the *Jewish People’s Paper (Zsidó Néplap)* (1904-05) – except for some missing issues at the OR-ZSE library. Another surprise came when I found the Jewish Life in the search engine of the National Széchényi Library which was not mentioned by the researchers before me, except by dr. Alexander Emed in his work “History of the Hungarian Zionist Movement”. The newspaper published in 1907 on a weekly basis is incomplete but can be studied in the NSZL microfilm section. I also studied the publication of the Hungarian office of KKL, published between 3-4 times between the years 1935 and 1938, “The Word of the Earth”. Apart from this, I have collected articles and news about the KKL in the Journal of Jewish Culture, The Past and Future. (1911-44), the full collection of which is found in the OR-ZSE library.

The last layer of resources was made up of studies and books already published. Starting from the huge literature on Zionism I found much less on KKL and the Hungarian activity was unprocessed.

Research Methods

The research methodology of the dissertation follows the work methods of the historian. In the first place primary sources were collected, which meant searching and gathering contemporary

documents, as well as gathering relevant articles, newsletters and press releases and news of the statements published in the collection. On one hand the processing of the material was accomplished by the interpretation and analysis of the history, on the other hand in a cause-effect context analysis, aiming to maintain the objectivity of the facts and of the factual reality. This process also involved the familiarization and processing of the relevant literature.

The Hungarian office was an integral part of the KKL, so the collections were published not only at the local but also at international level, always referring to the current work of The Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael). According to the statements, the donation path can always be traced from the donor to the purpose of use. During the writing of the paper, I tried to keep this contextual system in mind.

Thesis

During my research, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. Who and in what circumstances established the KKL's office in Hungary?
2. Which senior bodies influenced the activity of the office?
3. Who were the leaders of the organization? What was their concept?
4. Are the results of the larger collections in Hungary published internationally?
5. What impact did the office have on historical events?
6. Did the Hungarian KKL's activity remain within the Zionist movement or did it spread even in non-Zionist circles?
7. How successful was the KKL work in Hungary?

1. After the First Zionist Congress in 1897 held in Basel, the Hungarian Zionist groups were active in Bratislava. In 1905 they moved their headquarters to Budapest, which resulted in the strengthening of the local movement. At that time dr. Mór Künsztler started the Hungarian work of the KKL, from 1906 dr. Lajos Dömény, who founded the Hungarian office, organized collections in a few years and appointed nationwide national funders to disseminate the activity widely.

2. The Office has received permission from the Ministry of Interior for fund-raising. His supreme body, where the donations were sent and from which the material and material conditions required for operation were received, was the headquarters of the KKL. The head of the Hungarian office was elected by the Zionist National Meeting and the KKL's central office approved the decision. Between the two World Wars, however, delegates of the central office - Béla Székely, prof. Julian Silberbusch and Lajos Bató - worked as leaders of the Hungarian operation. Following the establishment of the Pro-Palestine Association of Hungarian Jews (1926), the KKL received the official collection permit through this umbrella organization. The Hungarian office continued to work, and its work was supported by the KKL Division, which was established within the Pro-Palestine Alliance.

3. The leaders of the Hungarian office were recognized and well-known personalities of the Zionist movement, who performed their assignment without payment with the greatest zeal and devotion. Most of them had their own civilian work and family, but their office-manager, multi-directional propaganda, and nation-wide personal agitation were done in full time. Their primer focus of their ideas was the incorporation of the widest layers of Hungarian Jewry into the collective work organized by the KKL, and then later into the process of nation building. The leaders of the office until 1938 were as follows:

1906-1913. Dr. Lajos Dömény

1914-1918. Dr. Viktor Jordán (under his military service he was replaced by Dr. Lajos Simon and Márton Hirsch)

1918-1921. Dr. Miksa Krausz

1921-1927. Dr. Ede Izsák (Central delegation between 1925 and 1927: Béla Székely)

1928-1931. Ignác Léderer

1931-1938. Ede Marton (central delegate in 1934 and 1935: Prof. Julian Silberbusch, 1936: Lajos Bató)

The Pro-Palestine Association, founded in 1926, has created a separate KKL Division. Based on the resources available to me, the KKL Division and the KKL Office in Hungary helped each other, and in many cases worked together. The first leader of the KKL Division for a decade is the

internationally renowned scholar, prof. Ignác Pfeiffer, after his resignation, in 1937 by Marer Arnold.

4. Major collections of the period under investigation related to World War I. The Donation war was launched on the Austrian initiative in 1915, aiming to resettle Jews who became outlaws in the war in Palestine. The Hungarian office was involved in the collection, but neither the statements nor the Hebrew and English publications dealing with the activities of KKL reveal how successful the action was. Following the death of Franz Joseph I of Austria, the Hungarian office started collecting an olive tree plantation, which was continuous in 1917-18. However, the result is not detectable at this time. The only collection that proved to be a result of the Hungarian office was the planting of the Hungarian Jewish Lost Heroes' Memorial. The action started in 1930, and the Inauguration Ceremony was held in 1931 near Kirjat Anavim. Attending the ceremony were dr. Patai József and the head of the delegation of the KKL Jerusalem office. In this forest they also raised money in memory of lost soldiers. This fundraising was the most popular for the *Unknown Hungarian Jewish Soldier's Grove*, of which two were planted in two years.

5. Historical events have greatly influenced the office's operations and activities. The Hungarian office has been continuously developing until the First World War both in the organization of the organization and in collections - donations and sums offered. At the beginning of the war, most of the Zionists volunteered to perform military service, and a large part of the KKL collections were spent in favor of the military hospital and war orphans in the Zionist center. At the end of the war, the head of the office, dr. Viktor Jordán presented large-scale, but concrete plans for the office's activities, but these plans could not be implemented after the Trianon peace treaty. By breaking up the country, a large number of Jews remained in the disbanded areas, and this affected the Zionist movement - and the activity of the KKL - also sensibly. The Hungarian Zionist activity, therefore, was mostly relieved to Budapest and to the rural towns with the most significant Jewish population. Thus, the momentum sprang up with territorial disassociations, since these measures lost important centers and people of the Zionist movement in Hungary. The events of 1919 (The Red Terror and The White Terror) made the situation even more difficult, which resulted in the KKL office being redeveloped almost from the basics. All of these contributed to the fact that Béla Székely, the delegate of the central office in 1925 saw that there were not only collections in the country but the KKL office did not work either. Between the two world wars, the KKL's range of activities has

been extended to the whole country through series of lectures, programs, film screenings and meetings to make collections as widespread.

6. The idea and the collections of the KKL have been popularized by the Zionists since the beginning in general Jewish - not Zionist - circles. From the very beginning, there were not Zionist security officers - in many cases they were not even Jewish - but their activity was not really expanded. Since 1909, the Zionists have repeatedly applied to the leadership of the Jewish Community in Pest with the request to allow synagogues to offer and collect for the purposes of the KKL. However, the broader distribution was not propagated and started by the Jewish Community of Pest, but the Jewish Community of Buda sent circular letters to all rural communities in 1926. The introduction of the KKL synagogue collections and the joining of part of a non-Zionist elite of Jewry to the KKL's ideals led to the Pro Palestine Association of Hungarian Jews at the end of 1926. The alliance was founded and led by Zionist and non-Zionist Jews. Although the sources indicated that the Zionists had come out of the initial assistance after the KKL's Zionist institution was to act as a non-Zionist non-Zionist institution, this did not end there and Pro Palestine's work was characterized by the cooperation of Zionists and non-Zionists.

7. Although the Hungarian Zionists attributed great importance to the KKL, they chose their best men for leaders and collections were constantly being promoted, and the comparison of numerical data does not make the Hungarian work effective. There were several reasons for this, but all of them could be related to the judgment of Zionism in Hungary. Researchers of the Zionist movement in Hungary found that the movement had only a few thousand members, so it is marginal. It is well-known that the Hungarian Zionist Association received a permission of the Ministry of Home Affairs only in 1927, until then they operated as in semi-illegality but in a number of periods it was completely illegal with an economic back-up organization called the Hungarian Zionist Organization as a co-operative. The head office of KKL in Cologne authorized the office in Hungary in 1907, so it worked legally. However, the collection permit was renewed each year, and this was, in the 1930's, several times problematic. In the absence of a collection permit, the KKL bureau could not legally work. These difficulties were partially triggered and partly contributed by the general perception of Hungarian Judaism that Hungary is a homeland of Hungarian Jews, and therefore donations for building Eretz Yisrael is not only unnecessary, but also harmful and dangerous. It is dangerous because it means patriotism, because it rounds on the values and rights

that emancipated by emancipation, because it replaces the ideology of a religious denomination with Judaism - ad absurdum nation. Most of all, this conception explains the great resistance of the leaders of the Hungarian Jewry and the fact that instead of joining the Pro Palestine Alliance, a separate committee was set up with the aim of assisting only the Hungarian Jews settling in Eretz Yisrael - if this initiative would have started in the second half of thirties.

Summary of the research work

The primary purpose of my dissertation was to present the operation of the Hungarian office of KKL. The knowledge of the amount of material collected and processed, and of the relevant literature, on the one hand, laid the foundation for this presentation, and on the other hand it created a secondary goal, the extension of the Hungarian language literature of the KKL. In my dissertation, therefore, after the foreword, I deal with the introduction of the KKL in a separate chapter. I have been following my mission and activity from the founders' first thought to the establishment of the organization, looking at the altered work areas of the state of Israel after its establishment. In this chapter, I summarize the Hebrew language literature, and I also put the KKL's office in Hungary into an interpretative framework. In the next chapter, I present the relations of Hungary, the spreading, evolution of Zionism, the establishment of its various organizations. This is followed by the main chapter of the dissertation, the presentation of the Hungarian office based on its own research and processing. The chronological analysis shows the development of the office, the establishment of the national network, the spread of the various donation branches, the process of special collections, and often the superhuman efforts of the leaders and the members. Through this presentation of the international context of these activities, the primary objective of the dissertation is realized.

The special yield of my research, an unexpected result is presenting two personal letters. The letters were written by dr. Lajos Dömény, the founder and first leader of the Hungarian office of KKL, in the Russian front in 1914, several days before his death. In the archives his last letters are preserved: to his parents, and another one addressed to his friend and Zionist colleague, to dr. Kahan Nison. The description of his letters adds further data to the Hungarian Zionist literature. The recollections of Professor Judit Komoly also served as a rich source of information, especially because her grandfather on her father's side, Dávid Kohn, was a well-known Zionist leader. He worked with

Lajos Dömény at the KKL office in Hungary, which he represented at the Zionist Congress in 1911 in Basel. One of the directors of the Hungarian Zionist Organization as Co-operative was also in 1911. Personal memory can help reveal the past to become more authentic and more enjoyable, since it is an experience that can address contemporary readers.

Publications list

- Bibliography of Sándor Scheiber and his Work by Alexander Scheiber and the Bibliography of his Writings, edited by Máté Hidvégi, OR-ZSE, Gabbiano Print Press and Publishing Ltd. Budapest, 2013.

- Translation of the written and vocal material of the Herzl Educational Center in the Israeli Cultural Center into Hungarian language 2013.

- Carl Lutz and the legendary Budapest Glass House. translation of the entire material of the traveling exhibition, translation into Hebrew 2013.

- Man and Earth. The tradition of the millennium is the Jewish National Fund

OR-ZSE PhD student Conference in 2013

- Remembrance of the missing. Two books on the Szécsény Holocaust. Yerusha online II. Year 2, 2015

- Bright world. OR-ZSE "Light Year" Conference 2016.

- Idea of Zion in the Middle Ages. OR-ZSE "Human-oriented science of Judaism - from sacred to profane" conference 2017.