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The Hungarian Bureaucracy and the Administrative Costs of the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania

In the course of May and June 1944, forty-five trains crammed with Jews from Northern Transylvania were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, making the region “*Judenfrei*” in accordance with the Nazi vision of the “Final Solution.” This article explores how the extermination process and its consequences, including the costs incurred, were approached and handled by the central and local authorities of Northern Transylvania as bureaucratic tasks. As I show, in addition to participating directly in the processes of genocide, local authorities also aimed to assure “the reparation of material and financial damages” caused by ghettoization, while the expropriated assets of the deported and their unresolved financial transactions were subject to further administrative action. Drawing on scattered documents held in various provincial branches of the Romanian National Archives and materials from the Cluj-based People’s Courts from 1946, in this article I discuss the high-level of continuity among Hungarian administrative personnel in 1944 and demonstrate that practically the entire Hungarian state apparatus participated in the implementation of the Final Solution. I argue that the economic costs incurred by “Christian Hungarians” may have been negligible compared to the overall theft of “Jewish property,” but the administrative tasks related to ghettoization and deportation were substantial.

Keywords: World War II, Holocaust, Northern Transylvania, ghettoization, deportation, bureaucracy

The so-called Second Vienna Award, which was issued on August 30, 1940 and which essentially made northern Transylvania part of Hungary while leaving the rest of the province (including most of Bánát and swathes of Partium) in Romania, temporarily brought an end to the territorial dispute between Hungary and Romania. With this legal change (accompanied by the occupation of the region in question by the Hungarian army), according to the results of the 1941 census 151,312 people of the Jewish faith again found themselves under Hungarian rule. The Jewish laws that were brought into effect, however, were based on racial categories, so they applied not only to practicing Jews, but also to Christians who, according to the provisions of the law, were legally regarded as Jewish. Thus the anti-Semitic measures that were taken by the Hungarian government affected 164,052 people living in northern Transylvania, or 6.4

percent of the population. From this point on, the circumstances of the Jewry of northern Transylvania in many ways resembled the circumstances of the Jewry of Trianon Hungary (by which I mean the territory of Hungary following the ratification of the Peace Treaty of Trianon in 1920, which is almost entirely contiguous with the territory of Hungary today), though as I will demonstrate, there were some significant regional differences.¹

The occupation of Hungary by the German army, which began on March 19, 1944, accelerated the pace of events and proved fatal to the Jewry of the country.² By the end of March, German troops had arrived in northern Transylvania. There were several phases to the implementation of the Final Solution in Hungary and northern Transylvania.³ The occupation of the country did not make ghettoization and deportation inevitable.

In the course of the ghettoization and deportation of the Jewry, the territory was divided into two “deportation zones.” The first was the region known as Máramaros (Maramureş in Romanian), which included an area that today lies north of the Romanian border in Ukraine (historically Máramaros is essentially a valley of the Tisza River surrounded by mountains and thick forests). The second zone consisted of Szatmár county (roughly equivalent with what today is Sătmar county in Romania), Bihar county (roughly equivalent with what today is Bihor county in Romania), Inner Transylvania, and the so-called Székely Land, a region in eastern Transylvania which to this day has a large Hungarian-speaking majority.

The plans for the assembly and deportation of the Jewry belonging to the first zone were drawn up during a meeting that was held in the city of Munkács (today Mukacheve in Ukraine) on April 12, 1944. The plans for the deportation of the Jewry of the second zone were completed in the course of meetings that took place on April 26 in Szatmárnémeti (today Satu Mare in Romania) and on April 28 in Marosvásárhely (today Târgu Mureş in Romania). After having returned from the meetings, the leading local civil servants, police, gendarmes, and sub-prefects again conferred on the measures that would be adopted in

1 Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 167.

2 Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 370. Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly, *Az utolsó fejezet. Rádpolitika, ideológia és a magyar zsidók legyilkolása, 1944/1945* (Budapest: Noran, 2005), 114. Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *Hullarablás. A magyar zsidók gazdasági megsemmisítése* (Budapest: Hannah Arendt Egyesület–Jaffa Kiadó, 2005), 109.

3 Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, *A végső döntés. Berlin, Budapest, Birkenau 1944* (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó, 2013), 234–36.

various settlements to implement ghettoization, including for instance the sites of the ghettos themselves.⁴

Just before the process of ghettoization was implemented and over the course of the month of May, Undersecretary of State for Internal Affairs László Endre traveled throughout northern Transylvania.⁵ He was present for the meeting in Marosvásárhely on April 28, at which some 200 people from the Székely Land took part, including the lord lieutenants, sub-prefects, mayors, chief administrative officers of the districts, and chiefs of police and the gendarmerie.⁶ Endre gave precise instructions concerning the process of ghettoization at the meeting, as well as the ways in which to ensure the effective assembly of the Jews, the organization and operation of the ghettos, and the management of “Jewish property,” including real estate and moveable assets.⁷ He then held a meeting in Kolozsvár (today Cluj in Romania) on the process of ghettoization, and by April 30 he had already reached the city of Nagyvárad (today Oradea in Romania) on the western fringes of Transylvania (actually in the region known as Partium), where he gave oral instructions to the mayor, László Gyapay, regarding ghettoization and the various administrative costs it would involve. Gyapay, referring to these instructions as authorization to act, implemented a series of measures affecting the agricultural properties and moveable belongings of Jews.⁸

The deportations in northern Transylvania began on May 16 in Máramarosziget (today Sighetu Marmăției in Romania) and ended on June 7 in Kolozsvár. 131,639 Jews were deported from northern Transylvania to Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁹ Lieutenant colonel of the gendarmerie László Ferenczy,

4 Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 538–39 and 566–67.

5 In the course of his travels, Endre observed the process of ghettoization and the conditions in the ghettos not only in northern Transylvania, but in all of provincial Hungary. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 587–588.

6 *Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj* (Cluj Branch of the Romanian National Archive, henceforth SJAN Cluj), Fond no. 1295 (People’s Court), dossier 11/1946, file 1.

7 According to materials used in cases tried by the People’s Court of Cluj in 1946, two participants in the meeting in Marosvásárhely had raised objections in connection with the rounding up of children under six years of age and the provision of food. However, neither of them was opposed to the social marginalization, ghettoization, deportation or genocide of the Jews. Rather, they merely gave voice to their views on questions of detail. SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 1295, dossier 11/1946, f. 1.

8 Decree number 13392/1944. II of László Gyapay, issued on May 12, 1944. *Yad Vashem Archives*, TR. 16, 28. dossier, f. 18–22.

9 Randolph L. Braham, ed., *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája* (Budapest, Kolozsvár: Park Könyvkiadó, Koinónia Könyvkiadó, 2008), 33. Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Geographical Encyclopedia of the Holocaust in Hungary* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013), lxix.

who served as a communications officer between the Hungarian gendarmerie and the German security forces, sent regular reports on and accounts of the state of affairs with regards to the gathering together and deportation of the Jews to Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross.¹⁰ Of the 164,052 people who were defined as Jews under the law, between 35,000 and 40,000 survived the Holocaust. Most of the survivors, some 25,000 to 30,000 people, were among those deported. The others were liberated from forced labor units or managed to survive the upheavals in some other way, for instance simply by going into hiding or fleeing to Romania.¹¹

There is, alongside the reading of the history of the virtual annihilation of the Hungarian Jewry as a tale of immeasurable suffering, a cold, dispassionate bureaucratic side to the story as well. The creation and maintenance of the ghettos, the organization of the transportation of the deportees, the assessment of the material demands of the non-Jewish population, and the provision of compensation for costs that arose represented an unusual challenge for the county and municipal authorities. By dealing with these and similar administrative issues, civil servants and officials took important preliminary steps in bringing about the suffering and deaths of masses.

The Hungarian and international historiography has already dealt in detail with the role of state bureaucracies in the Holocaust. In his classic study on the connections between modernity and the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman writes that the German bureaucracy was able to organize and implement ghettoization and deportation with such dispassion because it deprived the objects of its measures of their humanity, reducing them to mere numbers.¹² In the Hungarian secondary literature, Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági have provided perhaps the

10 With regards to northern Transylvania, the first report was sent from Kolozsvár on May 3, 1944 and the last was sent from Hatvan on June 8. Judit Molnár, *Csendőrtisztt a Markóban. Ferenczy László csendőr alezredes a népbizóság előtt* (Budapest: Scholar, Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, 2014), 280–306.

11 We know the names and personal information of people who survived deportation and returned to northern Transylvania following liberation. According to a list from 1946, there were some 20,000 such people. In addition to them, the number of people who survived but did not return following liberation, choosing instead either to travel to countries in the West or even go overseas, was somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000. For a list of the survivors, which includes their personal information, see Attila Gidó, *20 000 names/név/nume. Counted Remnant of Northern Transylvania* (Cluj-Napoca: ISPMN, 2016), forthcoming. See also: Braham, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt*, 470.

12 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca–New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 102–04. See also: Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2001), 73–78, Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169.

most recent overview of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Carpathian Basin, the history of modern anti-Semitism, and the path that led to the Holocaust.¹³ Kádár and Vági came to the conclusion that the annihilation of the Hungarian Jewry “was caused by a tragic meeting” of Nazi Germany’s program of extermination and an attitude of exclusion that had been present in Hungarian society for centuries.¹⁴ According to them, this attitude of exclusion, the “official routine” of anti-Semitism, and the opportunities that arose to make personal profit together were sufficient to prompt the majority of civil servants working in the organs of state administration to perform the tasks that were assigned to them in the course of the slaughter of the Jews of Hungary in an orderly and reliable fashion.¹⁵ In his study of the events that took place in Jász-Nagykunszolnok county, László Csósz also came to the conclusion that most of the civil servants did not actually espouse the principles of National Socialism, nor were they committed supporters of the physical annihilation of the Jewry, but rather agreed “only” that the role of Jews in economic and social life should be restricted. Nonetheless, in 1944 most of them, influenced by varying motivations, participated, whether reluctantly or with enthusiasm, in the implementation of the Final Solution.¹⁶ Drawing on the findings and insights of these authors, in this essay I closely examine the administrative issues and costs that came up in the course of the deportation and extermination of the Jewry of Hungary in order to arrive at a more detailed and precise picture of the ways in which civil servants working in state administration took part in the Final Solution and the extent of this form of collaboration.

In Hungary, as was the case in Germany and every country or territory that was affected by the Holocaust, the implementation of the Final Solution depended not simply on the acts of the political elites, but also on the cooperation and collaboration of everyday people, including civil servants who worked in state administration. Following the occupation of Hungary by the German army in March 1944, many of the high ranking civil servants and government officials were replaced or given positions in different offices. However, most of the people in lower levels of state administration, including the police and the

13 Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*.

14 Ibid., 12–13.

15 Ibid., 247.

16 László Csósz, *Konfliktusok és kölcsönhatások. Zsidók Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye történetében* (Szolnok: MNL Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár, 2014), 192–94 and 207.

gendarmerie, remained in their positions.¹⁷ Very few of the sub-prefects and mayors, who played important roles in county administration, were removed from their posts, in all likelihood because in the first few weeks it already became apparent that most of the influential figures in local administration were loyal to the new political leadership and would implement the anti-Semitic measures as ordered.¹⁸ Some of the people in low ranking offices were replaced or moved to different positions, but this was the exception rather than the rule.¹⁹ The ghettoization of the Jewish population was executed by two organs of power, but the necessary infrastructure was provided by the sub-prefects, lord lieutenants, chief constables, mayors, and deputy mayors, along with other state administrators with local or regional authority. With very few exceptions, they collaborated in the expropriation, ghettoization, and deportation of the Jews.

The situation in northern Transylvania essentially resembled the situation in Hungary. In late April, i.e. before the process of ghettoization had begun, a decision was reached regarding the removal of seven of the ten county lord lieutenants.²⁰ Also in April 1944, Béla Bethlen, lord lieutenant of Szolnok-Doboka and Beszterce-Naszód counties, asked to be removed from his posts. In the end, he was relieved of his position as lord lieutenant of Beszterce-Naszód county, but he continued to perform the tasks of lord lieutenant in Szolnok-Doboka county. Ödön Inczedy Joksmán served as lord lieutenant of Kolozs county and the city of Kolozsvár. At his request, he was relieved of the post of lord lieutenant of Kolozsvár (he was replaced by Lajos Vargha, who earlier had served as deputy prosecutor of the city), but he continued to hold the post of lord lieutenant for the county.²¹ Thus only with significant qualifications could

17 See: Judit Molnár, “Csendőrök, rendőrök, hivatalnokok a Soá idején” in *Magyar megfontolások a Soáról*, ed. Hamp Gábor, Horányi Özséb, and Rábai László (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1999), 124–33.

18 Molnár, *Csendőrök, rendőrök, hivatalnokok*, 127.

19 Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 247.

20 In northern Transylvania, including Máramaros, there were eleven counties, but two of them, Szolnok-Doboka (the center of which was Dés) and Beszterce-Naszód (the seat of which was Beszterce), were under count Béla Bethlen, who served as lord lieutenant of both until April 1944. *Budapesti Közlöny*, April 27, 1944, no. 94, 1. Of the seven county-level lord lieutenants who were relieved of their posts, several also had positions as lord lieutenant of a municipality. In addition to them, on April 26 Endre Hlatky, the lord lieutenant of Nagyvárad, was relieved of his post, as was Ödön Inczedy Joksmán, lord lieutenant of Kolozsvár. *Budapesti Közlöny* April 27, 1944, no. 94, 1–2; *Budapesti Közlöny* May 7, 1944, no. 103, 1.

21 Inczedy's signature is found on several documents that were issued in the middle of May 1944. SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 3 (Lord Lieutenancy of Kolozs County), batch number 1319 (Racial problems, 1–2 volumes). Inczedy's removal at the end of April from the position of lord lieutenant of Kolozsvár and the appointment of Lajos Vargha were announced in *Kolozsvár Tlji. Sz. Kir. Város Hivatalos Lapja* May 1, 1944, no. 9, 72.

these individuals be included among the civil servants who voluntarily resigned from their positions.²²

The sub-prefects, who played one of the most important roles in the process of ghettoization, almost without exception remained at their posts.²³ However, in Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Nagyvárad and Szatmárnémeti, which in May and June served as the largest centers for railway transportation, new mayors were appointed.²⁴ (Tibor Keledy, who had served as mayor of Kolozsvár, was made lord mayor of Budapest on April 8, 1944. He was replaced by László Vásárhelyi, who had served as deputy mayor of Kolozsvár.) Over the course of April and at the beginning of May, many of the chief constables were also replaced, for instance in Székelyhíd (today Săcueni in Romania), Szatmárnémeti, Zilah (today Zalău in Romania), and Felsővisó (today Vișeu de Sus in Romania), or simply given different positions, moved for instance from the district of Nagyszalonta (today Salonta in Romania) to Titel (today in Serbia), from Nagysomkút (today Șomcuta Mare in Romania) to Halmi (today Halmeu in Romania), or from Szilágycseh (today Cehu Silvaniei in Romania) to Nagykálló.²⁵ The essential purpose of these changes was to ensure that the chief constables, who played a key role in the implementation and enforcement of the various anti-Semitic measures in the rural districts and on the county level, be distant from their familiar environments and social worlds so that in new, unfamiliar contexts, surrounded essentially by strangers, they would carry out the disenfranchisement and expropriation of the Jews and ensure that they were gathered together into the collection centers to expedite the process of deportation.²⁶

22 In his memoirs, which were completed in the 1970s, Béla Bethlen at the same time writes that on many occasions he urged the Ministry of Interior to reach a decision regarding his request to be relieved of his position as lord lieutenant of Szolnok-Doboka county, but his petition was simply buried in paperwork. Béla Bethlen, *Észak-Erdély kormánybiztosa voltam* (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1989), 146.

23 For instance, Kolozs county got a new sub-prefect when, on June 2, 1944, Ferenc Szász died and left the position empty. He was replaced by Gábor Ajtay, who had served as the sub-prefect of Máramaros county and, as of May 30, had been the leader of the “separate unit” that had been created by the XXI/b. subdivision of the Ministry of Interior and had played an important role in ghettoization and deportation. Oliver Lustig, ed., *Procesul ghetourilor din Nordul Transilvaniei*, vol. 1 (București: AERVH, 2007), 74.

24 *Magyarország tisztii cím- és névtára, 1944* (Budapest: M. Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1944), 79. *Budapesti Közlöny* April 9, 1944, no. 80, 1 and April 21, no. 89, 1.

25 *Magyarország tisztii cím- és névtára, 1944* (Budapest: M. Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1944), 79. Cf. *Budapesti Közlöny* June 3, 1944, no. 124, 1–2.

26 Molnár, *Csendőrök, rendőrök, hivatalnokok*, 128.

Many civil servants moved up on the professional ladder in this period, so for them, these changes meant opportunities to build their careers.²⁷ The May and June issues of *Budapesti Közlöny* (Budapest Gazette) indicate that in general low level civil servants were advanced in greater proportions in northern Transylvania than in the other areas of provincial Hungary. While in other regions emphasis was placed on transferring civil servants to different settlements, civil servants in northern Transylvania often remained in the communities where they had been employed and were simply promoted. This may have been due in part to the fact that, when the territory had become part of Hungary again in 1940, many civil servants from Trianon Hungary or functionaries who had fled from Transylvania to Hungary in the wake of World War I had been given positions in the newly acquired territory. In 1944, most of these people were still serving in northern Transylvania. Thus in all likelihood, they were not as familiar with the local society or as closely connected to it as their Transylvanian colleagues and were therefore considered more reliable.²⁸

Historians have taken note of several high ranking civil servants in northern Transylvania who resigned from their offices for ethical reasons, thereby refusing to take part in the persecution of the Jews. Baron János Jósika, who served as lord lieutenant of Szilágy county, and János Schilling, who was sub-prefect of Szolnok-Doboka county, were among them. Jósika resigned when sub-prefect Endre Gazda informed him of what had taken place at the meeting in Szatmárnémeti on April 26 (Gazda had been present for the meeting).²⁹ Schilling took part in the implementation of the measures that laid the groundwork for the ghettoization of the Jews of the county, but on May 2, 1944, one day before

27 This was the case for Géza Czanik, the chief constable of Aszód. At the suggestion of the Minister of the Interior, he was named sub-prefect of Szolnok-Doboka county by the Regent of Hungary, Miklós Horthy. Similarly, Dezső Gálffy, a chief constable on the county level, became lord lieutenant of Udvarhely county, today Odorheiu county in Romania, and József Kadicsfalvi, who was magistrate of Felsővisó, was made lord lieutenant. Czanik replaced János Schilling, who had resigned from his position, on May 2, 1944. He was part of László Endre's personal escort, and he guaranteed the efficient implementation of the Final Solution in Szolnok-Doboka county. *Budapesti Közlöny* June 3, 1944, no. 124, 1. Ágnes Hegyi, "Dés zsidó közösségének virágzása és hanyatlása," in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról*, vol. 3, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2004), 171.

28 25.1 percent of the people working in public administration in northern Transylvania and 16.4 percent of the people working in the judicial branch of government had been sent from the territory of Trianon Hungary in 1940 and 1941. In contrast, all of the people working in the police and gendarmerie units were Transylvanian. See Edit Csilléry, "Közalkalmazottak és köztisztviselők Észak-Erdélyben a második bécsi döntést követően," *Limes* 2 (2006): 79.

29 Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 575.

ghettoization began, he went to the hospital and had his (perfectly healthy) appendix removed and resigned from his post.³⁰ However, these people were exceptions, and most of the leaders and staff of the state administration in northern Transylvania reliably performed the tasks that were assigned to them in the dispossession, ghettoization, and deportation of the Jews.

Jewish inhabitants of rural settlements were gathered together for deportation by the gendarmerie, which was under the authority of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. The Hungarian gendarmerie was broken up into ten different districts, each of which was under the command of a gendarmerie colonel. Following the occupation of Hungary by the German army, no changes were made to the leadership of the gendarmerie, so when the ghettoization and deportation of the Jews was taking place, the same people were in command as had been before. In contrast, changes were made to the leading cadres of the police forces, and many commanding officers were removed from their posts. There were even a few who resigned, for instance Antal Örményi, police captain of Gyergyószentmiklós (today Gheorgheni in Romania).³¹ Of the ten gendarmerie districts, two (the ninth and the tenth) had their seats in northern Transylvania, one in the city of Kolozsvár and the other in Marosvásárhely. The gendarmerie of the Kolozsvár district was under the command of Tibor Paksi-Kiss and the Marosvásárhely district was under the command of János Papp. Both Paksi-Kiss and Papp had begun serving in their posts before 1944. Officially, it was Paksi-Kiss who supervised the ghettoization and deportation of the Jewry of all of Transylvania, including the areas under the command of Papp.³²

The search for and rounding up of Jews was done by the gendarmes of the districts. In the collection centers and the ghettos, however, the theft of Jewish belongings, the loading of Jews onto train cars, and the final deportation of the Jews was done by gendarmes who belonged to subunits that had been

30 Zoltán Singer, *Volt egyszer egy Dés. Bethlen, Magyarlápos, Retteg, Nagyilonda és környéke* (Tel Aviv: Dés és Vidékéről Elszármazottak Landsmannschaftja, 1970), 422. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 414.

31 Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 247. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 414.

32 Refugees from areas that today are part of Ukraine fled into the territory of János Papp's gendarmerie district, thus he had to handle the administrative tasks that arose as a consequence of their presence as well. We know, however, that independent of this, Papp collaborated in the ghettoization of the Jewry of the Székely Land. He took part in the meeting that was held in Marosvásárhely on April 28, and together with sub-prefect Zsigmond Márton, lieutenant colonel János Zalántay and major N. Schröder he supervised the rounding up of the Jews of Maros-Torda county (today a part of Mureș and a part of Cluj county in Romania). Braham, *The Geographical Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 657–59.

created within the individual districts. These gendarmes in general did not come from the given settlements, but rather had been brought to the area from distant regions. This measure was taken in order to prevent Jews from bribing people they might have known personally, as well as to ensure that no mercy would be shown by the people charged with carrying out these measures. This is why gendarmes were sent from Miskolc, Szászrégen (today Reghin in Romania), and Szeged to Máramarossziget, for instance, or from Zilah to Dés (today Dej in Romania).³³

While these processes were underway, the bureaucracy also dealt with the belongings and real estate that had been taken from the Jews, as well as the costs that arose in the course of their ghettoization and deportation, the assessment of damages, and the provision of compensation. Later, dealing with the economic and social problems that arose as a consequence of the ghettoization among the members of the population who were not defined by the laws as “Jewish” (i.e. the so-called Christian population) became the first priority. The creation of a “judenrein” provincial Hungary (and therefore a “judenrein” Transylvania), the division of stolen properties, and the provision of compensation for claims of damage were done by a stratum of officials and an administrative system the original responsibility of which had been the completion of bureaucratic tasks that were important to the preservation of social cohesion and stability. In the changed domestic political circumstances and as a consequence of the anti-Semitic public sentiment that prevailed at the time, this bureaucracy was capable, without having undergone any major structural changes, of providing the infrastructure, the “administrative foundation,” for the annihilation of the Hungarian Jewry.³⁴

While several of the administrative and political models in Transylvania were borrowed from Hungary, there were regional peculiarities. The conservative, right-wing Hungarian political elite of Transylvania was quite convinced, as indeed was a significant part of Transylvanian Hungarian society, that in the period between 1918 and 1940, when the entire territory, northern and southern Transylvania, had been part of the Romanian Kingdom, the Jewry had betrayed Hungary and had represented the interests of the Romanian elites in power. This accusation found expression not merely in the period following the outbreak of war, but rather had been a discernible motif of public life in Transylvanian

33 Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 411.

34 See Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 104.

Hungarian communities since 1920.³⁵ The platform of *Erdélyi Párt* (Transylvanian Party), which was created in 1940–41, was seen as providing political legitimacy for the measures that were taken against Jews. Between 1941 and 1944, this political party represented the political interests of the Hungarian communities of Transylvania in the Hungarian parliament, and it enjoyed widespread social support and influence in the region. According to the eighth point of its platform, the party approved of measures “against the Jewry, which voluntarily broke from the body of the Transylvanian Hungarians when under Romanian rule,” and indeed it strongly urged the implementation of measures that would remove Jews from public life and every sphere of economic life “until the question had been settled on a European scale.”³⁶ The right-wing in Transylvania, which grew increasingly influential after 1940, also emphasized its view according to which the path of Transylvanian Hungarians and Transylvanian Jews had forever split, since the Jews were the enemy of Germany, the state which had made territorial revision in 1940 possible.³⁷ While the process of ghettoization was underway, the Transylvanian Party justified the expropriation of Jews with the claim that the belongings and real estate that had been acquired had to be used to improve the social circumstances of the Hungarian population.³⁸ Thus the collaboration of the so-called Christian population, including administrators of various ranks and positions, was influenced by a number of factors, but one of them was the branding of the Jews of Transylvania as outsiders and members of a group that had deliberately parted ways with the Hungarians.

35 Ferenc Sz. Horváth, *Elutasítás és alkalmazkodás között. A romániai magyar kisebbségi elit politikai stratégiái (1931–1940)* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 2007), 118. Gábor Egry, *Az erdélyiség “színeváltozása”. Kísérlet az Erdélyi Párt ideológiájának és identitáspolitikájának elemzésére, 1940–1944* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2008), 157–59.

36 Cited in Egry, *Az erdélyiség “színeváltozása,”* 159.

37 Holly Case, *Between States. The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 182.

38 The question of fragmentation, in other words the linking of the economic plunder of the Jews and the problems of the ethnically heterogeneous territories of northern Transylvania, can also be observed. See SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 3, batch number 1319, 3. vols., dossier 7336/1944, f. 2. Compare with Franz Sz. Horváth, “Ethnic Policies, Social Compensation, and Economic Reparations: The Holocaust in Northern Transylvania,” *East Central Europe* 39 (2012): 112–16.

Administrative Issues before Ghettoization

On April 20, 1944, Antal Kunder, Minister of Trade and Transportation, issued decree number 50.500/1944 KKM on the seizure of the goods, furnishings, and equipment belonging to Jewish businesses.³⁹ The decree went into effect on April 21, and in accordance with it, the Jewish businesses in the various settlements were stamped as such on that very day, lists of them were made, and these lists were sent within the space of a few days to the Chamber of Trade and Industry to which the given settlement belonged.⁴⁰ The surviving sources suggest that at the time the members of the non-Jewish population were most concerned with the fate of possessions of theirs that had been left for repair or for some other reason in the workshops and business now under sequestration. They besieged the authorities with questions and requests, and the rumor spread that they would not be given back the belongings that had been left with the Jewish merchants and tradesmen.⁴¹ On May 5, 1944, the Minister of Trade and Transportation issued decree number 56.912/1944 KKM, with which he sought to address these questions and lay these rumors to rest. According to the decree, between May 8 and May 20, Jewish merchants and tradesmen would have to hand over or return to its (so-called) Christian owner any article that had been ordered before April 21 or left in their places of business for repairs, alterations, or exchange. This was to take place with the shutters to the establishments only half open. The daily press in northern Transylvania published this news on May 7 and 8.⁴² With regards to the implementation of the decree, the sub-prefects of the region gave instructions to the district chief constables and the mayors of the cities one or two days after the news had appeared in the papers, i.e. on May 8 and 9.⁴³

39 Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 510.

40 Ibid.

41 “Zsidó üzletekben levő tárgyak tulajdonosait idejében értesítik a kiváltás módozatairól” [The owners of articles in Jewish businesses will be informed of the ways of retrieving them in time], *Keleti Újság*, May 6, 1944, 5.

42 On May 7, *Keleti Újság* reported on the issue and content of the decree, followed by a similar report in *Magyar Újság* on May 8. Both dailies were published in Kolozsvár, but they were distributed throughout northern Transylvania. Enikő Orsolya Nagy, “Mit tudhatott az észak-erdélyi magyar lakosság a zsidóellenes intézkedésekről?” in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról*, vol. 6, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2014), 52.

43 On May 9, 1944, Kálmán Szent-Királyi, the sub-prefect of Udvarhely county, sent the text of the decree to the chief constables and the mayor of Székelyudvarhely. We also know that the decree was received by the sub-prefect of Háromszék county (today Covasna county in Romania) on May 8. SJAN

People who sought to retrieve items they had left with Jewish tradesmen or take possession of articles they had ordered and already paid for could only do so if they first submitted a request to the authorities responsible for commerce or the office of finance. The ghettoization of the Jews of the region for the most part had been completed by this time. Thus the former owners of the businesses were no longer able to tend to the requests. Instead, “Christian” custodians who were not regarded as Jews (in the case of workshops and smaller factories) performed this task, or in some cases they were done by the municipal authorities. In the case of businesses that were being closed and put out of operation, the return or bestowal of such articles was overseen by committees consisting of three people. These committees were formed under the oversight of the office of the mayor or the office of the chief constable, and one member had to be a civil servant, while the other two had to be merchants.⁴⁴ In many cases, this all took place well after the May 20 deadline. On May 19, the mayor of Székelyudvarhely (today Odorheiu Secuiesc in Romania) announced that people who sought to retrieve items from the Jewish-owned businesses that had been closed had 48 hours to present themselves at the city hall.⁴⁵ In Nagybánya (today Baia Mare in Romania) the return of such articles to their owners probably took place much later, at the beginning of July, as indicated by notification number 1465/1944, which was issued by the leader of the city’s excise office on July 2. In this notification, he informed the mayor that the financial directorship of the city of Szatmárnémeti had given permission for the distribution of articles of property belonging to (so-called) Christians that were being held in Jewish dwellings, factories, and workshops. An announcement to this effect was to be made public on July 3, and on the subsequent days the news was spread far and wide.⁴⁶ Sometimes, it took months for these issues to be settled, and sometimes they were never resolved. Before ghettoization had begun, Tibor Gortvay Tihamér, an architect from Budapest, paid 8,000 pengő to Bernát Schöffler, a merchant from Palotailva (today Luncu Bradului in Romania). He never received

Cluj, Fond no. 151 (Northern Transylvanian Hungarian Military Administration), archival number 219, box 3, dossier 4/1944, f. 4–5., SJAN Covasna (Sfântu Gheorghe Office of the Romanian State Archive), Fond no. 9 (Lord Lieutenant’s Office of Covasna County), archival number 16, dossier 2/1944, f. 4–5.

44 The instructions that were given by the Székely District Chamber of Industry for the Mayor’s Office of Székelyudvarhely and the Office of the Chief Constable. SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 151, archival number 219, box 3, dossier 36/1944, f. 4–5.

45 SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 151, archival number 219, box 3, dossier 36/1944, f. 1–2.

46 SJAN Maramureş (Baia Mare Office of the Romanian National Archive), Fond no. 1 (Mayor’s Office), Acte Administrative (Administrative Documents), dossier 1168/1944, vol. 1, f. 141.

the building materials he had ordered, however, since Schöffler in the meantime had been taken to the ghetto in Szászrégen. The last source regarding the case of the Budapest architect is dated August 31, 1944. On that day, a government committee bearing the name “Committee for the Solution of Issues pertaining to Jewish Pecuniary and Property Rights” sent a transcript to the Royal Hungarian Financial Directorship in the city of Marosvásárhely urging them to resolve the case promptly.⁴⁷

On May 3, the transportation of the Jews to the ghetto began. The fate of the businesses that were owned by merchants and tradesmen who had been taken to the ghetto remained uncertain for days. In most of the settlements, there was great uncertainty regarding the future of the workshops, that had been left without owners. According to decree number 50.500/1944 KKM, enterprises that were important to the national economy could continue to be in operation and so-called Christian entrepreneurial leaders were needed to oversee them. In many cases, however, a great deal of time passed before these “custodians” were named to their positions.⁴⁸ In many cases, the staff took over the management of the workshops and factories, which meant, for instance, that they took new orders and they used the raw materials that were on hand to continue production. The Craftsmen’s Association of Kolozsvár submitted protests against this practice to the trade authorities of the first instance, contending that sloppy, amateurish work was being done and raw materials that were essential to the national economy were being used in a manner that betrayed a dire lack of expertise.⁴⁹

The distribution of the businesses that had been closed took place in accordance with decree number 2.120/1944. ME, which was passed on June 10 and announced on June 14. Across the country (and thus in northern Transylvania as well), the first people to be given places of business that had been stolen from their Jewish owners were merchants and tradesmen whose businesses, workshops, or factories had been damaged or destroyed by bombs

47 Hungarian National Archives, K498 (Government Commissioner Appointed for the Solution to Issues Pertaining to Jewish Pecuniary and Property Rights), batch 3, documents of the IX. department, document 539/1944, f. 1–5. (K498 – 1944 – b – IX – 539, f. 1–5).

48 Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*, 310.

49 “Az Ipartestület tiltakozott az ellen, hogy a zsidó üzemeket az alkalmazottak vezessék” [The Craftsmen’s Association objected to the Jewish factories being run by the staff], *Keleti Újság*, May 17, 1944, 7. On May 14, at almost the same time as these objections were being raised, decree number 23.200/1944 Ip.M. was published in *Budapesti Közlöny*. It addressed the question of the delegation of leaders for the businesses. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 510–11.

or whose enterprises happened to be located in areas that had become part of the ghetto.⁵⁰ Of the (so-called) Christian merchants and tradesmen whose businesses had been damaged in the bombing of Kolozsvár on June 2, 1944, 96 took part in this legalized form of theft.⁵¹

In the meantime, people who had been employed by Jews worried about the wages they had not been paid. The general practice was for the municipal trade authorities or the cities themselves to pay lost wages, and these institutions returned articles to their owners as well.⁵² In many cases unpaid wages were covered using monies that had been taken from Jews and put in the city treasury. This was the solution adopted by the mayor of Székelyudvarhely, who on June 12, 1944, referring to the second point of the sixth paragraph of decree number 1600/1944 ME, ordered the payment of more than 3,100 pengő to 14 people.⁵³ This sum covered work that had been done in the period beginning in early April and ending in late May.⁵⁴

The question of the retrieval of various articles and possessions was a matter of concern not only for the civilian population, but also for various institutions. In some case, library books were among the articles that had remained in the dwellings of Jews. For instance, a request that was made by a craftsmen's association in the city of Csíkszereda (today Miercurea Ciuc in Romania) to the office of the mayor indicates that members who were defined as Jewish by the law had regularly borrowed books from the organization. In one abandoned lodging, for instance, there was a copy of a book entitled *Mit ér az ember, ha magyar* (What a man is worth if he is Magyar?) by the well-known

50 Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*, 312.

51 On June 2, two cities in northern Transylvania, Nagyvárad and Kolozsvár, were bombed by the allied air forces. These bombings were part of the preparatory military operations for the landing in Normandy and they targeted first and foremost the railway junctions and industrial and military establishments. "Üzlethelyiséghez jutottak a kolozsvári bombakárosult kisiparosok és kiskereskedők" [Tradesmen and shopkeepers who suffered losses in the bombings have received premises for their businesses], *Keleti Újság*, June 17, 1944, 5.

52 "A városi iparhatóság folyósítja a zsidó üzletek alkalmazottainak járandóságát" [The municipal industrial authorities will cover the unpaid wages of employees of Jewish businesses], *Keleti Újság*, May 16, 1944, 8.

53 Decree number 1600/1944. ME., which was adopted on April 14, 1944 and announced on April 16, concerned the obligation of people who were defined as Jews by the law to report their wealth. It also addressed the seizure of this wealth by the organs of state administration. In accordance with the decree, bank accounts, deposits, and securities owned by Jews were seized, as were articles and jewelry made of precious metals. The law made it possible for the state to use the sums of money in the seized bank accounts to pay the wages of "Christian" employees. *Budapesti Közlöny*, April 16, 1944, 2.

54 SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 151, archival number 219, box 3, dossier 25/1944, f. 1.

populist writer of the era, Péter Veres.⁵⁵ It is a sad and perverse irony of fate that the pages of this book, in which the author expresses his concern for the fate of the Hungarian peasantry, were being turned by a reader who was defined as an outsider (a non-Hungarian) and condemned to deportation.

The Costs of Ghettoization, Unpaid Assistance, and Food Ration Cards

With regards to the costs that arose in the course of ghettoization and the fulfillment of the individual requests that were made for reimbursement or reparation, these questions were addressed in the confidential deportation decree of April 7, 1944 (Minister of the Interior's Confidential Decree number 6163/1944) and a notice that was issued on April 19, which was a supplement to the decree.⁵⁶ Neither document contained concrete instructions, but the document of April 19 specified that costs were to be covered using assets that had been seized from Jewish homes and places of business.⁵⁷ An internal decree issued on May 13, 1944 by foreign Minister Andor Jaross provided additional directions. The costs of the transportation of Jews to the ghettos were to be covered with the assets that had been taken from them. People who were not defined under law as Jewish but who nonetheless were compelled to vacate their dwellings because of the ghettoization were only entitled to compensation under extraordinary circumstances and with extraordinary justification. According to the decree, settlements in which ghettos were established had to cover the costs that arose as a consequence of this using money from their own coffers. They were given the promise that in time the state treasury would repay them for these costs. In some cases, the Ministry of Interior provided some settlements with an advance to ensure the completion of the operations. However, in every case the local authorities were expected to be frugal and keep costs to a bare minimum.⁵⁸ In principle, the costs of ghettoization were to be covered using funds from the central "Jewish account" (number 157.880), which was created by the state in June 1944 and was under the administration of the Ministry of Finance. Monies from this account were also to be used to cover the taxes and dues, unpaid

55 SJAN Harghita (Miercurea Ciuc Office of the Romanian National Archive), Fond no. 32 (Mayor's Office of Miercurea Ciuc), dossier 72, f. 24.

56 On the text of the decree see: Zoltán Vági, László Csósz, and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary. Evolution of a Genocide* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, USHMM, 2013), 76–79.

57 Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*, 286.

58 *Ibid.*, 287–93.

public works bills, and private debts of individuals who had been deported.⁵⁹ Indeed articles had been published in the press on the issue of unpaid public and private debts at the beginning of the process of ghettoization.⁶⁰ The mayors dealt with bills that had been sent to people who had already been deported (electricity bills, for instance). As early as May 12, the mayor of Nagyvárad had given instructions regarding the settlement of debts to the public works.⁶¹

As I will discuss, private individuals who participated in the ghettoization and deportation of the Jews of northern Transylvania were given payment or compensation in response to their demands only with great difficulty or not at all. One of the reasons for this was that in September and October of 1944, Soviet and Romanian troops began to take control of the territory. From then on, it became almost impossible to receive any compensation from the state authorities for costs incurred in the processes of ghettoization and deportation.

The various jobs and tasks that arose as the ghettos were created, during the process of transporting the Jews to the ghettos, during the period in which the ghettos were in use, and then as they were liquidated either were done by the people of the settlements and the subordinate institutions at their own expense or were performed by private individuals who had been hired to provide their services. These private individuals or the offices that represented their interests turned to the mayors of the settlements for payment of wages for services rendered. The settlements then asked for compensation for these costs from the state treasury. From the perspective of the local authorities, one of the most cost-efficient tools in the creation of the ghettos was the use of forced Jewish labor. In other cases, the Jews who had been moved into the ghettos had to create the conditions necessary for (temporary) survival. In the early days, the authorities, “moved to act by their good faith,” gathered the Jews together in the collection centers so rapidly that problems arose concerning the acquisition of the necessary materials.⁶² Only with the passing of several days could the ghettos be made more or less habitable. In Dés, the suggestion was made to

59 Ibid., 294–95.

60 “Mi lesz a zsidók köz- és magánjelleű tartozásaival?” [How will the private and public debts of the Jews be handled?], *Ellenzék*, May 5, 1944, 2.

61 Decree number 13392/1944. II, issued by László Gyapay on May 12, 1944. YVA, TR. 16, dossier 28, f. 19.

62 Gendarme lieutenant colonel László Ferenczy used the expression “good faith” in his report of May 5, 1944. He also notes how the authorities in northern Transylvania rounded up the people who had been defined as Jewish by the law “in general with the greatest willingness, expeditiousness, and flexibility.” Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban*, 285.

move the Jews who had been gathered together, more than 5,000 people, to the ghetto of Szamosújvár (today Gherla in Romania), since the camp which had been established in the Bungur forest lacked any trace of infrastructure. However, count Béla Bethlen, lord lieutenant of Szolnok-Doboka County, quickly intervened, and on May 5 and 6 he had building materials sent for the construction of a camp in Dés. In the end, no one was moved.⁶³ The construction of a plank fence around the ghetto of Nagyvárad was done by local carpenters and joiners. Twenty inmates from forced labor camps, who represented a free source of labor, were sent to assist them.⁶⁴ In Beszterce, on the days leading up to ghettoization, 50 to 80 local Jewish men were forced to help built barracks on the territory of the ghetto.⁶⁵ Forced labor units were dispatched to work at sites in the territories of Trianon Hungary as well. In the city of Pécs, for instance, construction on the wattle fence that surrounded the ghetto had been begun by people who had been sent to the ghetto and then was completed by forced labor units.⁶⁶

In general, the representative bodies of municipal government authorized the mayor to pay the various costs that arose. In many cases, this authorization was retroactive, meaning it applied to payments that had already been made. The bureaucratic jargon in the following excerpt from the records of a meeting of the body of representatives of Szilágysomlyó (today Șimleu Silvaniei in Romania) offers a clear impression of how the measures that were taken against members of the local population who were defined as Jewish were reduced to a mere question of administrative procedure:

The body of representatives of the Hungarian city of Szilágysomlyó approves the declaration of the mayor of the city according to which, with regards to the costs that have arisen in connection with the gathering together of the Jews of Szilágysomlyó and their transport to a camp and the costs of the maintenance of the camp itself, the visit and negotiation of the lord lieutenant of the county that took place on April 29, 1944 in the communities of Szilágysomlyó and Somlyócehi [today Cehei in Romania] made provisions to the effect that for the moment these costs would be covered with an advance from the

63 Molnár, *Csendőrtisz a Markóban*, 286.

64 Miklós Dános, “Tanúságtétel,” in *A tegnapi városa. A nagyváradi zsidóság emlékkönyve*, ed. Dezső Schön (Tel-Aviv: Nagyváradról Elszármazottak Egyesülete, 1981), 336.

65 Braham, *The Geographical Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 199.

66 Judit Molnár, “Hazafias tisztelettel”. Zsidók és nem zsidók Pécsen a holokauszt idején,” in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról*, vol. 2, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2002), 262.

coffers of the Hungarian city of Szilágysomlyó and the Ministry of Interior of the Hungarian Kingdom will provide reimbursement and has instructed the mayor of the city to issue the money order.⁶⁷

Some requests for reimbursement and compensation were made in the first days following ghettoization, though most of these requests were made around the time of or after the deportations. The offices of the mayor in the various settlements answered only with considerable delay, and in many cases they rejected the requests. In general, requests made by private individuals involved reimbursement for the costs of transportation or payment for work done by craftsmen (for instance joiner's work and carpentry). In many cases, owners of cars and wagons had been compelled personally to assist with the transportation of Jews to the ghettos or had had to allow the authorities to use their vehicles. On May 13 and 14, 1944, the ghetto command had made use of the car owned by cab-driver Márton Dankó of Kolozsvár. On June 14, the city paid him 384 pengő in compensation.⁶⁸

In the ghettos, for a daily wage midwives were hired to perform body searches, which included searches of body cavities. On May 29 and 30 and June 3, Mrs. György Dumitrán, a midwife under the authority of Borpataktelep performed body searches in the small ghetto of Nagybánya, for which she was paid 16 pengő. There were cases in Hungary in which the midwives were paid even more for these searches. In Szeged midwives were paid 20 pengő per day for their services, and doctors were paid 200 pengő per day.⁶⁹ The midwife in Nagybánya was only one of the many "costs" covered by the city. According to statements of account issued on August 8 and September 4, 1944, there were 56 "services" for which payments totaling 38,734 had been made. This of course only represents the sum of the costs for which claims had been made before July 5 and which had been covered between July 5 and 31 from the city coffers.⁷⁰ It is

67 YVA TR. 16, dossier 42, f. 204.

68 SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 1 (Mayor's Office of Cluj), box 201-7325/1944, dossier 23079/1944, f. 1-4. On the payments that were made to cover other transportation costs in Kolozsvár see SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 1, box 201-7325/1944, dossier 20220/1944, f. 1-2.

69 Judit Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben az V. (szegedi) csendőrkörületben* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1995), 140-41.

70 Other important kinds of costs included: the purchase of lime, building materials and cleaning tools, disinfection, payments to a local printing press for printed material, plumbing, the digging of sewage lines, telephone costs, the costs involved with care provided for the sick who had been taken to the state hospital, the daily wages for guards and midwives, and burials. SJAN Maramureş, Fond no. 1, Acte Administrative, dossier 1168/1944, vol. 2, f. 87 and 280-86.

worth noting that the city covered the costs of transportation for mayor Károly Tamássy to the meeting on the details of deportation process that took place in Munkács on May 12 using monies that had been stolen from Jews.⁷¹ The costs of the burial of the corpses of three deportees that were removed from a train passing through Nagybánya on June 7 were also covered using these monies. The train had probably arrived from Marosvásárhely (it passed through the city of Kassa, today Košice in Slovakia, on June 8). It was carrying elderly people and the sick from various settlements. According to the health officer of the first district in Nagybánya, the station agents in Zilah and Zsibó (today Jibou in Romania) had already refused to allow the train to unload the three cadavers. In Nagybánya they were given a simple burial.⁷²

The rejection of a request for the payment of costs was sometimes justified with the claim that the monies that had been expropriated from the Jews had already been transferred in their entirety to the central account. On September 6, 1944, the mayor of Nagybánya used this explanation when rejecting a request that had been submitted significantly earlier, on July 7. In this petition, a city alderman named István Ágoston had requested the daily wages for four contract workers for the services they had performed transporting foodstuffs from the homes of Jews to the ghetto, providing assistance loading Jews onto train cars, and taking care of storerooms. The mayor advised the alderman to turn with his petition to the financial directorship of Szatmárnémeti.⁷³

In the process of creating the ghettos, it was not possible to avoid compelling some Christian families to move. In some cases, for instance the ghettos of Szatmárnémeti and Nagyvárad, this meant changes of dwelling on a massive scale. In other places, it affected only a few families. In Kolozsvár, working-class families who were forced to leave their domiciles in the brick factory, which was used as the site of the ghetto, were given new lodgings in homes that had been taken from Jewish families. According to the newspaper *Keleti Újság* (Eastern News), the municipal authorities even took into consideration the size of the family in question. Families with two children were given dwellings with at least two separate rooms and a kitchen. Larger families were given homes with three rooms and a kitchen. By May 5, more than thirty Hungarian working-class

71 Ibid., f. 280, Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*, 286–96.

72 The report number 90/1044. v.o. of the medical officer of the first district to the mayor of Nagybánya, June 7, 1944. SJAN Maramureş, Fond no. 1, Acte Administrative, dossier 1168/1944, vol. 1, f. 58.

73 Ibid., dossier 44/1944, vol. 1, f. 467–68.

families had been moved to new lodgings in Kolozsvár.⁷⁴ The other properties that had been forcibly vacated by the Jewish families were made available to people whose homes had been damaged in the bombing of the city that had taken place on June 2. According to the financial directorship in Kolozsvár, by the second half of June some 1,300 dwellings that had been expropriated from Jewish families had been allotted to them.⁷⁵ These forced changes of dwelling often gave rise to sentiments of dissatisfaction among the people who were moved into the homes that had been vacated. There were two main reasons for this. Some of them did not find the new homes suitable and therefore felt that they had been unfairly treated. Others, having returned to their original homes following the deportations, complained that their domiciles had been seriously damaged and requested compensation.⁷⁶ Some were dissatisfied because, following the deportation of the Jews, they were compelled to return to their original homes, which were not as comfortable as the dwellings in which they had been temporarily housed. The people who had been assigned lodging in homes that had been stolen from Jewish families had to leave their temporary domiciles by a given deadline that varied from settlement to settlement. They had to return the keys to the local financial directorship. They were given compensation out of the city coffers for damages that had been done to their original homes, and the costs of the moves were also covered. On July 9, 1944 (i.e. some six weeks after the deportations), the mayor of Máramarossziget ordered the people who had been moved into temporary lodgings to return to their homes, and he gave them sixteen days to do so (the deadline was July 25). Families were only allowed to remain in the lodgings to which they had been temporarily assigned if their original homes were in potentially life-threatening or uninhabitable condition

74 “Eddig hatezerre tehető a táborba telepített kolozsvári zsidók száma” [At the moment, the number of Jews who have been put in the camp has reached 6,000], *Keleti Újság*, May 6, 1944, 5. Compare with: “Harmincegy kolozsvári munkáscsaládot zsidó lakásokban helyeztek el” [Thirty-one Kolozsvár working-class families have been placed in Jewish apartments], *Ellenzék*, May 5, 1944, 3.

75 According to an earlier report in the press, in Kolozsvár slightly fewer families, some 1,200, were left homeless as a consequence of the bombings. “A Kolozsvárt ért terrortámadás szomorú statisztikája” [The sad statistics of the bombing of Kolozsvár], *Ellenzék*, June 15, 1944, 2. “Ezerháromszáz zsidó lakást utaltak ki a bombakárosultaknak” [1,300 Jewish apartments were turned over to people who suffered damages in the bombing], *Keleti Újság*, June 23, 1944, 8.

76 See for instance the complaint of Sándor Kovács to the mayor of Nagybánya, in which he asks for compensation for the damages that were done to his dwelling in the confines of the ghetto. The real estate, he contended, was so damaged that he was unable to move back into it. SJAN Maramureș, Fond no. 1, Acte Administrative, dossier 1168/1944, f. 338.

or they had in the meantime had another child and therefore required a larger home.⁷⁷

From the perspective of the authorities, the complete deprivation of the rights of members of the citizenry who were defined under law as Jews was accompanied by a “fortunate” drop in expenses. Jews who had been isolated in the ghettos were no longer seen as worthy by the civil servants of receiving various subsidies and benefits. Bureaucratic habit inclined Sándor Gyulafalvi Rednik, the mayor of Máramarossziget, to submit a request to the sub-prefect on April 29, 1944 for an adjustment to the war relief payments to be made in the month of May. The sub-prefect’s response, which was dated May 12, made it clear that, in accordance with the oral instructions that had been given during a talk with Pál Tomcsányi Vilmos, the military operations commissioner of Ungvár (today Uzhhorod in Ukraine), on May 6, Jews who earlier had received war relief payments but who in the meantime had been removed to the ghetto had lost any and all legal claim to such payments.⁷⁸

There was also no need to provide sugar rations for Jews. On May 31, 1944, the mayor of Szatmárnémeti informed the Ministry of Public Nutrition that the 17,650 “Jewish sugar ration cards” that the county usually received had not yet arrived.⁷⁹ However, it would have been quite impossible to have distributed these sugar ration cards, since the deportations were already underway. Food ration cards could not be distributed among the Jews of Kolozsvár for the same reason. According to news that was reported on May 23, 1944, new food ration cards were to be distributed among the Jews of the city, who had been compelled to wear the yellow star to identify them, on May 25, precisely the day on which the first train destined for Auschwitz departed from Kolozsvár. The reports in the press were not really intended for those whom they would, in principle, have affected, but rather served merely as a means of distracting and placating the Christian population.⁸⁰

77 “Felhívás a gettóbéli lakosokkal kapcsolatban” [Appeal in connection with the inhabitants of the ghetto], *Máramaros*, July 9, 1944, 4.

78 YVA, TR. 16, dossier 43, f. 94.

79 Ibid., dossier 29, f. 108.

80 “Május 25-én kezdődik Kolozsváron a zsidók új ételmisszerjegyeinek kiosztása” [In Kolozsvár, the distribution of the new Jewish food ration cards will begin on May 25], *Keleti Újság*, May 23 1944, 5.

Liquidation and Assessment of Damages

As soon as the last transports had departed from the ghettos, the territories began to be emptied. In general, considerable emphasis was placed on disinfection and proper cleaning. In many settlements, the locals complained that the scraps of food, the trash, and the latrines that had been left behind gave off a terrible smell and posed a threat of contamination or contagion.⁸¹ Yet following the deportations, the ghettos were first plundered and only then disinfected. In Nagyvárad the ghetto was left unguarded for a few days. The articles of everyday use that had been left in the buildings became spoils for the taking. Then the forced labor unit of the anti-aircraft defense squadron that was stationed in the city was assigned the task of gathering together and sorting the furniture, clothing, and other items of value that had been left behind and transporting them to the Orthodox synagogue, which had been turned into a repository.⁸² If there were forced labor units in or near a settlement, it was general practice, following the deportations, to make use of them in the transportation of valuables and belongings that had been left in the ghettos. Trucks and wagons were used to transport these items in Nagyvárad and the other settlements as well.

In many cases, the procurement of means of transportation presented a considerable problem for local administrators. In Kolozsvár, the belongings that had been left behind in the ghetto or in the forcibly vacated homes were transported using vehicles belonging to the municipal sanitation unit, which so dramatically hindered the transportation of waste that it threatened the public health of the city. For this reason, on August 16 the mayor decided in the future to use only privately owned vehicles for the transportation of items that had once belonged to Jews.⁸³

Most of the ghettos were in horrible condition for months following the deportations and even following liberation. Anything of value was looted, but heaps of debris and items of everyday use were left behind. When Ernő (Ernest) Marton, who earlier had been a Zionist leader, came to northern Transylvania in November 1944, he made the following observation: “The sight of these ghettos is heart-rending even today. Broken furniture, household items that are now useless, layers of feathers from torn pillows, the remains of prayer books,

81 See also: Molnár, *Zsidósors 1944-ben*, 152.

82 Tereza Mózes, *Eвреїї дїн Орэдеа* (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1997), 230–32.

83 SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 1, box 24066–109499/1944, dossier 32503/1944. f. 1.

and inch-thick grime all indicate that months ago thousands of innocent people suffered in these houses and awaited their doom.”⁸⁴

Damages were done to the buildings in the ghettos and the brick factories that were used as sites for ghettos. The assessment of these damages and the arrangement of compensation constituted new administrative burdens for the authorities and the municipal leadership. The dossier on the assessment of damages done to the Municipal Brick Factory, which was used as the ghetto in Kolozsvár, has survived, and it offers a detailed overview of the process of how these kinds of damages were assessed.⁸⁵ According to the ascertainment of the engineers’ office, the replacement of items that were missing and the repairs that would be necessary would cost 3,900 pengő in total, which (in line with customary practice) the city would pay for using the assets that had been stolen from the Jews.⁸⁶ This sum, however, was significantly less than the estimate that had been given by the Municipal Brick Industry Corporation on May 27. According to the managers of the factory, the damages would cost some 70,880 pengő, and they predicted that this sum would grow.⁸⁷ Following the deportations, the factory requested compensation several times for the damages that had been incurred, but no complete settlement was ever made. These questions were decisively influenced by the fact that by the autumn of 1944, the Soviet and Romanian armies had reached the borders of the city. On September 16, the decree to evacuate the city was issued, and on that very day the Hungarian authorities, who were fleeing, closed the city’s coffers.⁸⁸

Conclusion

As the cases I have discussed in this essay demonstrate, the implementation of the Final Solution in northern Transylvania, in other words, the expropriation and annihilation of the Jewry of the territory, involved a complex state apparatus consisting of civil servants, units responsible for the maintenance of order and defense, and even intellectuals and technical experts (engineers, physicians, teachers, and economists). The anti-Semitic measures, which were adopted

84 Attila Gidó, “Marton Ernő beszámolója az észak-erdélyi zsidóság helyzetéről 1944 novemberében,” *Pro Minoritate* 2 (2015): 49.

85 SJAN Cluj, Fond no. 1, box 201–7325/1944, dossier 23559/1944, f. 7–12.

86 Ibid., f. 13.

87 The trampling and ruining of the gardens given to the workers in the factory were mentioned among the damages. Ibid., f. 14.

88 Ibid., f. 15.

in a period of only a few weeks, created serious administrative challenges for this apparatus and, furthermore, had negative material consequences for some segments of the so-called Christian population. Problems involving production and provisions arose in several branches of the economy, and the lack of trained experts and specialists, which had already been a problem, became worse.⁸⁹ Others, however, profited from the situation. They submitted claims for compensation, denounced people to the authorities, plundered, and moved up on the professional ladders. The relocation of some lower ranking and mid-level leaders (some of whom had left Transylvania in the 1920s and were returning to communities from which they had become distant) from Trianon Hungary to the newly acquired territory also increased the “efficiency” with which the Final Solution was implemented. For bureaucrats who often barely knew the people of the communities to which they had been assigned, loyalty to the regime proved stronger than any solidarity with the local Jews.

It would be difficult to produce a balance sheet for the implementation of the Final Solution in northern Transylvania, much as the costs incurred by Hungary and the material losses of the Jewry also rest on rough estimates. For this reason, I have attempted first and foremost to analyze a few kinds of costs.⁹⁰ As far as the question of the actual value of the real estate and belongings that were stolen by the Hungarian authorities, the Germans, the locals, and the soldiers who passed through region in the autumn of 1944 is concerned, we cannot know this with any precision, just as we cannot know precisely the value of the things that were destroyed in the course of the war and the pillaging. The 1946 assessment (which survives only in fragments) of the situation in Transylvania by the World

89 There were some 700 doctors in northern Transylvania in 1941, for example. 44.5 percent of them were defined as Jewish under the law. Thus as a consequence of the deportations, the number of doctors in the region, which was already low, was reduced to half. On the negative economic consequences see: Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági, “A ‘zsidókérdés megoldása’ a ‘termelés szempontjai’ ellen. A magyar holokauszt gazdasági vetületei,” in *A holokauszt Magyarországon európai perspektívában*, ed. Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005), 514–27, Csósz László, “Őrségváltás? Az 1944-es deportálások közvetlen gazdasági-társadalmi hatásai,” in *Küzdelem az igazságért. Tanulmányok Randolph L. Brabam 80. születésnapjára*, ed. László Karsai and Judit Molnár (Budapest: MAZSIHISZ, 2002).

90 According to contemporary anti-Semitic statistics, in 1938 the Jewry possessed a fortune amounting to some 7–12 billion pengő. The claim was also made that this sum constituted a significant proportion, between 20 and 25 percent, of the wealth of Hungary. The reliability of these figures was most recently debated by Hungarian historians in 2014. Gábor Kádár, and Zoltán Vági, *Self-Financing Genocide. The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of Hungarian Jews* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2004), 35–25, Cf. Dániel Bolgár, “Mese a zsidó jólétről,” *Magyar Narancs* 29 (2014), accessed July 27, 2015, <http://magyarnarancs.hu/publicisztika/mese-a-zsido-joletrol-90944>.

Jewish Congress contains precise information on the material losses of a few hundred Holocaust survivors. According to it, the value of the properties stolen from 316 survivors from Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, and Nagykároly (today Carei in Romania) came to 219,064,631 pengő and 367,902,000 lei.⁹¹ A memorandum sent to the government commission for Jewish property by the deputy mayor of Nagyvárad in June, 1944 offers a rough idea of the scale of the properties stolen from the Jews of the city. According to the memorandum, 4,700 dwellings were left empty following the ghettoization of the Jews, with some 13,000 rooms and 4,000 kitchens and larders. Furthermore, 600 businesses and 500 workshops and factories were taken from residents who had been defined under the law as Jews.⁹²

As is clear, the value of the property, both real estate and belongings, that was taken from the 164,000 former citizens of northern Transylvania must have come to billions of pengő before the Holocaust. A significant share of this property came into the hands of the Hungarian state and the civil servants, gendarmes, and police who took part in the ghettoization and deportation, as well as the civilians who submitted claims for reimbursement or simply looted. In comparison, the costs that arose in connection with the expropriation, ghettoization, and deportation of the Hungarian Jewry of the provinces were slight. Historians have not yet arrived at any precise estimate of how much the ghettoization and deportation of the Jewry of northern Transylvania cost (even disregarding the damages caused to the national economy). In 1945, the National Audit Office estimated that costs of the ghettoization and deportation of the Hungarian Jewry of the provinces came to 60 million pengő.⁹³ There are also estimates regarding the costs of the transport of the Jewish populations of some individual Hungarian settlements. In the case of the Jews of the city of Mohács and the surrounding area, these costs were estimated at 70,000 pengő. In the case of the ghetto of Szeged, we know the costs of the creation of the

91 The costs of damages listed in questionnaires as part of the assessment that was done in 1946 were rough estimates and were based on the individual assessments of the survivors. They moved on a wide scale of income categories. 316 questionnaires survived only by chance. Basically the things that survived did so in spite of the careless circumstances in which they were stored. Attila Gidó and Zsuzsa Sólyom, *The Surviving Jewish Inhabitants of Cluj, Carei and Oradea. The Survey of the World Jewish Congress in 1946* (Cluj-Napoca: ISPMN Working Papers, Nr. 35, 2010), 41.

92 “Emlékiratban foglalta össze Nagyvárad városa a zsidókérdés rendezésével felvetődött megoldatlan problémákat” [The city of Nagyvárad summarized in a memorandum the unsolved problems involving the settlement of the Jewish Question]. *Ellenzék* June 17, 1944, 12.

93 Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*, 287.

camp, the transportation of Jews, and the provision of food, which in total came to more than 32,300 pengő.⁹⁴ The creation of the ghetto of Túrkeve, which “housed” some 160 individuals, cost almost 50,000 pengő. This sum includes a plank fence (18,000 pengő) and the sanitation equipment, daily wages, transportation charges, etc.⁹⁵ The construction of the three-meter-high plank fence surrounding the ghetto of Zalaegerszeg is estimated to have cost 40,000 pengő. The forcible relocation of the Jews of Sátoraljaújhely to a single part of the city and the resulting relocation of some so-called Christian families cost 90,000 pengő. Transportation (to the ghettos and then deportation to the extermination camps) cost several million pengő.⁹⁶

In the case of northern Transylvania, we only have partial amounts. We cannot assess the total costs, and it is not entirely clear that we would arrive at a useful figure if we were to attempt to determine the “share” of the 60 million pengő (the estimated cost of the ghettoization and deportation of the Hungarian Jewry of the provinces according to the National Audit Office) that was “spent” on the 131,639 people deported from northern Transylvania (it would be roughly 18 million pengő). We have the greatest amount of detailed data on the small and large ghettos of Nagybánya. The cost of the creation and maintenance of the larger ghetto, which “housed” 3,660 people, came to 38,734 pengő, including the daily wages of the “Christians” who “provided services.” Following the liquidation of the smaller ghetto, where some 2,000 people were held, the cost of the damages that had been done was estimated at 30,000 pengő. If these sums are applied to all of the 131,639 people who were deported from northern Transylvania, the costs incurred in the process of ghettoization and deportation would come to 1.4 million pengő and the damages would come to roughly 2 million pengő, for a total of 3.4 million pengő. Naturally, this sum is not reliable, since the process by which it has been reached contains numerous possibilities for error. In individual settlements and areas the costs and the damages depended in part on whether or not in the given ghetto or collection camp existing edifices and infrastructure were used, how many people they were intended to “house,” the extent to which the local authorities had been frugal, and the length of time during which the ghetto was in use. The transportation

94 Ibid., Molnár Judit, *Zsidósors 1944-ben*, 144.

95 Csősz, *Őrségnáltás*, 84.

96 The sums are included in László Karsai, A holokauszt utolsó fejezete, *Beszélő* 10 (2005), accessed June 22, 2015, <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/a-holokauszt-utolso-fejezete>.

costs of deportation must also be added, and they may have come to several million pengő in northern Transylvania as well.

However, it is quite clear that, following the liberation of the region, only a small fraction of the wealth that had been stolen was returned to the few survivors. In November 1944, Ernő Marton informed the Romanian government and the international Jewish organizations of the difficulties regarding the recovery of stolen properties. In the course of the trip he took through northern Transylvania, Marton observed that the military and civilian authorities of the region, which had only been liberated a few weeks earlier, were hindering the reacquisition of stolen wealth. He ascertained with considerable concern and consternation that the returning survivors had to confront the people who had persecuted them: “the Hungarian civil servants who did not flee with the retreating Hungarian and German troops continue to serve in their positions, even though many of them displayed fascist conduct and took part in the implementation of the brutal measures of the Hungarian government. Some segments of the civil guard, which was created to replace the gendarmerie and the police, also consist of such fascist elements, which contributes to a great extent to the aggravation of uncertainty and doubt.”⁹⁷

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97 Gidó, *Marton Ernő beszámolója*, 45–46.

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