

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ORADEA AND THE ROMANIAN PRESS (*THE WESTERN GAZETTE*) – IN THE YEARS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS 1929-1933

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Abstract: The theme related to Jews, as it is found in the *Western Gazette*, aims mainly aspects of the Jewish community life of Oradea and the inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relationships between the three main communities of Oradea city: Hungarians, Jews and Romanians. The *Western Gazette* offered to the inhabitants of Oradea, among others, ample images on the existing divergences from the Hungarian and Jewish communities in Oradea and other cities in Transylvania, although the Jews from here were mostly of Hungarian culture. It can be observed a gradual spacing between the two communities under the conditions their interests began to be little by little others.

Keywords: Oradea, romanians, jewish community, hungarians, economic crisis, the *Western Gazette*

Since its very beginnings, the daily paper of Oradea the *Western Gazette* gave much attention to the Jews from Oradea and Bihor County, the more as that here there was a great number of representatives of this community. The Jew was an interesting character, with different habits of the other minorities. That's why he was carefully analyzed by the press of Oradea.

The *Western Gazette* offered to the inhabitants of Oradea, among others, ample images on the existing divergences from the Hungarian and Jewish communities in Oradea and other cities in Transylvania, although the Jews from here were mostly of Hungarian culture. It can be observed a gradual spacing between the two communities under the conditions their interests began to be little by little others. It is possible that the attitude of some of the Hungarian community leaders to have been influenced by the politics of some political parties in Hungary which had clearly anti-Semitic positions.

On 18th March 1930, the *Western Gazette* published an article entitled "*The Hungarians against the Jews*", pointing out that "*the Hungarians of race*", i.e., those who had the Hungarian as mother tongue, were discontent because the Hungarian Party branch in Oradea was in Jewish hands. In front of the formation in 1930 there were to be found Eugen Kotzo, lawyer and owner in Cadea, President, and Gustav Kövér, Vice President, who had the *advantage* of a certificate of Hungarian nationality. They began the action of taking out the party of the Jews' hands whereas they appreciated that they were not led by a real Hungarian feeling. The Kotzo-Kövé's group was an intransigent and chauvinistic one what that provoked for many years a lot of animosities with the Romanians and Jews of the town¹.

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¹ I. Zainea, *Economie și societate în Bihor (de la Marea Unire la Dictatul de la Viena)*, Oradea, Editura Universității din Oradea 2007, p. 253-254

Grouped around the newspaper *Magyar Szó*, part of the Hungarian population of Oradea began to militate to remove the Jewish community. This paper, presented as being the true body of the Hungarian party, got a serious anti-Semitic mark and tried to take the importance of the Jewish-Hungarian press out of the Hungarian people's life: "*The Jewish press was the tool of the Hungarian chauvinism in order to gain sympathies then when they were calling for an activity for the social harmony. The Jewish confreres have beaten their chest with fists blowing up their Hungarian feelings. Now other fists hit their chest. I do not commiserate with them. Maybe they will come to their senses!*"² - the article editor's conclusion was.

According to the *Western Gazette* the Jews of Oradea started not to show an unconditioned friendship towards the Hungarian people of Oradea. The paper has also presented amply this state of things. Thus, on the occasion of the Catholic Easter in the spring of 1931, the Jewish traders of Oradea kept their shops closed. This was in agreement with the demands of the Hungarian community's leaders, but, according to the opinion of the *Gazette's* editor of Oradea, Alter Scotus, contravened to the spirit of the Jewish traders who were "*self-restrained by the commercial interest*"³. Closing the shops meant an insult for the Romanian people - mentioning that on the occasion of the Romanian Easter - this did not happen. As a response, a Jewish trader said that they did so, rather out of consideration for the Hungarians, who they lived with "*for a long time together*"⁴. These attitudes were, however, increasingly rare, fact that could be observed in other positions displayed by some members of the community. Thus, another said that most of the Jewish merchants closed their shops during the Hungarian holidays under the pressure of the terror exercised on them by some powers of the "*Hungarian irredentism*"⁵. Moreover, on several occasions the paper presented threats addressed to the Jews of Oradea who - after the Great Romania has been carried out - began to align more and more to the new political realities. Not for a few times, the Jews have been warned about the return of the Hungarian domination "*that will punish all those who denied it (Hungarian minority our note G.M.) in one way or another*"⁶. Alter Scotus, finding that most of the local Jewish traders have addressed a request to the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric of Oradea requiring to be allowed to keep the shops open during the Romanian paschal holidays, excepting the Sundays, because, they said, "*they can not put up with so many holidays: Jewish, Hungarian and Romanian, which cause them great damages*"⁷, he flared up in an ample article accusing them that they despise the Romanians as they want to open their stores under the conditions that during the Catholic holidays that did not happen.

The *Western Gazette* consistently reflected the more visible divergences between Hungarians and Jews, either they were from Romania or from abroad. The same Alter Scotus, in the article of 20th January 1931, entitled "*A good lesson for the Hungarian Jews*"⁸, observed the protest of the Jewish parliamentarian of the Romanian Parliament, Ebner Mayer of Cernăuți, inserted into the pages of the newspaper *Népunkt* of Oradea, directed against the fact that

² Ungurii contra evreilor, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 8th March 1930, p. 1

³ *Ibidem*

⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵ Alter Scotus, *Simpatia evreo-maghiare*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 9th April 1931, p. 3

⁶ *Ibidem*, 9th April 1931, p. 3

⁷ *Ibidem*

⁸ Alter Scotus, *O bună lecție pentru evreii maghiari*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 20th January 1931, p. 3

the Jews were kept under the Hungarian interests. The intervention was due to the presumed pressures that the Jews from Czechoslovakia would have been kept under during the census which had happened in this country on the purpose of declaring them as Czechoslovakians; pressures also reported by the Union of the Hungarian Jews in Budapest. Against this situation was the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, sending a protest to the League of Nations. The Union of Jews in Budapest made common cause with the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia requires. The Senator Ebner Mayer criticized the attitude of the Jews in the Hungarian Jews Union: *“Mr. Senator Ebner Mayer draws a harsh lesson to the union of the Jews in Hungary, which is blindly and without reason serving the Hungarian maneuvers from Budapest. He, on the basis of the articles written by the president of the “Jewish National Council” of Czechoslovakia, remarks that the interferences attributed to the Czechoslovakian state are of a fantasy field and that in Czechoslovakia are very few those who are called Hungarian Jews. Then he says the followings: “I’d understand the irritation from Budapest, if the Czechoslovakian authorities would force the Jews to declare themselves Czechoslovakians. But, to protest against the fact that the Jews are declared Jews, this is the highest degree of Jewish humiliation”.*

“This is the same with us in Romania”.

The Senator Ebner Mayer continues:

“Presuming that the Czechoslovakian authorities would have indeed exerted pressure on the Jews, as they declared themselves Jewish minority - this wouldn’t be an unbelievable and unacceptable thing. The census prescribes under punishment, that only the truth to be declared. So it is with us in Romania. Since the law has given us the permission to declare ourselves Jews, we must live with that right. The Hungarian Jews from Budapest throw their point of view that the Jews who have belonged to the former Crown of the Saint Stephen are Hungarians on the basis of the language, culture and sentiment. Giving as example the United States with a population of 120 million, the culture is English and although the people are not English. It belongs to a nation only by the virtue of origin. The Union propagates the Hungarian assimilation and denies the existence of a Jewish people. In this case it should be demolished any dividing wall, which is to be found in the path of assimilation. The Union of the Hungarian Jews but just by its barren existence, bones up that for defending its special interests, the Jews must unite under the name of Jewry. We, the Jews in Romania, beside the recognition of Romanian citizens, are able to record as positive as against the government, that at the census we had the right to declare ourselves as belonging to the Jewish ethnic minority”⁹.

Taking into account these realities, Ebner Mayer considers that *“The League of Nations should reject undoubtedly as inappropriate, the protest of the Union. The writers of the Jewish history in any case will not countersink this protest on the brilliant page of the history. On the contrary...”*¹⁰.

Finally, Alter Scotus exculpates himself bewareing of the possible anti-Semitic cataloging of the self-person. Every time the arguments are offered by the Senator himself of Cernăuți: *“If I had written myself the above phrases, I would certainly have been immediately accused to be tendentious. But they are written by*

⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁰ *Ibidem*

a senator, a name that plays a leading role in the Jewry's life from us. Now, I should understand that he wrote them in the terms of the Jewish interests. But they are well received, firstly to show the calumnies launched by the Hungarians regarding the census, and secondly to show to his fellow countrymen that they are also citizens of the state where they live in and they are not allowed to put themselves in the service of the actions to denigrate the state, especially when they come from the outside enemies (and we have plenty of enemies inside). The Jews who play on the chord of the Hungarian chauvinism, in the opinion of the Senator Mayer, are totally erroneous. That when they play to be Hungarians are not honest, it is proved by their annoying when they are thrown in front an anti-Semite. Then they forget that they are Hungarians and Christians - as far as we know, the Hungarian people have been Christianized a thousand years before. They want however, to be both Hungarians and Jews, to speculate two situations - plus the Romanian citizenship. But that cannot be. As the Jews claim that their special interests to be protected, so we pretend also that their attitude not to be harmful to the state and therefore not to be attached to the work of black and undermining of our country. The Romanian state never needs Romanians spoofed by census and statistics or by statements grasped by terror. The Romanian nation possesses the figure that entitles it to master forever over this country and itself is in a position to state thoroughly before mankind. But the State must have in front of it a clear statement of its citizens of other nationality. This is firstly in the interests of the minorities, such as it will not be able to care about them as appropriate. For, when a father does not know his children, certainly he cannot care about them"¹¹.

Early in the June of 1931 there took place the parliamentary elections. On this occasion came again highlighted the problems existing between the Hungarians and Jews, as the Jews of Oradea and not only manifested more and more crystallization tendencies of an own political position. In an article appeared in the *Western Gazette*, on Wednesday 3rd June 1931, entitled "*Between Jews and Hungarians*" signed by the same Alter Scotus, he signaled that "*the Jewry made itself a party and tried to break off from the Hungarian people*"¹², this dividing the Jewish community into two. Some embrace this point of view while others consider that the Jews must remain further on loyal to the Hungarians' political position. Strange is, in the opinion of Scotus Alter, the position of the President of the Jews Union in Romania, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, who was asking the Jews of Transylvania to be close to the Hungarian minority. Despite of this position were enough Transylvanian Jews, including those of Oradea, who were saying themselves that "*if the Hungarians had the Hungarian party, why the Jews had no their Jewish party? They want to tear themselves away from the tutelage of the Hungarian chauvinism and to raise a separate organization, to represent only the Jewish interests as a minority distinguished from the Hungarian minority. To have their own Jewish representatives in parliament and be always presented as Jewish minority*"¹³.

The *Western Gazette* has allocated important spaces to this reality that seemed very interesting taking in view the excellent relations existing between the Jews and Hungarians before. The newspaper reflected the fears of the Hungarian minority in front of this situation. "*The Hungarians are desperate*", it claimed. The cause should be "*the separation of the Jews from the Hungarian*

¹¹ *Ibidem*

¹² Alter Scotus, *Între evrei și unguri*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 3rd June 1931, p. 5

¹³ *Ibidem*

company, the number of Hungarians is sensible decreasing, as it is known that the Jews of Transylvania were considered by them as "Hungarians" and shown as often as possible the Hungarian cause wanted to prove the numerical importance of the Hungarian element from us. On the other hand, the "Hungarian" intellectuals waste their rows, because most of them are composed by Hungarian-Jews. Even the Hungarian chauvinism is threatened to weaken, because those who were fluttering it better were also Jews exaggerating their Hungarianism to gain the Hungarians' confidence. Think about what would happen to the Hungarian press of Transylvania if the Jews separate from Hungarians, when it is known that the press is entirely in the Jews' hands"¹⁴.

Alter Scotus surprised very well the Transylvanian reality in this regard. The phenomenon was increasingly evident. In the Jewish community there weren't any major currents well outlined in this regard? According to the opinion of the *Western Gazette* "the Jews are at this time divided into two camps: a Jewish one and a Hungarian one. The last has the support of the Hungarians of race, so that it fights noisily. It is not known but if it will not weaken every day until finally the Jews will incorporate all in the Jewish party frameworks, as it seems the current was powered off. We will carefully watch this fight because it opens a new era in the minority life in Transylvania about we are interested very close"¹⁵.

In the same article there have been also presented the first tensions on this extremely sensitive issue between the Jews and Hungarians in Oradea:

"How does the struggle go between the Jews and Hungarians in Oradea?"

In regard of the fight between the Jews, Hungarians and Hungarians and Jewish Hungarians of Oradea and Bihor County, we have noticed characteristic signs, that let us to visualize that it had come further than we could imagine. Among the Jewish- Hungarian newspapers of the town only two of them took an accurate violent position against the Jewish party. Both of them belong to Mr. Hegedus Nándor who is directly interested in the matter, being the head of the list of the Hungarian party and the leader of this party. It is understood that he does not agree to lose the votes and the possibilities of deputation that currently he has. His newspapers accompanied by the Magyar Szó opened an angry campaign against the new Jewish party, labeling them as Jewish traitors who are standing away from the Hungarian party.

The other two Jewish-Hungarian newspapers have retained an impartial attitude. They have not carried away neither of the Hungarian party nor the Jewish's party, that were knocking its head against the other fluttering ones against the others. So, the Jewish public was allowed to adopt its attitude that it thinks it fit to"¹⁶.

Interesting is that in this dispute have also occurred the national leaders of the Jews. Among them is to be mentioned Wilhelm Fildermann too, the president himself of the Jews Union in Romania and advocate in Bucharest. Being in Arad, at the end of May of 1931, Wilhelm Fildermann delivered an interview to the Hungarian newspapers in town, on that occasion he was surprisingly shown to be in disagreement with the position of some consanguineous of his who wanted to benefit in Transylvania of an own identity different of the Hungarian one. According to him, a party would be in the disadvantage of the Jews in Romania, illustrating his sayings with the example

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 2

¹⁵ *Ibidem*

¹⁶ *Ibidem*

of the Jewish party in Greece and that one in Poland that have isolated the Jews from Greeks and Polishes so that the last were boycotting them.

Wilhelm Fildermann said: “*I do not find to be a beautiful thing that the Hungarian Jewry to deny that nation that lived centuries together with, participating to its joys and its pains*”¹⁷. The position of the leader of the Jewish community in Romania seems at least strange since he exhorted the Jews of Transylvania *to be Hungarians and not Jews*, as Alter Scotus underlined.

However, in the summer of 1931 in Oradea, was founded a local branch of the Jewish party, taking as presidents I. Mittelman and the lawyer Dr. Bárdoș Imre, and as general secretary the doctor Klein Ernő¹⁸.

On 2nd June 1931, were held parliamentary elections in Romania, which, according to the *Western Gazette*, “*they have thrown into the public opinion a trail of light on the mind of the Jewry of Transylvania that always seemed to be suspicious*”¹⁹. The Jews of Oradea, like others in Transylvania, tried on this occasion one’s own political orientation by separating of the Hungarian party. This was clearly expressed by tabling of separate lists of candidates by the Jewish party. Consequently, the *Western Gazette* has seized the commencement of some tensions between Hungarians and Jews, especially between the Jews of the Hungarian Party and the Jews of the Jewish Party. The Hungarians saw their influence in the life of the town at risk because the votes of the Jews were divided Jewish votes, a significant part going to the Jewish party. The Hungarians were losing in this way, important positions in the Municipal Council. So, it was proved once again that a part of the Jews of Oradea wanted to extort them from the Hungarian tutelage and found a separate organization to represent only the Jewish interests as a minority different from the Hungarian minority. It was that part of the Jewry willing to accept the political realities of the Great Romania.

The Hungarians’ leaders have remained insensitive to this situation that could become dangerous for the Hungarian political pioneers who saw their positions threatened by then. They were entering a new stage of the disputes between the Jews and Hungarians in Oradea and Bihor County, the problem being exposed in the local Jewish-Hungarian newspapers, mainly in those patronized by Hegedüs Nándor, member of the Jewish community in Oradea, but still faithful to the policy of the Hungarian Party. Hegedüs Nándor was the most influent personality in the range of the Hungarian press in Oradea. He was the patron of the newspapers *Nagyváradi Estilap* and later, after Fehér Deszö’s disappearance of the *Nagyváradi Napló*. Hegedüs Nándor was also leading an enterprise of importing books including a bookshop. In the same local with the shop there was also working a press office owned by the same Hegedüs Nándor²⁰.

All the newspapers patronized by him harshly criticized the attitude of that part of Jews of Oradea and Bihor County who wished the political separation from the Hungarians by constituting an own political formation. The *Western Gazette* has reflected on this state of things by presenting the dispute in its pages to inform its readers. In the issue of 3rd June 1931, the *Western Gazette*

¹⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁸ *Bihorul strajă la hotar*, Oradea, 1933, p. 145-146

¹⁹ Alter Scotus, *Între evrei și unguri*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 3rd June 1931, p. 5

²⁰ I. Horváth, *Ghidul orașului Oradea Mare*, Oradea-Mare, 1923, p. 186, 233, 237; in these matters also see *Istoria orașului Oradea*, Oradea, Editura Cogito, 1995, p. 386 (coordinators Gheorghe Gorun and Liviu Borcea)

was cutting in one of its numbers one of the most violent attacks of the press patronized by Hegedüs Nándor towards the Jews who wanted the spacing from the interests of the Hungarian community. Those who have done this step were called “*Jewish traitors who stand away from the Hungarian party*”²¹. In fact, as the signatory of the article was seizing, Hegedüs Nándor had a direct interest in maintaining the Jewish-Hungarian block of Oradea and Bihor County who was the first on lists of the Hungarian Party at the elections from the beginning of the summer of 1931. In the conditions that the block was breaking, the Hungarian Party was threatened directly by reducing the number of votes sent to it as the Jewish Party submitted the lists separately. Thus, it is also explained the violent attitude of the press patronized by it directed to those who advocated the idea of a Jewish party to defend directly the interests of the community. That the things have not been like that was also confirmed by the attitude of the other Hungarian newspapers in Oradea which kept an impartial attitude giving to the Jewish public the opportunity to adopt its attitude that it thinks it fit to.

According to the *Western Gazette* the relations between the Jews and the Hungarians were not anymore as cordial as they were before World War I, whether it was about Romania or Hungary. The *Western Gazette* reflected this reality bringing as arguments a number of facts occurring even in the neighboring country, Hungary. Thus, in its number of 17th September 1929, was given the example occurred in the Hungarian town Ráb where at the beginning of a new school year the Jewish students were excluded from the classes in which the Hungarian students were learning. According to the *Western Gazette*, the respective measure was taken by the school manager. He would have ordered the departure of the Jewish children from their Hungarian mates establishing a center with a special program for the former. Besides the first three primary classes there have been set up three special sections where all the Jewish students have been transferred. Thus, a total of 86 Jewish students have been separated from their mates. This measure has caused a great opposition among the Jewry of Hungary and was rejected by the Hungarian *progressive* press²². There was, however, according to the *Western Gazette*, also another part of the press in Hungary, which approved the gesture, asking the system to be expanded to other schools, too²³. The manager motivated the measures that have been taken by appeal to the students’ interest. It is about that “*the Jewish students would celebrate also other 6 holidays, so that they could remain behind with their studies related to the Hungarian students. In order to remove such a situation, it was necessary to change the program*”²⁴.

We find another example of this kind in the *Western Gazette* of 16th November 1933. It would have happened, in accordance with the daily paper of Oradea, on 15th November 1933 in Debrecen, Hungary where the Hungarian students would have closed the gate of the Faculty of Letters, of the local University as for the Jewish students may not attend the courses. After the courses they opened the gate, and when the Jewish students have entered the University the Hungarians rushed on and beat them, so that “*the Jewish students could escape only with great difficulty, with their coats and hats torn*”²⁵.

²¹ Alter Scotus, *Între evrei și unguri*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 3rd June 1931, p. 5

²² *Elevii evrei sunt excluși din rândul elevilor unguri. Măsura unui director de liceu din Ungaria*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 17th September 1929, p. 4

²³ *Ibidem*

²⁴ *Ibidem*

²⁵ *Studentii evrei bătuți în universitatea din Debrețin*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 16th November 1933, p. 5

The *Western Gazette* also remembered that the Rector of the University promised to take measures so that this situation not happens again. With all the promises, the Jewish students were incredulous into the Rector's words "because lately these have been always subjected to ill-treatment by the Hungarian students"²⁶.

Finally, there have been also given other examples of this kind. One of them deserves to be mentioned, however, in the terms of the light that is substantially by the nature of the position held by Hegedüs Nándor as against the Jewish-Hungarian relations in Oradea and Romania in general. The *Western Gazette* speculated the trouble of Hegedüs Nándor's son who attended the courses of the Economic Academy in Budapest. Finding that he is a Jew, his Hungarian colleagues assaulted him and shouted in an unspeakable manner: "out from the Hungarian universities of the slug Jews"²⁷. According to the *Western Gazette* the applied correction was so serious that he needed several days of hospitalization. The conclusion of this adventure, as it was expressed by the signatory of the article, was a very harsh one: "The student's father, i.e., Mr. Hegedüs, former flagman of the Hungarian people of Oradea, went to Budapest and brought his kid home in this Romania blasphemous by him"²⁸. Too harsh with the policy of the neighboring country as against the Jewish community, the *Western Gazette* concluded that "out of the trouble of Mr. Hegedüs' boy it can be noted that Hungary despises the Jews even when they play to be Hungarians in the successional states"²⁹. The assertion wanted rather is a warning for the former deputy and press employer Hegedüs Nándor as against his attitude in the dispute between Jews and Hungarians, and his position vis-à-vis the Romanian population of the city of Oradea.

Accrediting the idea that the relations between Jews and Hungarians are far from what they have been once, the *Western Gazette* published on 9th July 1931 under the title A young Jew turns at Oradea the clouts received at Seghedin³⁰, a new material about "the old and cordial Jewish-Hungarian friendship". The episode told by the editor of the *Western Gazette*, Asan, had taken place on 7th July 1931, participating two young people, a Hungarian and a Jew: "The young man Paul Farkas, the son of the President of the Commercial Hale of Oradea attended last year the courses of the university of Seghedin, in Hungary (you know: there is only there where he has future). There was also studying the young Csapo, the son of the local engineer Csapo. You can imagine what joy for these young men from Oradea, when they have met just in Seghedin, at the same university. Especially Csapo was very happy when he saw Farkas, exclaiming: - What, you, Jewish boy, are you here, too? And, because of his joy he sprang at Farkas - but, you can see that meanwhile they forgot that the joy of reviewing is manifested by embracing and kissing - and he has hit over his cheek several student hands. The young Farkas wobbled a little but he has involved his trembling hands in his pocket. He had nothing to do. He had to declare to be happy about the beautiful demonstration of love that his compatriot did it to him.

²⁶ *Ibidem*

²⁷ Băiatul fostului deputat maghiaro-evreu Hegedus a fost bătut de către studenții din Budapesta, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 4th October 1934, p. 2

²⁸ *Ibidem*

²⁹ *Ibidem*

³⁰ Asan, Un tânăr evreu întoarce la Oradea palmele ce le-a primit la Seghedin, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 9th July 1931, p. 4

The day before yesterday, just one year after, the two young people met on the streets of their native town and wanted to celebrate well the last year meeting. But now there was the turn of Farkaş to give the honors. With the same joy Farkaş sprang at Csapo, gave back the gifts of the last year and he didn't forget to add some more bruises of bat, as rate of interest.

I forgot to mention that this year the young Farkaş came back home as a licensed in pharmacy so that it was no longer necessary to return in autumn to the University of Seghedin, where he could meet Csapo or another Hungarian student who could have found about the enjoyment from Oradea. I also think that the reader has observed out of the above lines that Csapo is Hungarian and Farkaş is Jew. And, as because between the Hungarians and Jews there is an old and cordial friendship, it is also manifested certainly in this way a little bit more exuberant³¹.

Described with humor, especially with irony, the episode wanted to be one to argue once the dissensions clearer and clearer between the two communities, divergences that occurred by including the violent reactions of those involved. For the signatory of the article, Asan, it was very clear, as he expressed in the final, that between the two communities there are irreconcilable positions generated, in fact, by opposite purposes, by the fact that a part of the Jewry of Transylvania wanted to promote the own interests through own political and economic forces, not by means of the Hungarians and of the Hungarian Party, as the Hungarians would manifest a certain contempt as against the Jews: *"I have always shown what in fact the Hungarians' love for the Jews was reduced at, and as one could see of the present case, we were not cheated and we wouldn't be refuted. The Hungarians use the Hungarian Jews only for Hungarian purposes, but ultimately they hate them and despise them. We don't cry for the Jews as they themselves are guilty. On the contrary, we'd like to happen this to them more often so, finally to open their eyes or to forsake the speculation of the dissimulation. I suppose the young Farkaş will be so cavalier as to admit in the privacy of his thought, that I am right"*³².

Closely with the representatives of the Jewish minority of Oradea and Transylvania as well, Asan urged them to be more attentive to the Hungarians of the whole Transylvania in parallel with changing the attitude towards Romania, a state in which, unlike the popular one, Hungary, enjoyed a much better position. At the same time, he signaled that the Jews would have all interest not to declare themselves anymore Hungarians in Transylvania whereas this fact supports once again the Hungarian minority which gives the impression that it is more numerous than it is in reality, thus weakening the consistency of their communities: *"What moral can the Jews conclude from Farkaş's happening? However, the episode (with repetition) can serve as a good lesson for the Jews of Transylvania, who do not cease to clap the spurs on the Hungarian chauvinism. Here, with us, they play to be Hungarians, but when they pass over the border, there in Hungary, they are slapped and howled down by the Hungarians. The young Farkaş, for example, didn't want to pursue the university studies in Romania, as he was stopped, I'm sure about it, by his philo-Hungarian feelings. He went to Hungary, scurried by the Hungarian patriotic feeling, for which he received immediately the reward that he deserved. And how affectively are the*

³¹ *Ibidem*

³² *Ibidem*

*Jews received in Hungary, we can infer it not only from the clouts the young Jewish of Oradea has caught, but also that that he had not the courage to revenge on the Hungarian territory, but only on the Romanian territory, under the protection of the domination that he despised in his Hungarian Jew's conscience. You can see that the Jews in Romania, however, feel more secure, more at their ease. How can they say on the other hand, that in our country the Jews are persecuted? How can Hungary ride in front of the face of abroad on the shoulders of the Jewish Hungarians in Transylvania?"*³³

The anti-Semitic disorders caused by the Hungarian Christian students in Budapest and the anti-Semitic movement of the Hungarian students began also to take effect in the Jewish circles in Transylvania. It was known that a part of the Transylvanian Jews were among the most fervent supporters of the Hungarian cause, "almost more chauvinistic Hungarians than the Hungarians"³⁴. "You'd have the impression that the Jews and Hungarians in Transylvania are good brothers and love each other so much that they can not be disunited. And look, here in Budapest the Judeans are beaten into fits on the streets and thrown out of the university halls by the Hungarian Christian students"³⁵, Alter Scotus noted in the *Western Gazette* on 21st December 1933.

It seems that something is changing, however, in the attitude of the Jews of Oradea towards what happened in Hungary to the address of the students came from their ranks and learned there. This fact was welcomed by the *Western Gazette* editorial by one of its most vehemence editors on the matter, Alter Scotus. He was referring to an article published in *Nagyváradi Napló*, a newspaper owned by Hegedüs Nándor, one of the leaders of the Jewish community of Oradea politically framed in the Hungarian Party. For Alter Scotus it was a sign that things are moving in this regard, too: "The local *Nagyváradi Napló* published in the past days an article signed by Mr. Zoltan Leitner expressing his sadness towards the anti-Semitic atrocities from Budapest. The article was written carefully and in a style so devious, that somehow not to disrespect the Hungarian ears. We were talked about the Hungarian culture and other things, that in fact they have never existed, as the Hungarian culture is due to some non-Hungarian factors, i.e., it is the fruit of other co-inhabiting nationalities. But the author of the article points out an interesting letter of a young Jew from Budapest to another Jew who was fighting here in front of the Hungarian people to defend the Hungarian cause. The Jew over there shows to this one from here that while he is struggling for the Hungarian people's interests here, the Hungarian people do want to know nothing about the Jewry's interests over there. So that, while the Jewish-Hungarian politician from here shouts: "Long live the Hungarianism!" the Hungarianism from Budapest shouts: "Down the Judeans!" Well that this fact was finally observed in the Jewish-Hungarian editorial offices in Transylvania. But tomorrow, when they will be again engaged in activities put on the Hungarian irredentism service we will remember this and it could happen to shout them, us like shout the Hungarians from Budapest, because they would deserve it totally. Besides, mocking at them in Hungary is the most pertinent reward for their attitude of misleaders of the public opinion and of fishers in troubled waters.

The Jews believed that if they play to be Hungarians will get entirely the

³³ *Ibidem*

³⁴ Alter Scotus, *Antisemitismul unguresc și evreii din Ardeal*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 2nd December 1933, p. 3

³⁵ *Ibidem*

*Hungarianism's destinies. Today they wake up that their plan has failed. It's too late and we are not willing to show them any credit. Each sleeps as his pen. We are curious to see if at least since now, the Jews of Transylvania will continue or not to ally with the Hungarian irredentism policy against the Romanian domination against this domination which nevertheless looked with eyes less sullen than the Hungarians from Budapest. We'd like to know what Mr. Ferdinand Hegedüs and the other Jews of the Hungarian Party think about the contesting of the civil rights of their brothers from Hungary and their bones are broken by those who are represented by the Hungarian Party and Mr. Hegedüs makes the game? The Nagyvárad Napló should ask this question to its Jewish readers and discuss the matter directly. Have the Jews of Transylvania reasons to consider to be engaged in the Hungarian politics and in the interests of the Hungarianism?*³⁶

In front of this declared evidence Alter Scotus, through him and the *Western Gazette* asked the legitimate question why the Jews of Transylvania, if not everyone in Romania, do not take position against what happens to the Jews in Hungary. Alter Scotus found an explanation for this situation: *"Why the Hungarian Jews do not cry in front of the world? But Jews are also enrolled in the Hungarian party. Here the issue is changing. The Jew proves by that that understands to identify himself with the point of view of the Hungarian political. Or it is known that this policy dreams to a return of the Hungarian domination, to a really of Transylvania with Hungary. In other words, the Jew from here enrolls in a community of ideas and feelings with the Hungarian people which is found in a camp totally opposite and enemy of the Romanianism. You'd have the impression that the Jews and Hungarians in Transylvania are good brothers and love so much each other that they can not be disunited. And look that there in Budapest the Jews are beaten into fits on the streets and thrown out of the university halls by the Hungarian Christian students. Then you wonder: why the Hungarians from over there do not have the same opinion about Jews as the Hungarians from here? Or: Why the Jews from here associate against the Romanian domination just with the Hungarians who fight on the other hand against the Semitism? We have already asked these questions and our Jewish fellows acted that they did not hear them. Not only that they did not hear them, but instead to express their wonder about what's happening in Budapest, they were screaming as loud as they could only against the Romanian anti-Semites although they have not managed yet to introduce "numerus clausus" in the Romanian universities, as it had been introduced in the Hungarian universities long time ago. And, the campaign of defamation of the Romanian state that the Jews from here had plotted and powered it abroad on the occasion of the anti-Semitic demonstrations in Romania, while there was nothing mentioned about the mistreatments very often suffered by the Jewry from Hungary on the part of the anti-Semitic Hungarians, is very fresh in our minds"*³⁷.

In the following period, the *Western Gazette* brought before the Jewish public of Oradea and Bihor County new data about the situation of the Jewry in Hungary. All had the undeclared intend to make the Jews to be in solidarity with the Romanian police and move away from the Hungarian one. It was a well known fact that in most cases, in Transylvania, there was a very good collaboration between Jews and Hungarians, what that has determined in several localities, including in the large cities, these two communities to dominate the political,

³⁶ *Ibidem*

³⁷ *Ibidem*

economic and social life in the detriment of the Romanians or other communities. As the policy of the Hungarian minority, supported by most of Jews, was returning of Transylvania within the Hungarian borders, the examples given in the *Western Gazette* were meant to convince the Jews to think once again about their position in this regard, and the presentation of some real data about the Jews' situation of Hungary had just this designation.

Thus, of an article published at the end of April 1933, entitled *Large anti-Semitic Movements in Hungary*, the inhabitants of Oradea found that at the beginning of April, the Hungarian parliamentary Mesko, the leader of an anti-Semitic party in Hungary, paid a visit to the Chancellor Hitler. On that occasion Mesko made the pledge to the German Chancellor to lead the anti-Semitic movement in Hungary on the same coordinates with those of the German Nazi party. According to the *Western Gazette*, after his return from Germany, the number of the Hungarian anti-Semites increased from one month to another, so that in a very short time, they reached from 400 to around 10 000, the strongest anti-Semitic organization being founded in the city of Kecskemet. In the locality of Nagykörös, situated near the above mentioned town, the leader of the anti-Semitic group was a student named Ladislau Lengyel-Kenyeres. The last had already been convicted three times for anti-Semitic inquietudes. The student was frequently asserting in public that the Hungarians do not consider the Jews to be human beings and especially honorable men³⁸. On 20th April 1933, a group of about 60 anti-Semites gathered in front of the police headquarters in Kecskemet demanded the Francis Szima's liberation, one of Hitler's leaders, who was arrested because together with other fellows has prevented the auction of a Jew to by a Christian merchant³⁹. According to the information provided by the *Western Gazette*, the Hungarian authorities' intervention was extremely anemic, suggesting certain complicity with the protesters as only some of the agitators were detained at the police station.

The *Western Gazette* presented another example in this respect, considered to be more serious. It was about an anti-Semitic gesture of a representative of the state, the Hungarian Interior Minister Gyula Gombos, otherwise known as an exponent of the anti-Semitic current in Hungary. The Minister Gombos denied the issuing of the newspaper "*Egyenoseg*" the official of the Jews of Hungary, for two weeks⁴⁰. In addition, it was retired to be distributed for three months. The Minister's of the Interior control was motivated by the fact that the newspaper attacked the policy carried by the German government headed by Hitler on Jews, a fact that has brought prejudices to the Hungarian-German friendship. This order caused great trouble in the Jewish circles not only from Hungary, but from other countries, too⁴¹.

Two weeks later, the *Western Gazette* published a new notice of the same category, with direct reference to the Jews of Oradea and Bihor County who had to observe so the large freedom of expression they had in Romania as Hungary. Thus, the reader learns that, on 6th May 1933, the *patriotic associations* in Hungary were requiring the removal of Jews out of the public services and affirming that all the Jewish societies of Hungary had to be dismantled. The Hungarian association Móve, after a general meeting, "*voted a motion and a memoir addressed to the Prime Minister Gyula Gombos by setting and asking to*

³⁸ *Mari mișcări antisemite în Ungaria*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 21st April 1933, p. 4

³⁹ *Ibidem*

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*

⁴¹ *Ibidem*

dissolve all the associations with international character and to prohibit further activation of all those associations which do not have on their basis the Christian faith and are not composed of Christian Hungarians as the Hungarian race will not be able to escape from the certain death only if the Jews will be excluded from all the public functions and all associations, either cultural or professional. From this memoir results that the Hungarian officials are decided to go towards Hitler's policy and will begin to take action against the Jews, what that produced an unpleasant impression in the Jewish circles of Hungary⁴². Gyula Gombos had already got the function of prime minister of Hungary and the country's policy was attached more and more to Germany as the revisionist objectives were common.

Ganging up the Hungarian policy on the Hitler's one was increasingly evident. The *Western Gazette* considered being suggestive in this regard the Hungarian government's position in the matter of the possible Jews hidden from Germany on the Hungarian territory. A number of Jews would have received shelter in the Sarkad region. Investigating this, the Hungarian Ministry of Interior gave a communication from which emerged that after the researches that have been done it has been established that neither in the region of Sarkad nor in other region of the country any Jew hidden from Germany hasn't been placed and the Ministry of Interior did not and will not give any authorization to enter the country the Jews refugees from Germany. The communication has produced concern among the Jews of Hungary, who were suspicious towards the government's policy, in Budapest⁴³, an increasingly close to that of Germany in this matter. It was another alarm signal of the *Western Gazette*, addressed to the Jews of Transylvania and of the non-concordance between their philo-Hungarian policy and their statute of Romanian citizens. On other occasion, the *Western Gazette* presented a resolution of the Communal Council of Czegled town in Hungary which forbade Jews to have a bath in the local swimming pool. As the largest part of the inhabitants of the town was Jews the swimming pool has suffered significant financial damages. By evidence of irony, the signatory of the article concluded that "*the mentality of the Hungarian neighbors is curious and we do not understand what interest they have that Jews should remain unwashed*"⁴⁴.

Finally, we'll mention another example of this category offered to the public opinion by the *Western Gazette*, a very suggestive one for the purposes of the government's policy in Budapest as regarding the Jews: the case of the military bishop Haas who has delivered at the radio station in Budapest a violent speech against the Jews demanding their exclusion from universities, trade and the Hungarian industry. The newspaper was presenting the point of view of the Jewish community in Hungary to this speech, they being surprised and outraged by the violent attack they received. The speech of the bishop Haas had serious anti-Semitic connotations, showing the Jews as being a *pestilence* on the back of the Hungarian people. The editor of the material concluded: "*The Jews play to be Hungarians up to chauvinism and the Hungarians despise them and work to discard their influence taking advantage only of their number in purely Hungarian purposes. I think that, finally, the Hungarian Jews had the opportunity this time to*

⁴² *Asociațiile patriotice din Ungaria cer eliminarea evreilor din serviciile publice*, 6th May 1933, p. 3

⁴³ *Guvernul ungar nu admite evreilor din Germania să intre în țară*, in *Gazeta de Vest*(*The Western Gazette*), 22nd May 1933, p.2

⁴⁴ *În Ungaria se interzice evreilor a face baie*, in *Gazeta de Vest*, (*The Western Gazette*) 29th September 1929, p. 4

*convince themselves and I also think that they will cure of their Hungarianism*⁴⁵.

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⁴⁵ Alter Scotus, *Antisemitism prin radio*, in *Gazeta de Vest (The Western Gazette)*, 15th August 1931, p. 3