

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish Studies Project at CEU was launched in 1996 with the aim of revitalizing the study of Jewish history, culture and society in a region where these topics were long considered taboo. The idea for a Jewish Studies Program emerged primarily from two members of our Board of Trustees: Leon Botstein, President of Bard College, and Bronisław Geremek, a distinguished medievalist, co-founder of the Solidarity movement in Poland and former Minister of Foreign Affairs. The guiding idea has been to create a center for teaching and research that would reflect the long and rich contribution of the Jews to the region served by the Central European University. The educational purpose of establishing the project has been to provide an opportunity for students who have scant or no access to Jewish Studies courses in their home countries to study Jewish history, society and culture in a critical and scholarly manner. Thanks to institutional support from the university (which has been endowed by George Soros) and generous grants from various foundations (Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, Rich Foundation) and organizations (American Jewish Committee, the Czech, Hungarian and Polish Jewish Communities), we have been able to build the Jewish Studies Project from the ground up.

Our first and second Jewish Studies Yearbooks, published in 2000 and 2002, gave a detailed account about our activities in the first six years of the project. In the 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 academic years, we continued our teaching and research activities, and we expanded our network to include many organizations, institutions and individuals that share similar goals and academic interests.

1. TEACHING PROJECT: THE JEWISH STUDIES SPECIALIZATION

Since the 2001–2002 academic year, the Jewish Studies Project has been offering a specialization in Jewish Studies for MA and PhD students. A formal recognition of a completed Jewish Studies specialization is offered to MA students in History and Nationalism Studies who earn 12 classroom credits in Jewish Studies classes and write a dissertation on a related topic. These students can choose from core courses in Jewish Studies taught by the permanent CEU faculty as well as a wide range of courses taught by visiting professors from Israel, North America and Western Europe. These course offerings are highly diverse, but all of them share a common focus on the ramified Jewish experience in Central and Eastern Europe. This regional focus – along with its rather secular agenda – sets the Jewish Studies Project at CEU apart from the many other Jewish Studies programs across the globe.

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The Jewish Studies courses (listed in Appendix 2) are attended by more than 30 students per year. They have been made possible thanks to generous support from the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation and the Rich Foundation (which supports Israel Studies courses). Since the 2001–2002 academic year, thirteen MA students have completed the Jewish Studies specialization, and six of them have gone on to pursue a PhD in Jewish Studies – five at CEU and one at New York University. Our current PhD students are writing on a wide range of topics: “Circumscribing Spiritual Territory: Leningrad Intelligentsia at Home, in Exile, in Exile at Home?” (Ksenia Polouektova); “Jewish National Politics in Interwar Czechoslovakia (1918–1938)” (Marie Crhová); “Jewish Paths to Modernity – The Case of Hungarian Orthodoxy” (Ágnes Erdős); “Generation 1927: Jewish and non-Jewish Intellectuals and Politics in Interwar Romania” (Camelia Craciun); and “Jews as ‘Minorities’ in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires: A Comparison of Imperial Policies and National Politics” (Sezin Öney). We are happy to report that all of these students have received grants from other academic centers and foundations to help them pursue their research.

The Jewish Studies Project established a fruitful cooperation with the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary and Jewish University, whose students can attend our courses and – upon successful completion – receive credit from their home institution. On the basis of a similar agreement, our students can attend courses in Yiddish language and literature at Budapest’s Eötvös Loránd University.

In the last three years we continued our *Jewish Studies Thesis and Research Support Program*. The program was initiated to encourage MA and PhD students at Central European University – from all departments and programs – to complete dissertations on diverse Jewish subjects and to carry out individual research projects related to their topics. All students at the university can compete for these grants, which have been funded by the American Jewish Committee and the Czech, Hungarian, and Polish Jewish communities. The support program offers grants to help students conduct archival research, consult scholars outside of Budapest, participate in conferences, and also publish the fruit of their intellectual labor. In the past three years, students from the History Department, the Nationalism Studies Program and the Medieval Studies Program participated in this program, and wrote MA theses on a wide range of topics, including: “The Image of ‘the Jew’ in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Satirical Journals”; “Jewish Identity in Bulgaria”; “The Concept of Assimilation in István Bibó’s Writings”; “The Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944”; “Problems of Restitution in Bohemia and Moravia, 1945–1948”; “The Place of Jews in Inter-war Polish Society in light of the Debate over Ritual Slaughter;” “Nineteenth-Century Russian Antisemitism and its Impact on Georgia: Jewish Show Trials.”

2. JUDAICA LIBRARY

One of our main goals has been to develop the Judaica collection in the CEU library, with classic works as well as the latest scholarship in the field. As a result of these efforts and thanks to the generous support of the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, our library now offers one of the most extensive collections of English-language Jewish scholarship on modern Jewish history, culture and thought in Central and Eastern Europe.

3. RESEARCH PROJECT

Since Jewish topics were often disregarded or considered taboo in Communist times, little serious research was carried out on Jewish subjects prior to 1989. To fill in gaps in our knowledge of the history, sociology, culture, religion of Jews of the region, CEU Jewish Studies launched two research programs. The first one, *"Jews and Politics"* under the direction of András Kovács, aimed at to analyze the participation of Jewish politicians and political institutions which claimed to represent the political interests of Jewish communities in the countries of the region. Our purpose has been to support research on primary sources related to Jewish politics in various regional archives. The results of this research were partly published in the previous yearbook.

As a continuation of the first research project on Jewish politics, we decided to launch a new research project, *"Jewish issues in Communist archives,"* in 2002. Although some research conducted after 1990 examined the post-war history of East-Central European Jewry and the "Jewish policy" of the communist parties of the region, the most important documents were still buried in the archives. Not only had they not yet been published, but they had not even been systematically examined. The goal of our project was to take the first steps in this enormous task. Due to the size of the material, the research project did not aim, of course, to uncover and publish all the documents. In the past year, our primary goal was to determine the location and accessibility of the relevant material; to create an index of the most important issues appearing in these documents; and to publish some of the most important materials. The research team, led by András Kovács, carried out research in eight different archives in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, and identified, indexed and annotated more than 600 relevant files. For this volume we selected several documents for publication, and we intend to publish a larger selection of documents in a separate volume. The CEU Research Fund supported the initial research, and support from the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation will enable us to continue our research in the next two years.

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4. PUBLIC LECTURES AND EVENTS

Since 1999 the Jewish Studies has been running a public lecture series. The invited lecturers are renowned scholars from East-Central Europe, Western Europe, the United States and Israel. In the 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 academic years, we hosted seventeen bi-weekly lectures, which attracted audience from CEU and the public at large. Many of the texts published in this yearbook are from the lecture given in this period. (For a full list of lectures, see Appendix 1). We would like to thank the Rich Foundation for its generous support in making the lecture series and the publication of this yearbook possible.

With Pasts Inc., the Jewish Studies Project invited Moshe Idel to deliver the first Ion Petru Culianu Lectures on Religion in September 2003. This five-part lecture series, entitled “Psychanodia in Jewish Mysticism,” was part of a PhD seminar offered by Sorin Antohi, entitled “Approaching Religion.”

With the Department of Medieval Studies, the Jewish Studies Project hosted a session at the interdisciplinary workshop, “Segregation, Integration and Assimilation in Medieval Towns,” dealing with Jewish communities in European and North African towns. Lectures were given by Mónika Mezei (Budapest) on “Jews in Early Medieval Towns as Described by Gregory of Tours”; Emily R. Gottreich (Berkeley) “On the Origins of the Walled Jewish Quarter of Marrakesh” and Hanna Zaremska (Warsaw) on “Jewish Conspiracy against Christians in Wroclaw in 1453”.

As in past years, the Department of Medieval Studies also co-sponsored a number of public lectures, including Nicholas de Lange’s talk on “The Orthodox Churches in Dialogue with Judaism” and Professor De Lange’s seminar on “Byzantium and the Jews: Problems and Results of Research.”

András Kovács