

The Destruction of the Jewish People in Nyíregyháza

(Summary)

The sourcebook published for the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust is divided into three structural units. The preliminary study gives the short outline of the establishment of the Jewish people in Hungary. The study follows the settlement and the growth of the Jewish population in the three historical counties: Szabolcs, Szatmár and Bereg from the end of the reign of the Turkish until their deportation.

The fate of the Jewish people in Nyíregyháza is followed from 1840. The first Jew settling down in the town was Jakab Fried, who came to Nyíregyháza from Tokaj. Eight years later there were 71 people living in the town and their number was incredibly increasing due to the waves of immigration. Over thirty years their number grew twenty-nine times bigger. In 1880 there were 2053 people living in the town and their number was proportionally increasing with the population of the growing town, averagely until 1944 they gave 8-10 percent of the total population.

Two religious tendencies appeared in the town, too: the orthodox and the status quo. The latter calls itself „status quo neolog“. Using this phrase its followers wanted to indicate that most of the Jewish people in Nyíregyháza tended to assimilate, tried to adapt themselves to the local society and declared themselves Hungarian. By the beginning of the twentieth century the two tendencies separated from each other institutionally, only the elementary school and the 'Szentegylet' were maintained collectively.

Although the town during the mentioned period was explicitly considered as an agricultural territory, the Jewish people living here did not make any effort to acquire land. Most of them were engaged in trade and industry. In some commercial branches they nearly managed to gain monopoly as almost thirty percent of the units of trade belonged to them.

The realization of the anti-Jewish laws resulted in the economic and political impossibility of performance of the Jewish people in Nyíregyháza, too. As a result twenty-five committee members – who were elected or gained their membership by right of their being the greatest tax-payers of the community – were expelled from the municipal corporation.

The imprisoning of the Jewish people in Nyíregyháza into ghettos took place on 23 April in 1944. Until then there were only provincial Jewish people in the ghettos marked out in the middle of the town. The imprisoning of almost five thousand peo-

ple into ghettos increased the number of people living there up to seventeen thousand. The realization of the original schedule – the deportation of the people from the ghettos to reception camps – was hastened by incredible crowdedness, too. The majority of the Jewish people of Nyíregyháza were taken to Harangod puszta, but there were some of them in Nyírjes Tanya and Varjúlapos, as well. The evacuation of the reception camps started on 14 May and finished on 4 June. The destination through Kassa was Auschwitz II. Birkenau. Only 600–800 of the five thousand Jewish people from Nyíregyháza survived the hell of death camps.

The second part of the source book publishes archival records related to the subject from the rich sources of the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. A bigger part of the source-material from the period between 1939 and 1945 got into the volume in digitised version quite identically with the original version. The remaining part is in transcript as the original documents were unsuitable for copying.

The selected sources illustrate the period that we call the social, economic and political impossibility of performance of the Jews. Its stages are the so-called anti-Jewish laws. Unfortunately, they also demonstrate the public feeling which lacked sympathy and a helpful intention towards the slandered, outraged and robbed fellow-citizens was rarely felt.

The third structural unit of the volume contains the list of the Jews of Nyíregyháza. Mayor Pál Nyíregyházi (Szohor) ordered the registration of the Jewish people living in the town on 11 April 1944. The list – made by the religious community – contains 4753 names. The register which is kept in the archives is the contemporary carbon copy of the original list. Several parts of it are damaged, dim and difficult to read. In the case of the originally incorrectly written names the registers of births helped with the correction. (The square brackets mark these corrections.) Today it is impossible to establish whether the registration took place on the basis of identity papers or verbal communication. There were people who were recorded twice and there were some people who were registered by their nicknames instead of their given names. Many people with identical names could be distinguished only on the basis of their mothers' names, but in the case of old widows the census-takers often used only the husbands' names not the maiden names.

Therefore there might be mistakes or errors in the corrected and checked register, too. The archival records available can not help us to correct these mistakes any more. However, we think that the published list – containing even mistakes – modestly commemorates the people of Nyíregyháza who were the innocent victims of a barbarous and homicidal period.