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## Limits of Tolerance in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century in Transylvania.

### The Case of the Jews.

Promotion of religious tolerance was one of the essential elements of the eighteenth-century Austrian program of reforms inspired by Enlightenment ideology. These reforms were directed towards the modernization of the empire with the intention of consolidating its precarious unity. This constitutive element acquired a special importance in respect to the cultural variety and denominational pluralism represented by the Great Principality of Transylvania, where the social equilibrium depended fundamentally upon the maintenance of an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptable to all inhabitants.

Initiated in Maria Theresa's age, tolerance was, at this stage, unequally implemented at different levels of society, functioning most effectively in the reconstruction of Transylvania's Orthodox Bishopric, and the institutionalization and structural consolidation of Transylvanian Greek Catholicism. The policy with regard to Protestant denominations and the Jews, however, was still very restrictive. Thus, in the last years of Maria Theresa's reign, the Jews lived under the threat of a banishment project which proposed the general expulsion of all those who had settled in the Principality during the last three decades, while the rest were to be massed in Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia], the sole settlement area, designated as early as the *Approbatæ Constitutiones* code adopted a century previously.<sup>1</sup>

The accession to the throne of Joseph II brought about a fundamental change. At that time, tolerance encompassing all Christian and non-Christian denominations was manifested in much more effective ways in order to turn all the inhabitants of the Empire, irrespective of their origin and religious belief, into useful taxpaying citizens of the state with similar, well-settled rights and duties. Within this context, the provisions to expel the Jews of Transylvania or mass them in Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia] were postponed *sine die*, while a comprehensive bill was in preparation that would change the status of Transylvanian Jews and make possible their integration into society. But the array of tolerance decrees concerning Jews, implemented in the Empire's hereditary provinces—in Hungary as well as in Galicia—were not put into effect in Transylvania, where the decade of Joseph's reign brought about a range of partial measures which only foreshadowed a future extensive bill that was never enacted. These procedures liberalized the practice of economic activities particular to the Jews of this period (alcohol distillation, corn trade, itinerant trade), regulated the matrimonial system annulling certain abusive taxes, allowed the Jews to work on Sundays and on other Christian holidays, and forbade midwives to baptize Jewish children at birth without their parents' consent, establishing severe punishments for those who broke this regulation. The baptism of Jewish children under the age of 18, when they were regarded as being able to choose or change religion, was generally prohibited. The situation of children in families in which one parent had been baptized was settled as follows: if the father was baptized the child passed to Catholicism; if the mother was baptized the child remained unbaptized as long as his Jewish father lived. He could be baptized in the Catholic faith after his father's death, provided that there were no Jewish grandparents anymore. On the other hand, the strong interdictions concerning conversion from Christian denominations to Judaism stipulated by *Approbatæ*

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<sup>1</sup> *Izvoare și mărturii referitoare la evreii din România*, II/2 (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1990), pp. 197–98, 203–10, 219–23, 299–336; A. Schaser, 'Die Juden Siebenbürgens vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert', in *Südost-Forschungen* (Munich, 1990), pp. 71–74; M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor din Transilvania (1623–1944)* (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1994), pp. 26–30.

remained in force.<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, until the legal emancipation of the Jews in 1867, these regulations remained valid except for a sole attempt to make them more harsh in 1832. That year the Court consulted the Gubernium of Transylvania with regard to the propriety of implementing, in Transylvania, the aulic resolution of 25 November 1810, designed for the hereditary provinces, referring to the compulsory or even forced baptism of children who refused to follow their baptized father. According to the competent opinion of the *Director Fiscalis*, who pointed out the lack of legal grounds for putting such a measure into effect in Transylvania, the Gubernium decided to retain the status quo until a legislative regulation of the general status of the Jews in this part of the Empire could be established.<sup>3</sup>

Although the regulations issued during the reign of Joseph II were promulgated by bishops of all denominations to be followed accordingly by the subordinate clergy, they were only put into effect with some difficulty. This was owing to tendencies towards proselytism and still prevailing intolerance that may be illustrated by a famous case that occurred in the last decade of the eighteenth century. A confrontation emerged between the Catholic Bishopric and the provincial administrative authorities on the one hand, and the forces—still powerful at Court—promoting a policy of tolerance inspired by the atmosphere of Joseph’s age, on the other.<sup>4</sup>

The case involved the Jewish tradesman Löbl Deutsch, the first person to gain, after persistent solicitations and despite the obstinate hostility of the local authorities, the Gubernium’s permission to settle temporarily in Kolozsvár [Cluj], practice his trade, rent a house, and practice his religion in his lodgings.<sup>5</sup> In the summer of 1791, when this conflict reached its climax, his 11-year-old daughter was enticed into and sequestered in the Catholic priest’s residence in order to be baptized. In his petitions addressed to the Catholic bishop, Ignác Batthyányi, to governor György Bánffy, and, eventually, to the Court of Vienna, Löbl Deutsch demanded that the little girl, who had been seen at the window of the priest’s house crying and calling for her mother to take her home, be set free. He cited the law prohibiting the baptizing of Jewish children without their parents’ consent and, at the same time, he volunteered to allow her to attend a Christian school until she was able to decide on her own what religion she would adopt.

As the Aulic Chancellery ordered an official inquiry, the Catholic bishop asserted that the girl herself had taken the initiative, acknowledged before official witnesses, to convert to Catholicism. As far as the age and the parents’ consent were concerned, the bishop advocated an exception in this case, making reference to the precedent of the Hungarian Catholic bishops’ request to generally overthrow these restrictions. At the same time, he hinted at the need to act in favor of “the prestige of religion” and also to take into account “the Jews’ hatred of Christians”. The Gubernium also supported this point of view, and the Aulic Chancellery declared that it considered what had happened as an accomplished fact, although the bishop should be “more careful” in the future in complying with imperial orders. However, Emperor Francis’s verdict was extremely severe: the little girl should be returned to her family, and when she came of age she should decide about her religion. The Catholic bishop was severely reprimanded for breaking the law.

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<sup>2</sup> Hungarian National Archives, Budapest, The Transylvanian Gubernium Archive (hereafter: AG), F 46, No. 28, 395, 635/1790; J. Karniel, ‘Das Toleranzpatent Kaiser Josephs II für die Juden Galiziens und Lodomeriens’, in *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte* XI (Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 55–89; Schaser, ‘Die Juden Siebenbürgens’, in *Südost-Forschungen*, pp. 74–91; M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor*, pp. 81–87.

<sup>3</sup> AG, F 46, No. 13276/1832.

<sup>4</sup> AG, F 46, No. 1749, 4178/1792; 1355, 1852, 2455, 4266, 5297, 6866, 7604, 9184, 9678/1793; 2673, 3267, 3289/1794; 1638, 1864/1795; 765, 2626, 3560/1796; 1877, 9804/1799; 2012, 3987/1801; State Archives of Sibiu, Brukenthal Fund, NI-5, No. 38.

<sup>5</sup> E. Jakab, *Kolozsvár története*, Vol. 3 (Budapest, 1888), pp. 678–88.

This decision, obviously inspired by the circles—still influential around the emperor—that supported Joseph’s policy and were willing to hinder the Catholic Church’s tendencies toward autonomy and proselytism, faced an accomplished fact. In the meantime, the little girl had been baptized and sent to the Ursuline convent of Nagyszeben [Sibiu], although the Chancellery had ordered the suspension of the baptism until the end of the inquiry. In order to counteract the official reprimand, the bishop set up an investigation commission, including the Catholic priest of Nagyszeben [Sibiu] and two city councilors, that procured a document written by the girl—called, after the baptism, Karolina Lebel—which substantiated her decision as well as her appeal to forbid her mother’s visits which would unsettle “her peace of mind”. Submitting the commission’s report, the bishop applied again for the lowering of baptism age limit to 14 years according to the precedent of a case in Hungary, since to return the girl to her family would constitute “a blow to the Catholic faith” and encouragement of the “Jewish heresy” as she would be exposed again to ceremonial prescriptions and other “superstitions” peculiar to this religion.

Although supported once again by the Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery strongly disapproved of these proceedings on account of the “unfavorable impact on the numerous Jewish population” and the reiterated disregard of imperial orders. Consequently, the Gubernium was urged to implement the Court’s decision without delay. This time also, in connivance with the local administration, the bishop and the Catholic circles around him succeeded in finding a subterfuge. Under the pretext of the decline of the girl’s health as a result of over two years of harassment, she was entrusted to the care of her godmother, countess Karolina Gyulai, born Haller, who took her first to Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș] and then to the countryside, but not before subjecting her to a new inquiry carried out by the *Tabla Regia* and by the local authorities before which the girl, who was said to have suffered a nervous breakdown, asserted her wish not to return to her parents.

The Aulic Chancellery considered this as an outrageous disregard of its authority. What was at stake now in this conflict went beyond the case under consideration, turning into a conflict of principle in respect of the Catholic Church’s subordination to the state. Looking for a way to bring to order and admonish bishop Batthyányi, the Court resorted to Löbl Deutsch’s additional claim for indemnity for the expenses of this lingering lawsuit. The Gubernium, whose ecclesiastic commission was presided over by the bishop himself, did its best to establish the bishop’s innocence, because in this way it would be impossible to compel him to offer reparations. The petitioner was invited to pursue his claims in court. While in August 1794 the Aulic Chancellery’s tone grew harsher in asserting that the illegal baptism and the refusal to return the girl were administrative not juridical issues (therefore Löbl Deutsch’s claim for reparation was a matter which should also be solved by these means within 15 days), the Catholic party took a decisive step aimed at preventing the solution urged by the Court. Karolina Lebel was engaged and married to a Christian, István Vass, so that she would no longer be able to go back to her family.

Grasping the full meaning of this flagrant defiance of its authority, the Aulic Chancellery declared the marriage contracted without the parents’ consent illegal, representing a “disregard for the sovereign’s authority” of the utmost gravity, because it “may stir up reactions” in a country with so many different denominations. The Emperor decided to admonish the Gubernium and to find legal means to punish the bishop and the countess for their disobedience. Afterwards attenuating its position, the Aulic Chancellery suggested that, for the time being, the bishop and the countess, who believed they were acting “in a good cause”, should not be summoned to court, and that the Gubernium should be consulted with regard to the validity of the marriage, the legal procedures to admonish the culprits, and the compensation that the father should be offered for his costs.

Due to the artful maneuvers of the local party favorable to the bishop, the *Director*

*Fiscalis* and the Gubernium came to the conclusion that the laws of the land did not necessarily require the parents' consent—the marriage as well as the baptism, being contracted by her own will—and that the reparation claims were groundless. They attached evidence produced by the doctor of the city of Kolozsvár [Cluj] certifying her fever and “psychic disturbance” engendered by the fear of her parents and “the torments of Hell” that compelled her to ask to return to her family and to the Jewish faith. However, an inquiry commission set up after her recovery managed to get a statement of the withdrawal of these intentions.

The Aulic Chancellery, asserting that the Gubernium's decision was invalid and noticing a disagreement between the date of the doctor's certificate and the date mentioned in the inquiry commission's report which put into question the accuracy of the latter, declared that punitive measures be taken against all those involved; the actual point being “not so much the situation of the Jewish girl, but the disregarding of imperial orders”. Consequently, the emperor's resolution of February 1796 concluded that Bishop Batthyányi should immediately pay reparations of 2,000 florins and that the *Director Fiscalis* and the Gubernium shall be officially reprimanded for their report.

Batthyányi insisted several times that the decision should be cancelled as it “injured his bishop's authority, to the detriment of religion and state”. He expressed his frustration at the thought that “the Court deemed the baptism of Jews illegal”. Once again he hinted at the Hungarian precedent of lowering the age limit to 14, and even resorted to the absurd pretext that he had not been able to find out the girl's real age because of the Jews' lack of registers and the parents' refusal to cooperate. Nevertheless, this rearguard harassment proved pointless as the Gubernium paid the reparations and later on retrieved the money from the legacy of the bishop who died in 1798.

The limits of tolerance, emphasized by this episode at the level of the Catholic ecclesiastical elite and of the local or provincial authorities, turned out to be more precarious at the level of the ‘common people’, where we may find open outbreaks of hostility nourished by long-lasting ignorance and prejudice. Periodic reiteration of ritual murder charges in different areas of the Principality, in spite of official endeavors to uproot this mediaeval prejudice and notwithstanding the fact that on each occasion the accusations had been proved groundless, is the clearest expression of the limits of the diffusion of tolerance.

Despite the fact that, as early as 1792, the Gubernium had ordered the bishops of all denominations to proclaim to the people, through the subordinate clergy, the groundlessness of the blood libel,<sup>6</sup> repeated instances are recorded in Szolnok [Solnocul] Interior county (1810),<sup>7</sup> in Déda [Deda] (1825), Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureş] (1828), Fogaras [Făgăraş] district (1841), in the seat of Szereda [Miercurea] (1844), in Kolozsvár [Cluj] (in 1845 and 1846), Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia] (1846), and Erdőszentgyörgy [Sângeorzu de Pădure] (1863).<sup>8</sup>

In 1825, in Déda [Deda] (Torda [Turda] county), following the disappearance of Pasc Vasilica's baby and the testimony of his five-year-old sister, who said that he had been taken away by “a bearded Jew”, the bells tolled to warn of danger and all the Jews were taken into custody. The suspicions aroused by the reactivation of latent prejudices and hostile feelings were directed against the schoolmaster and ritual slaughterer Abraham Hersch who had been seen dressed up for the Sabbatical prayer, although it was Friday, and who was incriminated by the testimony of his pupil, Josip Simon. However, he was defended by the Orthodox priest of the village who stated, at the trial held in Szászrégen [Reghin] between 8 November and 3 December 1825, that the deposition of the under-age witness had been obtained by means of

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<sup>6</sup> E. Jakab, *Kolozsvár története*, p. 682.

<sup>7</sup> *Siebenbürger Bote*, 1846, 51, pp. 204–05.

<sup>8</sup> *Korunk*, 1863, No. 131.

pressure, gifts, and promises. The fact that the child was later found in the garbage pit of the next garden, his corpse torn to pieces by pigs, as well as the fact that medical experts confirmed that he had not died of blood loss but suffocated by earth, led to the acquittal and release of those under arrest. Nevertheless, they were denied the right to complain against ill-treatment (they had been put in chains). The false witness' sentence was six months' imprisonment and fifty lashes.<sup>9</sup>

Three years later, in Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș], the maidservant of shoemaker Sámuel Beke took away his 6-month-old baby and was eventually tracked down in Székelybós [Bozeni] village. She denounced Lebel Hersch, bailiff of Count László Rhédei of Erdőszentgyörgy [Sângeorzu de Pădure], for having employed her to bring him the baby. The maid charged him with a similar deed committed five years ago, also in Erdőszentgyörgy [Sângeorzu de Pădure] as well as with the claim that a year ago he had asked her former master of Szásznádas [Nadeș] to sell him his child. On the basis of this testimony, the authorities of Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș] made a search on the same night, rushing onto Count Rhédei's land, and arrested and put into chains Lebel Hersch and his family. The unrest among the villagers stirred up by these events led to the stoning of another Jew, Sámuel Pál. However, the investigation proved, on every point, the fallacious character of the maid's deposition. There was no trace of murder on the spot she indicated as burial place of the victim killed 5 years previously. Her former master from Szásznádas [Nadeș] strongly denied her statements and ultimately the maid withdrew all her previous accusations.

The petition of 13 August 1828, made on behalf of all the Jews of Târnava county and the seats of Maros [Mureș] and Udvarhely [Odorhei] by the released prisoners, referred to this episode as new evidence of the groundlessness of the ritual murder charge—proved a long time before by Moses Mendelssohn—and asked for official confirmation of the falseness of the superstition. Although they also required compensation for the injuries and brutality inflicted upon them, the Gubernium seemed satisfied with their release. Still, it did order an inquiry into the police officers who had trespassed on Count Rhédei's domain without his consent. The excuses of the police and local administrative authorities that justified their illegal proceedings on the ground of “the general opinion that Jews make use of Christian blood”, as well as of the assertion that “if Jews find shelter in every parish, Christians' lives will no longer be safe”, reflected a degree of intolerance beyond the prejudices of ordinary people. This intolerance was deep-seated in the mentality of the townspeople and the petty provincial nobility that customarily furnished the local administration with personnel. Eventually, the episode concluded with the Gubernium compelling the head of Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș] police to offer an apology to the Count for infringing on his noble prerogatives.<sup>10</sup>

An instance which aroused an animated debate in Transylvanian Saxon journals occurred in Felsővenice [Veneția de Sus] (Fogaras [Făgăraș] county). In 1841, the serf Simion Grecu, sent by his master to work in the village's alcohol distillery for three weeks, was found in the forest with his throat cut. The representative of justice on the Count's domain, Sámuel Benkő, who, as he had been playing cards the previous day with the two Jewish overseers of the distillery, would have “sold” them the serf, was charged with murder. A villager claimed to have seen them going to the forest together. Soon afterwards, he withdrew his deposition and the inquiry commission came to prove only the domainial judge's habitual ill-treatment of the serfs which finally led to his dismissal.

What is interesting with regard to the mentality of the period is the fact that the ample publicity surrounding the case in the Saxon press of Nagyszeben [Sibiu] and Brassó [Brașov] called forth a vehement reply from the district physician, Wilhelm Capesius. He condemned

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<sup>9</sup> F. Lövy in *Magyar-Zsidó Szemle*, 1914, XXXI, pp. 209–15

<sup>10</sup> AG, F 46, No. 7789, 11248/1828; 415/1829.

the practice of spreading uncorroborated rumors grounded on testimony, later withdrawn, while the inquiries based on the testimony were still going on. The editorial board of the Nagyszeben [Sibiu] newspaper was compelled to publicly exculpate itself, stating that it only wished to obtain enlightenment and edification. At the same time the board expressed its contention that the accusation had not brought about violent persecutions as had happened in Damascus, a case which had outraged European public opinion. The editor-in-chief, Josef Benigni, a firm opponent of the Jewish presence in the Saxon districts, dropped a malicious hint: “it is merely a matter of brandy and money rather than of Christian blood”.<sup>11</sup>

The press of the period periodically describes manifestations of common urban or rural prejudice against the Jews in the years just preceding the revolution of 1848. This was a time when the Jews’ massive demographic explosion in the Principality through immigration, as well as the hard times of misery and high prices imputed to their economic activity, generated hostility and resentment. The inhabitants of a village in Szereda [Miercurea] seat blamed a Jew who had passed by for the death of a herd-keeper found in the field with his throat cut. Ordinary people believed that the Jews who picked up rags for paper manufacturing were involved in “suspect witchcraft” practices. In Kolozsvár [Cluj], where between 1845 and 1846 relations between the local authorities and the Jewish community became more and more tense, the blood libel was welcomed as an excuse for expelling all the Jews from the town. In Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia], the disappearance of a child brought about the assault and devastation of the house of the Jew who was held responsible by the town’s military men and students. Only the fact that the child was found at home put an end to the violence. The local Jewish community replied with a protest of 25 May 1846, published in the Transylvanian Hungarian and Saxon press, which emphasized the fact that Jewish religious laws were contrary to such practices.<sup>12</sup>

As demonstrated by the brief account of these instances as well as by contemporary depositions, ritual murder charges in Transylvania did not stir up violence or generalized brutality, since they had their nefarious effects on a local stage and within a rather limited area. At the level of public mentality, however, the consequences were pernicious. They represented an obstacle to modernization and contributed to the strong resistance of certain urban communities to the acceptance and integration of Jews. Additionally, these instances delayed juridical or dietary measures aimed at a gradual release of restrictions as preliminaries to full juridical emancipation.

Nevertheless, only in isolated cases did the opposition of certain urban communities against the integration of Jews reach a climax in outbursts and threats of violence. Thus, in Fogaras [Făgăraș], a dispute lasting several years concerning the synagogue, which had been built without the local authorities’ consent, was brought to a conclusion in 1836 by the demolition of the building by the townspeople and a threat to banish all the Jews.<sup>13</sup> In 1843, in Nagyenyed [Aiud], written warnings that Jews would be chased away and the houses of people who sheltered them would be set on fire were being spread.<sup>14</sup> In the spring of 1848, the wave of violent anti-Jewish persecutions in Hungary’s towns reached Transylvania; in Kolozsvár [Cluj] the provision to expel all the Jews within a year was preceded by threats of violence and sporadic outbreaks which caused the immediate departure from town of several Jewish families. In Nagyenyed [Aiud], the Jews were warned to leave town within a couple of days.<sup>15</sup> The year 1862 was marked by an outburst of violence against the background of

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<sup>11</sup> *Siebenbürger Wochenblatt*, 1841, No. 15; *Siebenbürger Bote*, 1841, 16, p. 65; 17, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *Erdélyi Híradó*, 1844, 72, p. 428; 93, p. 555; 1846, 150, pp. 361–62; *Múlt és Jelen*, 1845, 76, p. 451; 1846, 91, p. 532; *Siebenbürger Bote*, 1846, 51, pp. 204–05.

<sup>13</sup> AG, F 46, No. 5300/1833; 4355, 13077/1837; 8856, 11128/1838; 10451, 13063/1839; 1447/1840.

<sup>14</sup> AG, F 46, No. 13494/1843.

<sup>15</sup> AG, F 46, No. 6004, 6607, 7460, 8611, 9238, 9445, 10669/1848; *Revoluția de la 1848–1849 din Transilvania*,

hostility stimulated by a lack of grain and high prices, which were imputed to black marketeering and alcohol distillation, chiefly practiced by Jews. An incident which occurred in the synagogue of Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș], where the Jews responded violently to an act of desecration committed by a drunk apprentice boy, led the following day to the devastation of the synagogue by many townspeople, the pillage of Jewish stores, and attacks against Jews who had not managed to flee town. Violence spread to the neighboring villages as well as to several villages of the Transylvanian Plain where Jewish overseers' property was set on fire.<sup>16</sup>

In all these instances the official response was unequivocal: disturbances and violence were condemned and punitive measures taken against the culprits. In Fogaras [Făgăraș], high officials of the town were taken to court and the Jewish community was offered reparations. In Nagyenyed [Aiud], they issued an order to seek out and punish the authors of threats “in conflict with the more tolerant spirit of the epoch”. The expulsion provisions of the spring of 1848 were overturned, and the riots of 1862 were put down by county police and the army.

While rejecting violence as a means of solving the Jewish question, the authorities took care that the boundaries of tolerance, stipulated by the law, should not be trespassed. Therefore, if the conversion of Jews to one of the Christian denominations was officially accepted and enjoyed a good press during this period, the few instances of conversion to Judaism were viewed with the utmost severity by the authorities. A case of this kind occurred in 1841, when a maidservant of Sfântu Gheorghe converted to Judaism with the local Reformed priest's consent, in order to be able to marry the Jewish father of her child. This caused disquiet even at the Court in Vienna, and an aulic decree ordered the separation of the two, the punishment and arrest of Sára Nagy and her father, the suing of the Jew and of the priest who celebrated the marriage, and severe ecclesiastical measures against the Reformed priest.<sup>17</sup>

A similar incident occurred in 1851, after the revolution, when Chief Rabbi Abraham Friedman, in Gyulafehérvár [Alba Iulia] to celebrate the marriage between the widow Katalin Mikó of Nagyrápolc [Rapoltu Mare] and a Jew, made use of the local Reformed priest's certification that enabled the bride to change religion if she remarried and the bridegroom's religion required her conversion. The authorities again responded vehemently, ordered the annulment of the marriage, and the admonishment of the priest of Nagyrápolc [Rapoltu Mare] by his bishop. The Chief Rabbi escaped punishment only by making use of a previous government document which had, by mistake, asked him for “a list of those converted to the Israelite religion”, and which he had interpreted as an official removal of the interdictions in this respect. On 4 June 1854, the ministerial disposition addressed to the Transylvanian authorities strongly reinforced the interdiction of conversions to Judaism and the firm refusal to acknowledge the validity of mixed marriages.<sup>18</sup>

These interdictions remained in force after the civil emancipation of the Jews in Hungary and Transylvania in 1867. It was only in 1895 that a bill acknowledged the equality of the Jewish religion with the other denominations. During this period, a sole exception was recorded: the Sabbatarian community of Bözödújfalú [Bezidul Nou] which, despite the pressures and persecutions inflicted upon them by the administrative and ecclesiastical authorities, stuck to their Judaic rite adopted in the seventeenth century, and in 1869 converted to Judaism, interpreting the bill of emancipation of the Jews in this way, and

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1st ed. ( Bucharest: Academiei, 1977), pp. 287–89; 2nd ed. (Bucharest, 1979), pp. 42–43, 71–72, 86–87.

<sup>16</sup> *Korunk*, 1862, No. 141–42, 144, 149, 154; M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor*, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> AG, F 46, No. 4165/1844; 1485/1845.

<sup>18</sup> Hungarian National Archives, Budapest, The Archive of the Neo-Absolutist Epoch, D 4, The Ministry of Religion and Education, Transylvania 1848–1860, Package 73, pp. 745–55.

persisted in this faith up until their tragic end in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.<sup>19</sup>

These instances emphasize the fact that it was still hard to pass beyond the boundaries of tolerance. It was a gradual and difficult process which proceeded step by step by means of an educational influence assiduously and persistently exercised upon public opinion over decades by the concerted action of different actors, of which the press was the most important. During the three decades preceding the juridical emancipation of the Jews in 1867, the Hungarian, Transylvanian Saxon, and Romanian newspapers were unanimous in condemning prejudice and violence wherever they arose. Famous cases which stirred European public opinion—for instance, the ritual murder charge followed by bloody persecutions in Damascus in 1840 and the Mortara case in Rome in 1858, when a Jewish boy was sequestered and converted by force—were laid before the public, accompanied by comments which condemned such deeds as “harmful for society’s spiritual life and calm”.<sup>20</sup> Anti-Jewish outbursts in Hungarian towns in the spring of 1848 also generated unfavorable echoes in the Transylvanian press, which contributed to the prevention of their re-enactment in the Principality. The idea of the Jews’ collective responsibility for individual crimes was rejected, pointing out that “the actions of certain people cannot serve as an excuse for hating an entire nation”.<sup>21</sup> There was severe condemnation of attitudes of the kind expressed by the people of Kolozsmonostor [Cluj-Mănăştur]—exposed by the press of Kolozsvár [Cluj]—who commented, on seeing that a Jew’s barn was burning: “Let it burn, it’s the Jew’s.”<sup>22</sup> The tendency to blame the Jews, and only the Jews, for all evils was combated in the newspapers, emphasizing that most of the moral shortcomings they were charged with were due to oppression. Exclusivism in confessional matters as well as the striking abuse of the Jews committed by a number of administrative authorities or landowners, were also condemned.<sup>23</sup>

This compassion and defense of the oppressed, characteristic of a liberal spirit, attempted to make some headway amongst the tide of anachronistic mediaeval prejudices and mentalities. They were intermingled with attempts to propagate mutual tolerance, in an effort to generate a much needed evolution towards civilized cohabitation within the Principality’s cultural variety and denominational diversity. The social integration of the Jews—the fact that they gained access to public schools, casinos, and reading societies—was welcomed as “proof of enlightenment and modern principles”, manifestations of “the liberal spirit of the epoch”.<sup>24</sup> The progress of the study of modern languages (German, Hungarian) in Jewish schools and synagogues was persistently displayed. Jewish communities’ donations to disaster victims of all confessions and for public cultural ends were cited as instances worthy of being followed and proof of a desire for inter-confessional cooperation.<sup>25</sup> In turn, the support of local communities in the setting up of synagogues, the fact that representatives of all Christian denominations attended ceremonies for laying cornerstones or for the inauguration festivities of Jewish religious buildings (for instance, in Fogaras [Făgăraş] in 1857: this had particular significance in light of the nefarious precedent)<sup>26</sup> emphasized a notable development on the road to establishing an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.

The extension of this spirit from festive and official events to everyday life was

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<sup>19</sup> Kohn Sámuel, *Die Sabbätharier in Siebenbürgen* (Budapest–Leipzig, 1894); M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor*, pp. 46–49.

<sup>20</sup> *Transsilvania*, 1840, 36, pp. 141–42; 37, pp. 146–48; *Kolozsvári Közlöny*, 1858, 87, p. 363; 89, p. 371; 91, p. 380; 93, p. 389.

<sup>21</sup> *Múlt és Jelen*, 1841, 34, p. 266.

<sup>22</sup> *Erdélyi Híradó*, 1846, 136, p. 250.

<sup>23</sup> *Nemzeti Társalkodó*, 1832, I, 5, pp. 72–80; *Vasárnapi Újság*, 1847, 689, pp. 491–93; 1848, 716, pp. 109–10.

<sup>24</sup> *Erdélyi Híradó*, 1841, I, 18, p. 70; 1844, 20, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> *Siebenbürger Bote*, 1841, 26, p. 103; *Transsilvania*, 1860, 11–12, p. 43; *Satellit*, 1845, 9, p. 40; 1846, 103, p. 419; *Erdélyi Híradó*, 1838, II, 12, p. 45; 1840, I, 52, p. 206; 1844, 54, p. 320; 73, p. 435.

<sup>26</sup> *Kolozsvári Lap*, 1850, 83, p. 331; 1851, 310, p. 1237; *Kolozsvári Közlöny*, 1857, 140, p. 569; 1860, 66, p. 274.

marked by episodes such as the one recorded in Kolozsvár [Cluj] in 1839, when a Christian family on the outskirts of the town chose a Jewish family as godparents of their child. Another such incident was noted in 1851, when a Jewish schoolmaster acted as best man at a Catholic marriage. These were cases which the press depicted as “proof of religious tolerance and fair-mindedness”.<sup>27</sup> The deed of a Jewish cart driver who drove, free of charge, a poor Christian family to Nagyvárad [Oradea] allowed the newspaper of Kolozsvár [Cluj] which recounted the episode to underline the fact that “virtue and a noble heart do not represent the exclusive property of one or another people, denomination or religion, but honest people may be found in every nation”.<sup>28</sup> In 1841, *Gazeta de Transilvania*, generally not too favorable to the Jews, warned its readers in the following way: “but the Jews too are human beings as such deeds bear witness, so do not abuse them”.<sup>29</sup>

Alongside the press, the clergy of all denominations played an important part in promoting the spirit of tolerance and struggling against mutual prejudices. As already mentioned, as early as 1792 the official authorities prescribed to the bishops of all Christian denominations of Transylvania to explain to the people the groundlessness of the blood libel. The press reproduced the normative official standpoints of the Catholic Church, such as the 1845 pastoral of the Catholic bishop of Mainz against religious intolerance toward Jews and Protestants.<sup>30</sup> In May 1848, Iosif Lonovics, the Catholic bishop of Nagycsanád [Cenad], in a letter addressed to the clergy, told the priests to explain to their parishioners that hatred was against the church’s teachings on love of one’s fellows, and to preach tolerance and mercy toward the Jews.<sup>31</sup> The Greek Catholic priest of the Naszod [Năsăud] border area, Ioan Marian, in an 1840 letter in which he warned the border troops of the allegedly detrimental effects of Jewish economic activity at the military border, asked the subordinate clergy nevertheless to proclaim in church that it is “proper to love all kinds of people—the Jew also—because they all are Lord’s creatures”.<sup>32</sup> In turn, Chief Rabbi Abraham Friedman, in a speech delivered in 1847 and published later, asked his believers to give up their prejudices, to help those in need, irrespective of religion, to support the setting up of prayer houses of all kinds, and to strive to be “good Jews in family and synagogue, good citizens and faithful citizens”.<sup>33</sup>

The more civil emancipation became a tangible aim, the more relevant the effects of such advice and educational measures were, as restrictions and interdictions weakened. The fact that the obstacles hindering access to real estate and the practice of all business branches had been removed, together with progress in the social integration of the Jews, as well as the fact that after 1860 they gained the right to vote, were also reflected at the level of *mentalité*. The Hungarian press of Kolozsvár [Cluj] opened its columns to an animated journalistic debate upon the ways and means of attaining civil emancipation.<sup>34</sup> *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* of Brassó [Braşov], in a laudatory obituary of Doctor Julius Barasch, considered to be the “Mendelssohn of Romania”, emphasized that

on this occasion we may understand everything that is good and great in this Evangelical tolerance of the Romanian people who friendly receive any stranger to the land and religion, and who most lovingly embrace him under God’s eyes and in a common homeland. This is the Romania we love and which

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<sup>27</sup> *Erdélyi Híradó*, 1839, 42, p. 165; *Kolozsvári Lap*, 1851, 266, p. 1063.

<sup>28</sup> *Erdélyi Híradó* 1840, 5, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> See E. Boşca-Mălin, *Evreii în Ţara Năsăudului* (Braşov, 1943), p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Vasárnapi Újság*, 1845, 564, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> *Revoluția de la 1848–1849 din Transilvania*, IV (Bucharest, 1988), pp. 265–66.

<sup>32</sup> *Arhiva Someşană*, 1936, 18, pp. 414–16.

<sup>33</sup> Á. Friedman, *Egyházi beszéd*, Kolozsvár, 1847, pp. 10–11, 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Korunk*, 1860, No. 14; 1861, No. 30, p. 106; 1863, No. 33, 52, 54, 57, 59.

God will help because it has always been the country of love and ancient hospitality.<sup>35</sup>

The Transylvanian Saxon press, in which reserved and even hostile anti-Jewish attitudes had prevailed up to 1848, expressed in 1861, through Professor Johann Karl Schuller, the idea that “intolerance and persecution of those of other religions is not peculiar to the people, but it is imposed upon it from outside”.<sup>36</sup> This change of mood was also revealed by the attitudes of the Transylvanian Saxon delegates in the diet of Nagyszeben [Sibiu] between 1863–64. Here they pleaded for the recognition of the civil and political rights of the Jews in order to eliminate the consequences of “Christian intolerance” and to promote the triumph of “the moral laws of humanity, similar, in our part of the world, for Christian and Jews”.<sup>37</sup>

The *de facto* accomplishment of the juridical emancipation of the Transylvanian Jews in 1867 represented a significant sign of evolution at the level of mentality in the direction of mutual tolerance. However, the process was not yet finished. In the decades following civil emancipation, the appearance and rise of modern anti-Semitism, which took over and re-enacted in new ways the mental burden of hostility and prejudice, tending to institutionalization, foreshadowed and anticipated the dreadful developments of the twentieth century which culminated in the tragedy of the Holocaust.

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<sup>35</sup> *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, 1863, 19, pp. 140–41.

<sup>36</sup> *Transsilvania*, 1861, 12–13, p. 52.

<sup>37</sup> *Stenographischer Tages-Bericht auf den 1. Juli 1863 nach Hermannstadt a.h. einberufenen siebenbürgischen Landtages*, I, Sibiu, 1863, pp. 178, 736