Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry

Herczl, Moshe Y.

Published by NYU Press

Herczl, Moshe Y.
Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry.
NYU Press, 1993.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/15778.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/15778
2

Anti-Jewish Legislation
Introduction

The anti-Jewish legislative process began in the spring of 1938 and lasted for some six years, up until the German invasion of Hungary in the spring of 1944. Earlier, Hungarian Jewry had enjoyed some equal rights for some seventy years, ever since the adoption of the Law of Emancipation in 1867, and as early as 1895 the status of the Jewish religion was rendered equal to that of the great Christian faiths. Equality before the law was absolute except for the limits imposed upon Jewish students under the “Numerus Clausus” Act of 1920. It was thus natural for the Jewish public to view as a serious blow to its position the tabling of an anti-Jewish bill in Parliament and the public debate that ensued, with various public figures in Parliament and in the Upper House voicing strong antisemitic sentiments. This besmirching of Jewry and of Judaism was strongly reflected in Hungarian public opinion, as demonstrated, among other things, by the results of the parliamentary elections held in May 1939. The Hungarian electorate lavishly rewarded the extreme right-wing circles that supported the anti-Jewish legislation, while severely punishing those parliamentary factions that opposed it. Experienced public figures and politicians, sensitive to the mood of the Hungarian masses, did everything possible to meet their expectations. The speeches delivered by many members of both Parliament and the Upper House were saturated with antisemitic incitement and with derogatory references to Judaism and to Jews. The masses and the national leadership reinforced one another, creating an axis linking them with a common topic and a common aim: persecuting Jews and removing them from as many fields of endeavor as possible.

This axis was joined by the top-ranking leaders of the Christian churches of Hungary, who, by virtue of their posts and their status, enjoyed membership in the Upper House. The strength of their antisemitic sentiments, voiced during the consideration of the proposed bills, was no less than that expressed by leaders of both the government and the extreme right wing, as will be demonstrated below. The church joining this axis, representing the people and their leaders, added yet another
dimension to the anti-Jewish campaign, and created a triangle that was to play a significant role during the entire period of anti-Jewish legislation.

Since the parliamentary debate was characterized by repeated mention of the confrontation between Christians and non-Christians, and between Christianity and Judaism, the debate aroused the Christian public to a greater degree of awareness of the differences between them and their non-Christian neighbors, the Jews. Furthermore, since the denigration of the Jews and the antisemitic incitement had their origins in the highest of government circles, expressions of antisemitism that in the late 1920s and early 1930s might have been considered vulgar now won legitimacy, becoming commonplace and desirable even in the most respectable of drawing rooms. When the heads of the Christian churches added their voices to those besmirching Jews and Judaism, a dimension of religious devotion was added to this antisemitic trend—a dimension that enjoyed considerable influence in Christian Hungary.

The anti-Jewish legislative process that went on for years was in fact the reading of a lengthy indictment against Jews, against Judaism, and against the characteristics of each. The damage caused by the corrupt traits of the Jews to the economic, social, cultural, and spiritual life of Christian Hungarians was spelled out from several points of view. The expressions used to describe Jewish corruption became so commonplace that even in the summer of 1944, when the Jews were faced with the danger of expulsion from Hungary, and even after most of them had already been expelled and then murdered in the gas chambers, those expressions still served the church leaders.¹

The First Anti-Jewish Act

The first official intimation of the government's intention to legislate an anti-Jewish act came directly from the Hungarian prime minister, Kalman Daranyi, in a speech he delivered in the town of Gyor, on March 5, 1938:

There is a Jewish question in Hungary...and it forms one of the unsolved problems of the nation's public life.... The kernel of the problem...lies in the fact that Jews living in Hungary, partly by reason of a special disposition for commerce and also because of the indifference shown by Hungarian Christians, play quite a disproportionate role in certain branches of economic life. Moreover, the large concentration of Jews in the Hungarian capital has naturally influenced the cultural and economic life of Budapest, and that influence does not always square with the vital requirements of the Hungarian people.... A solution should be found whereby
Jewish influence in cultural and other domains of national life will be reduced. Such a solution will grant the Christian section of the community a just share in the industry, commerce, and finance of the country.\(^2\)

On the following day, Balint Homan, the minister of religion and education, made a speech in the town of Szentes, where he spoke in a similar vein:

The Jewish problem is one demanding discussion... and it involves two questions—one economic, the other ideological. Economically, a disproportionate influence and participation in economic fields is enjoyed by Jews because of their special capacity.... Similarly, cultural endeavors and the press are dominated by Jews, many of whom express views alien to the Hungarian mentality... they live a separate, peculiar life, with a separate, peculiar ideology; and they are considered as aliens by the Hungarians. Certain of them have participated in subversive movements and in propagating dangerous theories.\(^3\)

It should be noted that the concept of limiting the activities of the Jews by means of appropriate legislation had been raised in government circles long before the prime minister's Győr speech. Though the idea of anti-Jewish legislation had not yet been explicitly formulated, indications of such thinking had been voiced earlier. In a speech delivered by the prime minister in February 1937 at the annual convention of the Baross Szovetseg, an organization whose raison d'être was the advancement of Christian trade and industrial interests at the expense of those of the Jews, the premier had said, “I must stress that the government shall do its very best to cultivate the ideas represented by the Baross Society. The government shall strive to achieve a maximal increase in the number of Christian industrialists and traders in this land.”\(^4\)

In March 1937 the president of the Hungarian National Bank, Bela Imredi, had prepared a memorandum for Premier Darányi in which he dealt with the Jewish problem and with proposals for its solution. He suggested adopting measures to reduce Jewish influence over the press and to increase the number of Christians in middle- and upper-class economic projects.\(^5\) In January 1938 General Karoly Soos, a retired minister of war, presented the regent of Hungary, Horthy, with a similar program. He proposed to reduce Jewish influence in economic activity, mainly by granting benefits to Christians, and to remove Jewish influence from the press and from cultural life by means of suitable legislation. The regent referred Soos to Premier Darányi.\(^6\) The economics minister, M. Fabinyi, said in a speech he made in the town of Pécs on January 16, 1938, “The desire is growing among Hungarian Christians to occupy
those posts in industry and commerce which they had for so many years been content to leave to others.” He made no attempt to explain who the others were.

A week before the prime minister’s Gyor speech there appeared an article written by a Catholic priest, which included these remarks: “We must admit the fact that there exists a Jewish problem in this country. Each and every one of us is called upon to support only those shops owned by Christians. We must see to it that the banks, the shops, and the land belong to sons of the Hungarian race alone. We must achieve this by appropriate legislation.”

If the Gyor speech aroused grave unrest in the hearts of the Jewish population, as well as a genuine fear of things to come, to an equal extent it excited the imaginations of the antisemitic circles, which hoped that the anti-Jewish legislation would usher in a new period in Hungarian history. Some two weeks after the Gyor speech an exuberant party was thrown, with the participation of high-ranking notables from both Catholic church and government circles, in honor of Bishop Istvan Zadravetz’s receipt of a prestigious medal of excellence from the regent of Hungary, Horthy. The aftermath of the Gyor speech was very apparent at the party, where an atmosphere of expectation prevailed. The opportunities for predictable change, which now appeared over the horizon, excited the imaginations of the guests, who expressed their innermost thoughts in their speeches. Zadravetz himself expressed the general appreciation of the Gyor speech and of its ramifications:

The Hungarian Catholic Church and millions of Hungarian Catholics desire to work together for the rehabilitation of our beloved homeland. Whenever our country is considered, we must take into account its thousand years of history, the soul of those thousand years, including its exalted morality and principles. All of these converge on a single word: Christianity. ... The topics, the problems, and the matters discussed these days in the Gyor speech are like tree trunks, thick branches, arranged in such a way that they can become a raging bonfire, a triumphant flame illuminating our glorious future. To set this bonfire, this flame, alight we must place coals beneath them. The coals exist! They are simply the fire of Jesus Christ! We need an eternal flame, a fire never to be extinguished, for our great and joyous homeland and for the next thousand years for our nation. “I have come to ignite a fire in the world—can I not desire this fire to burst out?” (Luke 12:49)

The bill was tabled in Parliament on April 8, 1938, and was known as the “Bill for a More Effective Guarantee of a Balanced Social and Economic Life.” The preamble to the bill strives to give it a dimension
of historical depth and links it with the Clerical People's party, which had struggled at the close of the nineteenth century against granting recognition to the Jewish religion: "The Catholic People's party, which was founded in the year 1894, has already waged war upon the anomaly which existed in political life, having been created as a result of liberal political views. In the political bearing of the People's party and in its practical activity in the various walks of public life, its intention in attempting to solve the Jewish problem has been clearly discernable.'"

The preamble also mentions that the bill was intended to benefit the Hungarian nation by removing the Jews from various economic sectors and by making it more difficult for them in a variety of cultural fields, especially journalism:

Under present circumstances certain sections of the population find their way blocked to various economic positions, as a result of the Jewish control of these positions above and beyond their proportion in the population. The national public opinion considers this situation unjust, unreasonable, and unacceptable. This disturbance of the economic balance is stressed by the fact that the vast majority of this sector [the Jews] does not partake of our traditional national feelings.

Paragraph 2 of the proposed bill deals with the limits placed upon Jews engaging in journalism, designed to reduce their part in influencing Hungarian public opinion. In explanation of the paragraph, the preamble says,

The practical execution of this idea may be achieved most effectively by legislation which will guarantee the unification of journalistic endeavor within an organized association enjoying decisive influence over the formulation and direction of public opinion. In this way it will be ensured that the press functions in a spirit both national and Christian, on the one hand, while on the other, it will be guaranteed its independence within the framework dictated to it by the public interest. By means of this independence the nation will be able to rest assured that the freedom of the press will be expressed in the most noble fashion without being exploited for undesirable ends.'

The bill was adopted by an overwhelming majority in Parliament and was brought before the Upper House for its approval. As already noted, the heads of the Christian churches were members of the Upper House by virtue of their positions.' The church representatives encountered difficulty in voting for the bill. For operational purposes the bill included a definition of the term "Jew," defining as Jews even those converts to Christianity who had converted after August 1, 1919, upon the collapse
of the Bela Kun Communist regime. The church delegates would not accept this definition, claiming that it was completely unreasonable for members of their churches, their flocks, to be considered Jewish. This became a bone of contention that aroused considerable debate concerning the bill, but could not prevent its adoption. The church leaders fought boldly for the interests of the members of their congregations, repeatedly stressing that they were not opposing the bill itself insofar as it imposed limitations upon the Jews. Regarding the desirable approach, as they saw it, to the Jewish problem, their utterances generally matched those of government members and supporters. The church leaders draped their utterances in religious, historical, economic, and other ideologies, as be-fitted their status in the church.

The head of the Evangelic church, Bishop Sandor Raffay, said,

I cast no doubt, not even for a single moment, upon the necessity of tabling this proposal. Neither do I doubt that Jewry could have prevented its tabling. It could have done so by means of a substantial change in its behavior, and by means of such a change it would not have compelled us to consider this proposal.

The bishop went on to propose amendments he considered significant. One of these was for the date of August 1, 1919—the decisive date, according to the proposed bill, for recognition of valid conversions to Christianity and for exemption from the requirements of the bill—to be postponed until the 31st of that month. He also spoke of the need for consideration of those who had converted, “thus attuning themselves to us and already becoming like us.” After proposing additional minor changes in the wording of the various paragraphs of the bill, he concluded his speech with the following declaration: “I accept the proposed bill.”

The head of the Reformed church, Sandor Ravasz, took the opportunity to expound upon the Jewish problem, its origins, the nature of Jews and Judaism, possible solutions to the Jewish problem, and the proper conduct required of Jews:

As a legislator I sense the importance of taking a stand on the matters under discussion... The Jewish problem has been the bane of humanity for about two thousand years. It is an important matter still awaiting its solution, and until it is eventually solved it will be accompanied by much suffering, many struggles, and a great many difficulties... I am convinced that the adoption of this bill will serve well not only the welfare, the tranquillity, and the security of the state, but also those who today protest vehemently against its adoption... Since the bill is intended to put in order economic issues such as providing employment opportunities and a fairer
division of revenues, I should like to believe that this is merely the first step in a broader, general program of planned legislation. In discussing this bill it is impossible to refrain from dealing with the origin of the Jewish problem. We must state that during the modern, liberal period, the period that came to an end on the eve of the Great War, it was customary to view the Jewish problem as a religious one. The time has come for Hungarian public opinion to liberate itself from the opinion that the Jewish problem is a religious one. Were the 430,000 Jews of Hungary to convert all at once to Christianity, so that not a single Jew was left in Hungary, would in such a case the Jewish problem be solved? Of course not. It would become more complex and more difficult.

Ravasz continued:

Judaism is not a religion. If such is the case, what is it? Judaism is a race, with strong racial characteristics which prevent its assimilation. Though the Jews mingle with people of other races, yet Judaism continues stubbornly to maintain those racial characteristics. Consider a nation with a strong racial awareness, which has existed for thousands of years, a nation with a fierce sense of national uniqueness, people for whom the very concept of being chosen has become bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh. This concept of theirs has grown and developed, together with their concept of their national god who grows with them, parallel to their exaggerated expectations of life. After much suffering and difficult crises this nation has altered its national form, adopting the form of a “diaspora”...living among the nations and at their expense.

Honorable Upper House! Is it any wonder that a nation living under such historical conditions for two thousand years develops certain psychological characteristics?...The diaspora and world trade are interwoven, and it is impossible to learn which came first. Is it any wonder that such a society, whose composition cuts across nations and countries, has selected for itself as a means an object which may be stored in the narrowest of places, which in comparison with its size represents the greatest value, which reflects great strength, and which is capable of attaining great influence—and this means is nothing but money! Does this not mean that this society has come to dominate international capital and has become the controller of world credit? The natural consequence is that wherever it arrived, even within nations which have conducted their lives properly for hundreds of years, this scattered populace has sought out the cracks in the accepted social systems, just as parasitic, crawling plants do the same, climbing up on the host plant, sinking their roots deeply into it in order to enable them to subsist at its expense, even in tempestuous, stormy, dangerous times. Thus there are many who are stunned by the destructive ambitions of this race. We should not be surprised! Destructiveness is the basic characteristic of this race, “for it seeks to live, and if we do not want
its life to be destructive, as at present, we have to work for a change in
the relations between Jewry and its host nation. . . . Let the liberals claim
whatever they will: every intelligent person can see today that over the last
few hundred years an act of conquest has been executed against our home-
land. This conquest was not executed by the sword, but rather by means
of migration and of the Jewish natural increase. Our Hungarian ancestors
conquered this land by the sword, but have lost considerable portions of
it to those who migrated here, who, together with their descendants, have
filled the land as a consequence of their extraordinary fertility.

Honorable Upper House! I would like to add a few practical conclusions
to the theoretical concepts I have spoken of here with regard to the elements
of the Jewish problem. First, I must stress that the Christian Church shall
never concede its mission to Jewry. . . . When we accept a soul into the
bosom of Christianity, we do not desire it to be accepted into a certain
club, but rather to adjust itself to the Christian entity. He who joins the
Church of Jesus in the hope of achieving certain benefits shall be disap-
pointed, for when our Lord Jesus founded his church, he promised neither
benefits nor recognition nor assimilation, but merely said: "Bear my cross
and drink of the cup I have drunk from."

An additional comment: it is astounding to see how little sorrow or
soul searching the Jews display in this matter. They view the entire affair
as a kind of legalistic process which can be solved by means of the smooth
tactical tongues of brilliant attorneys. Judaism seeks in this a kind of formal
justice, having profoundly convinced itself that the suffering the Jews have
undergone has befallen them despite their innocence. The Jews believe that
they suffer because of the stupidity, the wickedness, and the jealousy of
mankind, while they remain—innocent, pure, and upright!

Not at all! As long as the idea of Jewish righteousness is based on the
aforesaid approach, the Jewish problem will not draw even a single short
step nearer to its solution. By this erroneous approach, Judaism manages
to convince itself that it suffers because of the guilt of others, despite its
own innocence, and it would solve its problem by means of active or passive
resistance. The only thing the Jews attain by this approach of theirs is that
their opponents find their own hostile attitude justified, the polarity thus
becoming ever stronger. I therefore warn the Jews once again to set aside
in advance their passive or active resistance. To do so, they need the traits
of concession, humility, and modesty. . . . It has long been known that be-
because of evil, the good, too, suffer. This is true of the Jews, as well. . . .
May the good bear their suffering with bowed heads, not because of their
own guilt, but may they note: what kind of a blessing is it for them to
have among them those who suffer in vain. The suffering of the innocent
is a particularly suitable backdrop for atoning and acting well.

I accept the proposed bill. 17
The subject of anti-Jewish legislation was put on the agenda of the Synod of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Seredi reported on the stand taken by his church’s delegates in the debate on the proposed bill:

Regarding the proposed bill, which strives to limit the function of Hungarian Jewry in public and economic life, and to channel it into smaller frameworks, the Cardinal and Bishop of Csanad in the Upper House of the legislature expressed a very proper Catholic opinion with special regard to the converted Jews.\(^\text{18}\)

A comparison of Ravasz’s speech with that of another participant in the debate, Gyorgy Pronay, who was not a man of the cloth, is most interesting:

The main responsibility [for the anti-Jewish legislation] rests on the spirit of Judaism, which has courted internationalism, denying nationalism and the national genius. This spirit is destructive, yet for decades Judaism has been applauding it, large sections of the Jewish populace actually living off it . . . There undoubtedly exists a connection between this spirit and the vast majority of the Jewish public. Part of the Jewish population is aware of this fact, and this is the source of the great tragedy which leads to the indictment of innocent Jews together with the guilty ones. In fact, all Jews will suffer at the hands of this legislative proposal.\(^\text{19}\)

The two speeches have a common denominator: they each place the responsibility for the anti-Jewish legislation squarely upon the shoulders of the Jewish population, and they each mention and even justify the generalization ‘leading to the suffering of innocent Jews as well.

The bill was adopted on May 29, 1938.

The act limited the participation of Jews in the free professions to 20 percent. At first glance it would seem as if the instructions of the act were in no way limiting, in light of the fact that the Jews made up only about 6 percent of the population. Yet it must be taken into account that many and various occupations such as the military, the civil service, the railways, the postal service, etc., had already been completely, or almost completely, shut to the Jewish public. Even living conditions compelled the Jews to concentrate on certain occupations to a far greater degree than their relative portion of the populace would dictate. Besides the direct harm done by the act to thousands of families, it struck indirectly at the entire Jewish population. Most of this population had for several generations considered themselves Hungarian in all respects, and now this anti-Jewish act appeared, overturning their Hungarian patriotism while presenting them as undesirable aliens whose presence on Hungarian
soil was barely tolerated—all this in addition to imposing legal limitations upon them.

The Eucharistic Convention

During the final stages of the parliamentary debate on the anti-Jewish act, Hungary basked in the warmth of international appreciation as expressed by the Catholic church, which held a eucharistic convention in Budapest. All the important figures of the Catholic world participated in this convention. There were scores of bishops from all over the world, and Pope Pius XI was represented by his personal representative, Cardinal Pacelli, who, less than a year later, was to become Pope Pius XII. Besides members of the priesthood, high-ranking secular guests from every corner of the world—guests involved in the activities of the Catholic church—took part in the convention. Ceremonial prayer services and impressive masses were held in the great cathedrals and open squares of Budapest, the capital, with throngs of celebrants participating. Budapest took on a festive air and the Catholic church impressed the public with mass ceremonies attended by tens of thousands, perfectly organized, pompous and majestic, exploiting the best of church knowledge and tradition. Special trains at low rates transported tens of thousands of believers from all over Hungary. The postal service issued special stamps in commemoration of the occasion. The atmosphere prevalent at the convention reflected the Christianity of Hungary and the pious, Christian, religious fervor of the Hungarian people. This Christian religious fervor did not limit itself to Catholic church frameworks; it had its influence upon the congregants of the other Christian churches and became characteristic of the entire Christian population of Hungary. Prime minister Imredi appeared at the convention and delivered one of the central speeches. His topic was “Christian Love”:

It was God’s idea for the bread of love, coming out of the Last Supper on its world-conquering journey, to live in our midst by virtue of the bonds of His love in this world of ours, the creation of the hands of God. . . . Love radiates from God, it is the gift of God, it coexists here in our world with us, and it also spreads throughout the world. This love now faces its sublime task: it must rebuild the home of love. For the sake of the success of this work of construction, we must combine the divine concept expressed in Creation with the additional divine concept which created the Cross and the sacrifice of the Last Supper. In the concept of love we must discern a practical plan of operation of which St. Paul sang the most sublime hymn and in the name of which we strive for our rebirth. Love is an eternal
concept and a practical platform, our task being to build with it a strong, unconquerable fortress of courage. This is our historical task... Time is pressing. We must harness ourselves to the execution of this work of Love, and the sooner the better.  

The minister of industry, Geza Bornemissza, was another participant in the convention. The subject of his speech was similar to that of the prime minister. He said, among other things,

The honoring of God and love of one's neighbor are the two elements of Jesus' doctrine. The ropes of neighborly love unite all, large and small, ignorant and erudite, poor and rich, tightening the links between them. The concepts of neighborly love and human cooperation bestow, from a social viewpoint, security in life and security at work; they also guarantee a just distribution of living resources needed to maintain life... For this reason the church has always attempted to fill social life with the unifying force of neighborly love. The early Christians presented the most exalted examples of love and brotherhood. Medieval Christian regimes also determined the rights and obligations of the various social strata on the basis of Christian love... We must apply the spirit of Christianity in all walks of economic life, so that our interpersonal relations be guided by a spirit of love and social justice, rather than by the love of profit.

To realize these ambitions government and society must cooperate. The government's Christian love guarantees human hearts tranquillity and soothes the most serious wounds of mankind.

These two love-filled speeches, by the prime minister and his minister of industry, were delivered two days before the final ratification of the first anti-Jewish act, after it had been thoroughly discussed in Parliament, in the Upper House, and in their committees. These debates were widely covered by the media. In addition to impoverishing thousands of Jewish families, the debates concerning it provided an opportunity to express and incite hatred toward Jewry in general and Hungarian Jews in particular. A crowd of tens of thousands of believers, which had gathered to be indoctrinated by its leaders, attended this respectable and sanctimonious ceremony, ready to absorb the message they would utter. The crowd did indeed hear a definition of love and its praises. It may be assumed that they took these words to heart, and that some of the audience began to wonder. Those very leaders who spoke so enthusiastically in praise of love, were—together with their colleagues—the very people who, at the very same time, were actively engaged in besmirching the Jewish populace. These two diametrically opposed approaches—love of Christians on the one hand, and hatred of the Jews on the other—might have generated a certain degree of confusion concerning the nature
of the concepts of love and hate. But, even if confusion did arise to any extent in the hearts of the believers as a result of the contradiction in their leaders' approach to the subject of love, the standpoint taken by the heads of the churches quickly enabled them to relieve themselves of any uncertainty.

The secular heads of state appeared on the speaker's podium at the eucharistic convention together with the leaders of the church. The latter had already expressed their opinion of the Jews on the occasion of the debate in the Upper House; now they also spoke up at the eucharistic convention.

The minister of industry did not merely hint in his speech at the existing cooperation between church and state: "the government is beginning to deal with social ills in accordance with the spirit of the great Popes and on the basis of Christian love. It is assisted in this execution of its responsibilities by the understanding and aid of the church and its institutions." The decisive significance of the expression "to deal...in accordance with the spirit of the...Popes and on the basis of Christian love" is sufficiently clear in light of the declared position of the church leaders in the Upper House. Quite correctly the minister relied on the example set by "medieval Christian regimes," which functioned "on the basis of Christian love." It was well known that those regimes were hardly based on social justice, and the attitudes toward their fellow human beings served as shining examples to be followed by the Hungarian government.

After these remarks by the minister of industry, the ranking bishop, Gyula Glattfelder, rose to express his agreement with the stand taken by the minister and his appreciation of the minister for his participation in the convention:

The fact that a government member is participating in this convention demonstrates that the ancient traditions are very much alive in our land, and in perfect condition. Nothing in our land is secular; even things which would seem to partake of a secular nature—such as trade, industry, machines, and mechanics—are all interlinking with the most sublime goals.12

The close relationship displayed by the government Jew persecutors and the priesthood sheds light on the ideological background to an event that took place in Budapest while the convention was in session. A group of priests marched along one of the avenues of the capital and, upon arriving at the national headquarters of the Arrow-Cross party, dipped their flags in honor of the residents of the building.
The concluding speech at the eucharistic convention was delivered by Cardinal Seredi. He, too, spoke of love, and ended his speech by saying,

If we love God, we shall certainly love our neighbors, that is, our brethren, both individually and in general, all together, just as we love the various strata of our society, just as we love the various people and nations of the world.

We shall thus, my dear brothers, be consistent in these two loves of ours, in order that the hymn always rise up, everywhere, from every mouth, in proper respect: Jesus triumphs, Jesus rules, Jesus commands!

It is evident that the “love of the peoples and the love of the nations” mentioned by Cardinal Seredi excluded the Jews at this critical and tragic moment in their history in Hungary.

It has already been noted that the highest-ranking guest of the convention was the personal representative of the pope, Cardinal Pacelli. Pacelli was known to be an intelligent, considered, and cool politician, well versed in the subjects in which he was engaged. It cannot be doubted that a diplomat of Pacelli’s stature was well aware of the anti-Jewish legislative process that was in motion in the Hungarian Parliament at the very moment of his sojourn in the Hungarian capital. It might be supposed that in the name of Christian kindness and mercy, and as the personal representative of the deputy of the founder of the religion of love on earth, he might take advantage of the opportunity and raise his voice against the evil being perpetrated before his very eyes.

But Pacelli preferred to ignore the hate and fanaticism that resulted in the anti-Jewish legislation and, instead, made pointed mention of the “wonderful atmosphere of love, the contribution of Christianity,” that prevailed during the convention period:

This eucharistic convention has been held under conditions of love pangs. ... We shall not settle for spreading the message of love; rather, we shall rather spread throughout the world the doctrine of love in action. This love stems from our feelings, from the throbbing of our hearts and from our far-seeing determination. From this determination of ours—which is apparent only before God—there must develop day-by-day love-filled activity, which must succeed in overcoming the pettiness, conflict, quarreling, and egoism of both great and small.... Our love of God serves as a foundation stone of our love of our neighbors. Our love of God revitalizes it, directs it, grants it nobility, and encourages it to carry out heroic deeds. This neighborly love—this wonderful Christian contribution to the world—which cannot be expressed either in figures or in literature, exists everywhere and makes its sublime contribution to the solution of the raging problems of social distress, and we shall be worthy of it only if our en-
couragement of love is from now on the alpha and omega of our entire existence.\textsuperscript{44}

Pacelli made no attempt to clarify the nature of the “example of love in action” he discerned in the Hungarian capital and the like of which he desired to “spread throughout the world.”

Even if Pacelli made no direct mention of the Jews, he did refer to them indirectly:

Jesus conquers! He who so often was the recipient of the rage of his enemies, he who suffered the persecutions of those of whom he was one, he shall be triumphant in the future as well.... As opposed to the foes of Jesus, who cried out to his face, “Crucify him!”—we sing him hymns of our loyalty and our love. We act in this fashion, not out of bitterness, not out of a sense of superiority, not out of arrogance toward those whose lips curse him and whose hearts reject him even today.\textsuperscript{45}

(He is quoted in the very same publication as attacking the Communists and mentioning the pope’s warning against this danger.)

Pacelli relied on his audience, realizing that hints would suffice and that he had no need to specify the identity and names of those foes of Jesus who had cried out to his face, “Crucify him!” He was sure that his audience understood him well.

Pacelli’s comment that toward the foes of Jesus “we act in this fashion, not out of bitterness, not out of a sense of superiority, not out of arrogance” was tinged with more than a little cynicism. How else is one to interpret his ignoring the sufferings of those persecuted?

The appearance of the heads of state and church before the participants in the eucharistic convention, and the speeches they made, prepared hitherto untrodden paths in the field of Hungarian Christian relations with their Jewish neighbors. Even before the eucharistic convention and before the anti-Jewish legislation, hostile statements made by leaders of church and state regarding the Jews were not uncommon. Nevertheless, after the adoption of the anti-Jewish act, discrimination against the Jews took on a seal of official approval. The motives behind this legislation were very far from the “comprehensive love” the eucharistic convention spoke so much about. This can only indicate that the speakers at the convention intended to hint unambiguously to their listeners that this “comprehensive love” was not to include the Jewish population.

**In the Wake of the Act’s Adoption**

The adoption of the first anti-Jewish act did not result in the solution of “the Jewish problem,” it did not remove the Jewish topic from the public
anti-Jewish legislation

95

agenda, and it had no noticeable tranquilizing effect. The atmosphere was saturated with antisemitic emotion.26

The leaders of the Christian churches contributed not a little to the repeated discussions and debates that the Jewish topic was subjected to in various public arenas. They addressed the Jewish topic again and again in public discussion. They generally dealt with the subject from two points of view—the limitations imposed by the act upon the Jews; and the damage done by the legislation to the validity of Jews' conversions to Christianity, as well as the corresponding harm done to the Christian churches.

The following excerpts show clearly that, with regard to the first viewpoint, the representatives of the churches supported the government unreservedly; they justified the government's action and even encouraged the government to continue with the anti-Jewish legislation and to entrench it even more deeply. With regard to the second consideration, however, the priesthood raised its voice in protest against those legislative definitions that, in its opinion, violated both church autonomy and the sanctity of the conversion process.

The Reformed church held a national convention of its Society of Spiritual Leaders. The convention took place in the town of Debrecen, the stronghold of Hungarian Calvinism. Participants included the head of the Hungarian Reformed church, Bishop Laszlo Ravasz, and many other church leaders from all parts of the country, as well as several from abroad.

A guest lecturer from England, Conrad Hoffmann, the secretary of the World Missionary Movement to the Jews, spoke of the reasons for antisemitism. The speaker proved to be generous to the Jews in stating that they were not the only ones responsible for antisemitism: "The Jews alone are not to be accused of antisemitism. Christians, too, must suffer pangs of conscience regarding antisemitism, for they have not been successful in converting the Jews to Christianity."27

References to the converts were ambivalent. On the one hand, Christianity claims that the way to Christian faith is open to everyone, and that one's racial origins are powerless to prevent one from taking the route to salvation that Christianity offers. On the other hand, however, accepting "the new Christians" into Christian Hungarian society clashed with the outlook of the members of that society. A further complication was introduced by the opinion prevalent at the time, both among church leaders and among the leaders of secular Hungary, that Hungarianism and Christianity were one and the same indivisible concept.28

Well aware of this problem, one Bela Papp, a spiritual leader from
the town of Vac, spoke up at the convention: “With regard to our desire that the Jews become good Christians, we must not assume that every Jew who converts to Christianity will also become a good Hungarian, just as we would not want every Negro, Turk, or Chinese who converts to become Hungarian as well.”

In this way the speaker found an elegant escape from the obligation imposed upon him by Christianity with regard to his attitude toward converts. It was impossible to prevent the converts from joining the believers in Christianity, for once they had converted they were Christians in every respect, but it was possible to block their progress toward membership in Hungarian society.

It should be noted that the speaker based his concept of blocking the progress of the Jews upon their racial origins. This racist concept was expressed by a man of the cloth, at a convention of spiritual leaders, in the presence of the head of his church. The speaker also added that “the Christian churches should view Judaism as idolatry leading away from Jesus.”

Bishop Laszlo Ravasz summed up the convention discussions. He, too, referred to Judaism in a similar vein, declaring, “We shall never cause the Jews joining us to feel that they are persons of the second class, of inferior standing.” The bishop’s message came over clearly: as long as Jews refrained from joining the bishop’s faith, and remained Jewish, they were second-class persons, of inferior standing. The bishop succeeded in expressing succinctly the conceptual basis of the Hungarian government’s anti-Jewish legislation: the Jews were justifiably being discriminated against, since they were inferior to Christian citizens of the state.

A short time later the Evangelical church held a district synod. In his speech the head of the church in Hungary, Bishop Sandor Raffay, referred to the anti-Jewish legislation, saying,

I shall not deal with the question of the degree of need for this legislation. Neither shall I enter into a debate on the question of the extent to which the one-sided and egoistic behavior of the Jews brought about this legislation. . . . But for the sake of truth, it must be stated that this legislation is not as cruel as it seems at first glance. The legislation interests us only insofar as it causes many of our believers spiritual suffering and gnawing anxiety. . . . Those in our midst who seek the tranquillity of belief in Jesus Christ we regard with understanding brotherly love, for such is the requirement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ideas expressed by the heads of the two Protestant churches were similar. Their reference to “understanding brotherly love” was aimed at
converts only. The head of the Evangelical church had no good words to say of the Jews except for the statement that "the legislation is not cruel." This was the spirit in which he interpreted, it would seem, the "requirement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The bishop of the Evangelical church in Transdanubia, Bela Kapi, sent a Shepherd's Epistle to all the priests in his district, in which he, too, dealt with the anti-Jewish legislation: "Our church happily congratulates the government on its efforts aimed at introducing a Christian spirit into our economic, cultural, and social lives, and we willingly offer the assistance of our forces in carrying out this corrective activity." Further along in his epistle, he criticized the fact that "along with the numerous constructive regulations in the act limiting the activities of the Jews, there is a deficiency whereby state institutions have usurped the authority to decide upon the validity of the conversion of certain converts to Christianity." Nevertheless, the epistle ends with a declaration: "Our Evangelical church looks with Christian spirit upon the anti-Jewish legislation and the problems accompanying it."

The Catholic church did not stand idly by, observing its Protestant sisters at work. At a synod held with the participation of the Catholic populace in the town of Ersekujvar, Bela Bangha, a high-ranking priest, made his appearance. In his speech he, too, referred to the fear that the act might violate the sanctity of Christian conversion. The speaker showed his understanding of the considerations of the legislators on this point, wondering if every case of conversion indicated a substantial change for the better in the life of the convert, a change that might bring about his spiritual purification:

The problem is a difficult one, for the act of conversion in itself does not guarantee the simultaneous onset of a desire for a spiritual assimilatory process.... On the other hand, it would be a big mistake for us not to take sufficiently into account the revelation of a frank desire for such assimilation being expressed in the very act of conversion. It would likewise be an ignoring of justice. We must not adopt such steps as do not regard conversion itself as of sufficient importance, steps that may lead to a confrontation between church and state on the question of the interpretation of the concept of Christianity. Such a confrontation is liable to take place in our Christian state.... Even if there do exist certain difficulties in finding a solution to this problem, the legislator must act in such a way that, on the one hand, he succeeds in rejecting efficiently those undesirable elements which have penetrated the realms of economics and society, while on the other, he must not harm people who have for many
years now been following innocently and truthfully in the footsteps of Jesus.\textsuperscript{35}

An impressive expression of the support of the Catholic church for the anti-Jewish legislation was revealed in a press item reporting a Synod of Catholic Bishops. The synod was held in the cardinal's palace in Budapest, with the participation of representatives of the two branches of the Catholic church in Hungary: the Latin branch and the Greek one. Cardinal Seredi chaired the conference. The newspaper reports that, regarding the Jewish question, the synod ruled as follows: “The Synod registers with satisfaction the fact that the Royal Government of Hungary strives to defend the interests of the Christian public in face of Jewish spiritual domination. Furthermore, the Synod expresses the opinion of the Catholic church concerning the sanctity of Christianity regarding converts.” The paper adds that the Synod of Bishops referred the content of its discussion to the “most authorized state institutions.”\textsuperscript{36}

The protocol of the session reported by the press reflects the bishops’ honest anxiety concerning both the converts to Christianity and the status of the church; at the same time, it also reflects their negative attitude toward the Jews against whom the proposed act was directed. The cardinal reported at the session that in discussions he had held with the prime minister and with the minister for religion and education, he had pointed out the basic deficiency of the proposed act in classifying certain converts as Jews. The cardinal had even expressed his opinion that “the legislation should be based on elements of justice and on the concept of loving one’s neighbor,” emphasizing that he considered it “very important to limit the activity of the Jews and to remove the Jewish spirit from the public and economic domains, as well as from additional walks of life.” The reasons for this struggle were “the same reasons which led the church in our homeland to oppose bitterly the liberal outlook ever since the granting of full recognition to the Jewish religion.”\textsuperscript{37}

The cardinal raised ideas concerning the general substance of the act, stating that “justice and injustice are served in confusion in so general a hill, and it would be preferable for the bill to base the limitation of Jewish activity on an individual basis.” The cardinal was worried by another aspect of the bill:

Whether we classify the Jews as a religious community or as a race, this legislation may provide a dangerous precedent if the treatment of Jews in our homeland is applied to people of other races as well, or to those of
other religious communities. . . . Nevertheless, it is necessary to take additional measures against the Jews. We must uproot decisively all those phenomena that Judaism has introduced into our economic, our social, and our public lives, as well as into our legal system.

The bishops taking part in this discussion expressed their fears that the sanctity of conversion to Christianity might be violated by the proposed legislation, and spoke up in defense of those in their congregations who had nothing whatever in common with "the Jewish spirit." Furthermore, they brought up the problem of the offspring of mixed marriages.

Especially noteworthy in the discussion of the synod of bishops was the fact that no one spoke up against the very idea of anti-Jewish legislation. On the contrary, their support of the legislation was made very clear. "The Bishop of Szekesfehervar stresses that the synod of bishops was unanimous in its desire to put an end to the Jewish destructiveness." He was supported by the apostolic delegate of Rozsnyo, who also demanded "that additional, very firm steps be taken to remove the Jewish spirit, steps that will effectively prevent the spread of the ideas of the Social-Democrats, of the Freemasons, and of the Communists." To conclude the debate it was decided that two bishops would meet with the prime minister and put to him the stand of the Synod of Bishops. 18

Thus, we have before us the clear and uniform opinion of the three great churches of Hungary as it was expressed by their leaders. Since these opinions were phrased and expressed by the men at the pinnacles of the church hierarchies, and considering the authoritarian atmosphere prevalent in the churches, it is very likely that the priesthood at all levels viewed these expressions of opinion as statements of policy that were to be followed, and in the light of which their flocks were to be led.

It should be noted that the opinions of the church leaders as expressed by them and as adduced above were not voiced during debate in any particular forum and were not stated under conditions of extreme stress. These were opinions expressed by respected leaders and voiced under the tranquil conditions of church conventions. The views of the church leaders as they were published in the various media presented to members of the government, of Parliament, and of the Upper House, as well as to the priesthood and the general public, a clear picture of their attitude toward the Jewish problem and of their approach to the anti-Jewish act. The bodies entrusted with this legislation were given a clear signal of approval for their past activities. With regard to the future, they received
a green light to continue with the legislation, as well as encouragement from the highest spiritual authorities in Hungary to broaden the base of the legislation and to deepen it.

The Second Anti-Jewish Act
In mid-November 1938, less than six months after the adoption of the first anti-Jewish act, Imredi announced his intention of pressing for the adoption of further anti-Jewish legislation:

Our country has an extremely delicate problem which we have to meet, just as we meet all our problems. I am speaking of the Jewish problem. ... We must reexamine the standpoints which guided us up until now, so as to find a solution enabling us to restore the leadership of the Christian elements in this country.... both in the press and in economic life.39

The formal excuse exploited by the prime minister for the additional anti-Jewish legislation was that "with the liberation of land from South Slovakia and its restoration to Hungary, the relative number of Jews in the population grew larger." Imredi hinted here at the beginning of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, which had begun in the fall of 1938 and had resulted in a gain of 1,040,000 new residents for Hungary, including eighty-seven thousand Jews.40 This Jewish increment made almost no difference in the percentage of Jews in the entire population of Hungary, and so it is unlikely that this was the real motive driving the government to additional, stricter anti-Jewish legislation. It is more likely that Imredi was aware of the mood prevalent in Hungary, including the vehement antisemitic emotions rife among the Hungarian masses. Imredi had no intention of being outdone by the masses.41

Imredi approached his legislative goal energetically. A committee appointed by his party to prepare the details of the proposed act convened promptly. He participated, as did the minister of law who also served as the national chairman of the party, as did high-ranking officials in charge of the practical preparation of the proposed act.42

The bill was tabled in Parliament on December 23, 1938. At the time Parliament was recessed for the Christmas vacation, and so was convened especially for this purpose. While presenting the bill Imredi remarked cynically that he was presenting the Jews with a Christmas present.43

The basic idea of the second anti-Jewish act was that from then on, one's Jewishness would be determined not according to one's religious beliefs but rather according to one's racial origins. The ministerial explanation attached to the bill stated, "A person belonging to the Jewish
denomination is at the same time a member of the Jewish racial community and it is natural that the cessation of membership in the Jewish denomination does not result in any change in that person’s association with the racial community.”

The proposed bill intended to reduce still further the percentage of Jews active in the various fields. Contrasting with the 20 percent fixed in the first anti-Jewish act, the second anti-Jewish bill fixed a maximum of 6 percent for Jewish activity. This percentage was approximately equal to the percentage of Jews in the general population. The act aimed at bringing about a changing of the guard in the realms of economics and culture, in favor of the Hungarian middle class. “The object of the bill is that capital in Hungary should work under Christian direction,” announced Imredi.

At a session of the parliamentary committee, Kornel Kelemen read out a declaration in the name of the opposition and in the name of his party, the independent National Christian party: “For the sake of defending the Hungarian race we are prepared to vote for any bill serving the good of the nation and its future.”

The chairman of the United Christian party, Count Janos Zichy, made mention of his antisemitic past, saying that he “has been fighting for forty-four years against Jewish domination. The Clerical People’s party once was an object of general hatred, merely because it attempted to prevent the Jewish question from becoming a general problem.” The speaker went on to criticize the proposed act for determining which of the converts to Christianity would be considered Christian. “According to the Christian view, every convert is a Christian.” He admitted the difficulty in applying this view in practice within the framework of the act under consideration, for then “thousands and tens of thousands will come begging to convert.”

Another speaker at the committee session, Lajos Makray, announced that he was basing his views on that of the church and on the Catholic outlook:

While it is true that the proposed act does not violate Catholic principles, yet it violates the concept of purification of the soul which underlies conversion. . . . I have nothing against the proposed act itself, and thus it would be preferable to make those changes in it which would enable its adoption without any doubts or pangs of conscience.

The atmosphere of antisemitic incitement continued while the proposed bill was debated. The people saw that the vast majority of those who were opposed to some paragraph or other of the proposed bill—
mainly concerning the converts to Christianity—did not avoid expressing their antisemitic opinions. "There is no question but that we have to expel the Jews from economics, from culture, and from politics. No matter how strong the idea of 'general love of mankind' is in our midst, we have to safeguard Hungarianism against the surplus economic and cultural spirit of the Jews," one of the speakers, one Janos Szeder, stated. His statement reflected the viewpoint of most of the participants in the debate.49

No wonder, then, that during the debate on the proposed bill there took place a murderous attack on the worshippers at the central synagogue of the Neologic congregation on Dohany Street in Budapest. On February 2, 1938, a Friday night, as the congregation was coming out of the synagogue, hand grenades were hurled at them. One person was killed, and twenty-two wounded. The investigation pointed to the Arrow-Cross party. It is reasonable to assume that the prevailing hate-filled atmosphere, largely nourished by the antisemitic expressions voiced both in the parliamentary debate and elsewhere, contributed considerably to preparing public opinion for the attack.

A few days after the grenade attack in Budapest, Imredi appeared at a party convention in the town of Szekesfehervar. As could have been expected, he spoke of the Jewish question without touching on the attack on the worshippers. "Christianity is not a mere slogan, but rather an innermost experience. During the most recent decades a foreign spirit has taken over various fields of Hungarian cultural life, and as we strive to restore to ourselves these positions, we have need of a healthy Hungarian spirit."50

The United Christian party held a meeting in which the members of its factions in Parliament and in the Upper House took part. After the discussions the following resolution was adopted: "In accordance with its already-existing program, the Party welcomes the adoption of the aims of the anti-Jewish legislation and records happily the amendments accepted by the prime minister in accordance with the Party position."51 The amendments refer to the problem of the converts.

For reasons irrelevant to the scope of this paper, the regent of Hungary, Admiral Horthy, decided to dismiss Prime Minister Imredi. A noteworthy, piquant detail is that the direct excuse for his dismissal was the revelation that Imredi's father had been Jewish. When rumors began to circulate in Budapest about Imredi's Jewishness, he tried to deny them, but when Horthy placed before him documents testifying to his Jewishness, he was forced to accept the verdict and resign.52

In Imredi's stead the regent appointed Count Pal Teleki as prime
minister on February 16, 1939. He had served as minister of culture and education in Imredi’s government.

Teleki was a professor of geography and was considered an intellectual. In cartography he had won international acclaim and status. He had been one of Horthy’s “men of Szeged” who had brought about the counterrevolution of 1919. He had served as prime minister from July 1920 to April 1921. During his term of office Hungary had passed its “numerus clausus” act, which imposed limits on Jewish youth with regard to university study, while during his second term of office as prime minister, he had the second anti-Jewish act adopted, as we shall see below. As Katzburg puts it, “thus he symbolized the continuity of Hungarian anti-Jewish policy throughout the period.”

Katzburg states further:

His anti-Jewish ideology was based on the broad historical and social conception of a scholar, combined with a deep inner conviction and fundamental religiosity. These characteristics, together with his considerable personal prestige, added weight to his views. Dezso Sulyok describes Teleki as a “deep rooted antisemite, the most unaccommodating anti-Jewish politician of the Trianon period. In his quiet, contemplative, and soft manner, he stood up against the Jewish national minority more decidedly than anyone else.” Teleki’s antisemitism was further buttressed by his racial ideology.

The historian Macartney describes Teleki as “a most dedicated Catholic. ... In his philosophical outlook on society and politics, the barb of nationalistic roughness was removed by his delicate and profound Christianity. ... Oppression and injustice were opposed, according to his outlook, to the laws of humanity and of Christianity.”

As a member of the Imredi cabinet, Teleki participated in the preparation of the proposed second anti-Jewish act. He composed the ideological basis that was attached to the bill. As he himself says, he was the most radical member of the Imredi government on the Jewish question.

In one of his speeches in the Upper House he dealt at length with his theoretical views of Judaism and the problem it was causing the Hungarian people. In his opinion, the Jews are a racial group living according to a tradition thousands of years old. Consequently Jewish thought has remained unique and closed to its environment. ... We can speak of a race, but I put the stress on the four-thousand-year-old Jewish tradition. Their closed lifestyle still exists, and is unlikely to change, not even by means of conversion. This is not a matter of mere religion, but rather one combining religious and national aspects.
The religion is merely one of the components of the entirety, and though their religion may change, much of their original world of thought remains. ... Assimilation is especially difficult for us, for Christian society has already absorbed that world of thought which Judaism brings with it from the Orient and from the Occident—mainly in the economic field, though also in other walks of life, especially theater, the press, and other fields shaping public opinion.57

These words of commentary come through clearly in the ministerial explanation added to the proposed second anti-Jewish act, which was apparently composed by Teleki himself.58

Teleki spelled out his practical approach to the Jewish problem less than a fortnight after his appointment as prime minister. On February 28, 1939, Teleki appeared at a rally of the Urban Christian party for Hungarian Life, which controlled the Budapest municipality, where he was elected party leader.59

Teleki began by recalling memories of his first steps in politics, which he took under the tutelage and influence of Karoly Wolf. We left Szeged together with Gombos, our leader, the regent, all united in order to carry out a certain task in which we are still engaged. ... We feared that after the initial enthusiasm, after the first Christian reaction to the war and to Communism [he was referring to the white counterrevolution and the White Terror], we would return to the situation which was prevalent before the World War. But this is not so. It turned out that the war and the economic crisis which followed it were mere symptoms of the great spiritual crisis the world is experiencing.

Our present Christian reaction is not a reaction to the World War, but rather our reaction to the liberalism and materialism of the nineteenth century and of the early twentieth century. This approach of ours is connected with the fact that we are at present engaged in our final struggle against Judaism. A final struggle, but not an easy one. The struggle will not end within three months or even six months, not even within a year or two. It is a great and drawn-out struggle, whose dimensions suit the matter it is intended to deal with. ... This struggle may perhaps involve difficulties, and we must state this openly, for if the Christian populace is unaware of this fact, it will be unable to withstand the burden of the struggle. ... Over the past twenty years we have undergone some difficult periods, but we have never despaired, we have never given up. We have remained united under the banner of Karoly Wolf; we have continued our struggle and have never forsaken the banner.

Our plan is as follows: to persevere in our struggle for the Christian idea, and in the end we will triumph!
Our hopes for victory are especially bolstered up here in our capital city, for this is where our strength was first fired by the strength of the enthusiasm and charismatic personality of our leader, Karoly Wolf.60

Teleki left no doubt in the hearts of his audience that he intended to outline his policy regarding the Jews and the Jewish problem in accordance with the blunt, antisemitic example set by Karoly Wolf. And so he did.

At that same rally Teleki was warmly praised by his predecessor, the former prime minister, Imredi:

Teleki’s words have made a deep impression on our hearts, for he is one of the most veteran fighters for the Christian idea. . . . I know that in Count Teleki’s personality such a fighter for the Christian idea takes over the scepter of leadership as will, by his force of will and his perseverance, bring these ideas to fruition. The request I make of all those present here is that they serve as Teleki’s faithful men-of-arms, just as they have been the faithful men-of-arms of the Christian-national idea over the past twenty years.61

The change in premiership had no effect upon the legislative process instituted in the Imredi period. The second anti-Jewish bill was placed before the parliamentary committee, approved by thirty-six votes to twenty-six, and brought before the parliamentary plenum for debate.62

The minister of law, Andras Tasnadi-Nagy, presented the government view on the subject of anti-Jewish legislation:

It seems to me that no topic has been the subject of such comprehensive and thorough public debate in such broad circles as this one. The broadest circles of society, of their various strata, various associations and organizations, have considered it . . . . Ever since the month of November the press has dealt daily with this topic in its editorials, in articles composed by experts. Certain papers have even instituted special columns to discuss this topic.

There is need for a strong decision to put this matter in order, not only for the welfare of the nation, but also for the welfare of the Jews.63

The minister of law went on to deny allegations that the source of the anti-Jewish legislation was “foreign influence”:  

Contrary to this view, I point out not only the Hungarian movements of 1919 but also the adoption of the “Numerus Clausus” Act, which took place during Count Teleki’s previous term of office as prime minister. That legislation was, in fact, the initial step in the present legislation. I also note the founding in 1895 of the parliamentary People’s party. Among the
important goals of that party the idea of limiting the activity of the Jewish spirit and the desire to oppose Jewish domination were preeminent.

He objected to the accusation that the present legislation contained "antisemitism per se and a brutal lack of humanity." This law is the first step in the defense of the Hungarian race, while economically it is merely an extension of the anti-Jewish act adopted last year. . . . We must introduce a Hungarian spirit into our economic lives, and these lives must be dominated by the Christian spirit."65

The Debate in the Upper House: The Stand of Church Leaders

After the proposed law was adopted by Parliament, it was sent over for debate in the Upper House, and was considered there initially by a "joint committee." The speaker of the Upper House, Laszlo Gorgey, said that "the spirit of the Hungarian race lives in this proposal; it solves the most important existential problem of Hungarianism, opens a new page in the relations between Hungarians and Jews, and ensures a national Christian lifestyle."66

The first spokesman in the debate was Cardinal Justinian Seredi, the leader of the Catholic church in Hungary. In his opening remarks he referred to the problem of the converts, saying that had the proposed act dealt only with blocking the Jews, he would have related to it as a legalist, by virtue of his position as a member of the Upper House. However, since Christianity was entangled in every stage of the proposed act, he would relate to it as a representative of the church, for the very people the law applied to were not only Hungarian citizens but his congregants as well, his Christian brethren: "If we are speaking of a Christian Hungary—and we do believe that our country is Christian—it is thus self-evident that Christian concepts should be reflected in our legislation." For this reason he did not view favorably the fact that the proposed law distinguished between one Christian and another.

The cardinal went on to voice several practical proposals, the adoption of which would be aimed at preventing the Jews from streaming to Hungary, infiltrating the country's borders, and receiving citizenship. The cardinal added, "It is not sufficient to make use of the law to block those Jews who should be blocked. It is also important to do away with the phenomena which the Jews introduced into our public lives in the economic and social fields, and to liquidate that Jewish spirit because of which the government has seen fit to table the proposed bill." The cardinal stressed that he was making his comments in the name of the Synod of
Catholic Bishops, a body that had no desire to cause the government and the state any difficulties whatever. He also saw fit to voice his comments “so that present-day or future readers of the proposed bill will be able to read that the Synod of Bishops has based itself on the grounds of righteousness and love.”

The next speaker was Bishop Gyula Glattfelder, bishop of Csanad. In his speech he elaborated on the concept of “spirit over matter” and spoke critically of the fact that the proposed law did not sufficiently recognize the purifying power of Christianity. Consequently, it did not recognize the converts as absolute Christians.

The bishop mentioned favorably and picturesquely the veteran anti-semites who had used to be active in the Clerical People’s party: “those who strove to restore Christianity to its pristine glory were busy with the Jewish problem at the same time as today’s policymakers were still babes in arms.”

Glattfelder went on to mention what he called “the Jewish spirit”:

Even those values and topics viewed by the Hungarian nation and by the Christian religion as sacred and worthy of adoration, Judaism regarded as objects to be bargained over....Since the proposed law aims to restore the balance, we must accept it. The condition in which Christian society finds itself requires emergency treatment.

We must respect the public need, yet we must be careful not to let emotions of hatred or injustice overwhelm this special legislation. Therefore: if anyone compares this legislation with the acts of the early Popes and church princes and with the severe restrictions they, too, imposed on the Jews—he had better note the substantial distinction between imposing restrictive decrees out of prayer and tears and doing so to the accompaniment of gypsy music and indecent language, for the distinction is not merely one of style.

The bishop criticized the law’s attitude toward the validity of the conversion of certain converts, as reflected in the opening paragraph of the proposed law:

Though we accept this proposed anti-Jewish bill, yet under no circumstances can we agree to the tendency to cause Christians harm. A law denying Christianity severely damages the faith of a believing Christian.

Every defensive act aimed at preventing unworthy elements from penetrating the inner sanctum is acceptable to us. Nevertheless, in a Christian country there is no way to divest Christians of the validity of their Christianity. We cannot agree that the conditions of converts and assimilationists be worse than those of the Galician mob [Jews who had migrated during the last few generations from Galicia].
The bishop stressed once again that he had searched in vain for recognition of the influence and superiority of the spirit in the proposed law: "The regard for jobs, wages, and percentages cannot ensure a Christian spirit in public life or in the press. If we remove the Jews from the editorial boards of the newspapers, but the destructive Jewish spirit remains there, it will be a most painful scandal." 68

The bishop's criticism was aimed at the aforementioned first paragraph, in which he demanded amendments. Regarding the proposed law in general and regarding his attitude to its proponents, he said, "The honorable prime minister may rest assured that he enjoys the full confidence of the Upper House.... The only conclusion to be drawn is that since the proposed bill is supposed to ensure the life of the Christian public in this state room, it should be adopted in general, while the first paragraph of the proposed bill should be opposed." 69

The next speaker was Bishop Laszlo Ravasz, head of the Hungarian Reformed church. Just like his predecessors, he, too, criticized the first paragraph of the proposed bill and its definitions, which were liable to cause harm to the converts. He focused on the significance of the assimilation of the Jews and on the purifying spiritual value of the assimilatory process. His overall approach to the proposed law resembled that of his predecessors: the law was to be supported.

There exists a Jewish problem which must be solved, while taking care to minimize the harm done to Hungarian Christians and ensuring them maximal advantages. . . . The proposal is based on the only right and acceptable point of view: we are talking of the problem of our struggle against the Jewish spirit. This topic may find its solution within the lengthy and complex process of assimilation . . . and so a law must be formulated to speed up the assimilatory process and neutralize all those factors which are liable to interfere with this process. Consequently we must adopt the law in its entirety, for rejecting it may bring about an even worse situation than we are in at the present time, a situation extremely difficult for the nation, for the Jews, for the administration, and for us all. We must avoid bringing about such a situation in which the ramifications of this bill, proposed so as to free us of the focused and corruptive effects of Judaism, will be weaker than the harm it will have caused all those ex-Jews who have become as us in their souls and in their Hungarianism. 70

The representative of the Evangelical church and its highest-ranking official in Hungary, Bishop Sandor Raffay, repeated the main points already made by his colleagues, the heads of the other Christian churches. He, too, spoke in favor of assimilation and against the stipulation of the proposed law, according to which even after conversion, the convert
might still be regarded as a Jew. He repeated Glattfelder's suggestion that outstanding intellectuals be awarded privileges similar to those enjoyed by outstanding athletes, such as Olympic champions. Yet, despite his criticism, he too—like his predecessors—undertook to vote for the bill because he was convinced that its rejection might well put us, nationally speaking, in a most unpleasant situation... and worried by the fact that despite the tablers of the bill being desirous of taking steps in favor of the Hungarian Christians, they are causing Christians harm, for they have ruled that converts remain Jews in the future as well, and not only the converts themselves but their offspring, too. Any person who converts to Christianity becomes a Christian. The concept of "returning to Judaism" should be removed in its entirety from the proposed bill.... The most important question is not "who is Jewish" but rather what can be done for the Christian nation.

He announced that he would appreciate it if the law were to stipulate that from now on no Jew will be allowed to obtain Hungarian citizenship; furthermore, if the law were to forbid mixed marriages between Christians and Jews.... I willingly accept the proposed bill in its general form, in the hope that the government takes into account those proposed amendments worthy of its consideration.72

Thus did the heads of the Christian churches, the spiritual leaders of some 98 percent of Hungarian Christians, make their voices heard on the topic so fateful for the Jews of Hungary. Their speeches speak for themselves, and testify to the character of their speakers.72

The minister of law, Tasnadi-Nagy, represented the government in defending the proposed bill. He described the basic need for the proposed anti-Jewish law by referring to the views of men of stature, citing statements made by the late Bishop Ottokar Prohaszka and by the priest Bela Bangha on the Jewish question.

The minister of law expressed his agreement with "the wonderful statement by Glattfelder, that there really exists a Jewish spirit and that the Christian society maintains its right to restore the equilibrium.... It is high time the Jews felt the existence of this problem, but for some reason they have not paid it any attention."73

The minister denied Glattfelder's assumption that the proposed bill had been prepared with a lack of sensitivity or lightheadedly, claiming that he could say with a clear conscience that neither he nor anyone else of those who brought the proposed bill before the legislature was influenced by any
negative feelings or by hatred. On the contrary, he feels the pain of all those hurt, but the confrontation is not between individuals; the nation, too, must be considered, and the proposed bill serves the future of the nation.

Therefore, the minister of law rejected the opinion that the proposed bill was un-Christian, was not based on the love of all creatures. "In the name of divine and man-made laws, I ask that the proposed bill be adopted."74

Prime Minister Teleki, too, participated in the debate; his speech includes two points worthy of special mention. Like his minister of law, Teleki ensured his audience that in tabling the proposed anti-Jewish law he "was not guided by any desire to persecute the Jews or by feeling of hatred or of sadism, or any other similar emotion." The prime minister went on to deny the allegation that the proposed bill was presented under foreign influence: "I do not feel that this is so. No foreign mentality guided me in this context. My view is based upon the elements of a purely Hungarian outlook, and this applies to me not only today—it was the case twenty years ago as well, long before these attitudes developed outside the borders of Hungary."75

Two exceptions from among the members of the Upper House must be mentioned. Count Gyula Karolyi resigned his membership in the Upper House in protest against the proposed legislation. Lorant Hegedus was utterly opposed to the proposed legislation because in his opinion "it contradicted both the Christian approach and the national viewpoint. From both of these points of view the proposed bill is a retreat."76

Among the rest of the members of the Upper House, some supported the bill wholeheartedly, even demanding that its language be rendered stricter in various places. Most of the members accepted the proposed bill as it had been tabled. There were also those who only paid lip service to their liberalism or to their religious outlook, but ended up voting for the bill.

The fate of the first paragraph of the bill, concerning the definition of a Christian, remained in the balance. A confrontation developed between the government and the Parliament on the one hand and the Upper House that opposed several declarations of paragraph 1 on the other. The debate on this paragraph underwent various metamorphoses in the different committees: a joint committee, a formulating committee, and then, once again, a joint committee.

Consequent to the opposition of the Upper House, the proposed law was brought back for reconsideration by the joint committee. The atmosphere prevalent at the renewed sessions of the committee was
similar to that which had dominated the discussions of the same committee two weeks earlier. Once again bishops Glattfelder, Ravasz, and Raffay took part in the debate. They repeated the reservations they had expressed two weeks before regarding the converts to Christianity, but nevertheless supported the adoption of the legislation after making a number of amendments to its first paragraph. These amendments were intended to lighten the burden of the converts and to broaden the base of those converts who would be exempted from the restrictions of the anti-Jewish act.

Ravasz, faithful to his beliefs, voiced the opinion that “Christianity’s ability to reshape human lives is so decisive that even a person who is completely Jewish according to his origins can assimilate entirely within a certain period of time.” Ravasz added that despite his displeasure at various aspects of the bill regarding the converts, “the Upper House will not be doing the nation good service if it refuses to adopt the bill.” The other two bishops spoke in a similar vein.

The minister of law expressed his appreciation of the bishops and of all those who were striving to settle the disagreements between the Parliament and the Upper House so as to enable the law to be adopted by both sections of the legislature. The committee’s proposals were sent back to the plenary session of the Upper House, and it began to debate them on April 15, 1939.

Once again the bishops, the heads of the churches, spoke. Cardinal Seredi, who stressed once again that he was speaking in the name of the Synod of Catholic Bishops, said that he perceived in the solution of the Jewish problem a national interest as well as the legitimate self-defense of the nation:

“I declare that in our treatment of the Jewish question I perceive an act of justifiable self-defense, and for this reason the state is entitled to limit the existing rights of its citizens, even those of its Christian citizens.

The concept of imposing limitations on the Jews is acceptable to all. Part of the Jewish population—disguised as the press, art, literature, poetry, and music—has cast doubt upon values sacred to Christians. They have done so with the silent acquiescence of the other Jews and despite the constant protests of Catholics.... Even if imposing limitations upon the Jews means a certain denial of rights, the present bill should not be defined as ‘a law of punishment.’ The influence of the Jews must be curtailed, for they have sinned much against Christian Hungary.... We must ascribe the responsibility to the liberal regime which facilitated the Jewish tricks, despite the constant protests of Catholic Hungarians.” Seredi accepted the proposed law in general.
Bishop Raffay, too, spoke at that session. He stated that life had dictated the need for the proposed law. "The Jews themselves are one of the factors leading to the need for this legislation." He also pointed out the limitations of the proposed bill: "There are people who converted to Christianity decades ago, but the proposed law classifies them, too, as Jews." He would prefer that the road to assimilation not be blocked. He accepted the proposed legislation with certain reservations, and welcomed the committee's amendments concerning the converts."

The disagreements, however, were not settled, and paragraph 1 of the proposed bill became an obstacle to its final adoption. In light of the stand taken by the church leaders and their supporters in the Upper House, a self-evident difference of opinion developed between the two parts of the legislature. This difference of opinion threatened to develop into a constitutional crisis, and under certain conditions could even have led to the dispersing of Parliament and the calling of early elections, a year before they were scheduled (May 1940). An increase in the strength of the extreme right-wing parties was expected in these elections. Neither the premier and his party nor the church leaders wanted that. Thus Teleki made a special effort to prevent the conflict between the two houses, and tried to convince the Upper House to accept the proposed bill in its original form, as it had been approved by the Parliament, without the committee's amendments.

Prime Minister Teleki reiterated his view that the complaint that the proposed legislation had been influenced by "foreign ideologies" should be rejected. Nevertheless, he referred to the importance of race and of blood, declaring,

I support this position, both scientifically and socially. I have been furthering it, both in lectures and in writing, for over twenty years, i.e.: I took this stand long before it became possible to attribute it to the influence of any external factor.

Certain racial characteristics are liable to become dominant to such an extent that in cases of mixed marriage, these dominant characteristics appear at the expense of the weaker side. Anyone having a knowledge, any knowledge, of biology and the other natural sciences is aware of these facts, the validity of which is indisputable.

The prime minister agreed with Cardinal Seredi that Christianity has an assimilating effect, and claimed that the proposed law reflects the opinions, the outlooks, and the needs of the population as these have been formulated over decades, and serves merely as a remedy to prevent the poisoning of the body of the nation. The change perpetrated
by Judaism in the body, the character, and the thought processes of the Hungarian nation involves the greatest of dangers; this change is felt even in the thought processes of the Christian elite, which is unsullied in the purity of its blood.

The prime minister, too—like the head of the Catholic church before him—referred to the denial of the rights of a large body of citizens. To justify this denial the prime minister made use of the very same reasoning as was voiced by the head of the Catholic church:

Though it is true that the proposed bill does entail a denial of rights from many points of view, nevertheless, considering the vital interests of the entire nation, this is nothing but justifiable self-defense against the deep penetration of a foreign body into the national body....I have stated explicitly that this is not persecution, but merely self-defense.... The expectations of Christian society, that this bill be adopted, are unambiguous and absolutely justified."

Later on Bishop Ravasz also took part in the same debate. At first he stressed that it was necessary to adopt the proposed bill because

its rejection would leave the urgent problem unsolved, and not solving the problem would cause harm not only to the entire nation, but to Judaism as well.... We must ask: do we have the right to entrust the economic administration and spiritual direction of Hungary to a population group, the complete assimilation of which is doubtful? Has it become so Hungarian and so Christian that it should be permitted to take part in the leadership of the nation in the economic and spiritual spheres?

In general, we must state that despite its numerous values, despite its spiritual superiority, and despite its brilliant intelligence, the spirit of the Jews is nothing but a rootless, alienated, and decadent spirit.

The bishop boasted of his antisemitic past, and made it clear to his audience that

as early as 1917 he had determined his stand on the Jewish question and his views had not changed since."

... The fact that Judaism differs from Hungarianism racially and religiously, with regard to its future and with regard to its historical past, is immutable. The alien nature of the Jewish spirit is the result of all these. Christian culture and national life must take this fact into consideration.

The bishop took advantage of the opportunity to dispatch a strongly worded warning to the Jews:

In Western democracies there is unbridled incitement on the part of the Jews against all those states which adopt anti-Jewish laws, including Hun-
gary. I ascribe considerable significance to the fact that Hungarian Jewry will reject this defense of itself. . . . I repeat once again, that those democracies, too, will one day face the Jewish problem. If they have Jews, they will have a Jewish problem. The two have always gone together. 83

In conclusion the bishop addressed the converts to Christianity: "There is a consoling and calming force accompanied by humility and a modesty of spirit. If one suffers innocently, by this suffering of his he weakens those very elements in the proposed law which are a possible result of human weakness." 84

Regarding the bishop's statement, it should be noted, first of all, that his view of the Jews—racially, spiritually, etc.—and that of the prime minister are very similar, and, secondly, that he viewed the suffering of the converts as "innocent suffering." This is not valid for the Jews.

In his rebuttal the minister of law referred to Ravasz's statement, and expressed his astonishment at Ravasz's willingness to accept the proposed law only in general. "According to his statements about Judaism, he could have been expected to adopt the proposed law in all its detail, in its original form." 85

Bishop Glattfelder spoke again later on in the debate. He spoke not only in his own name and in the name of the bishops, but appeared this time as the spokesman for the Upper House. "The Upper House has proved that it is not interested in quarreling either with the government or with the Parliament, and so it has adopted, in general, the proposed law." He requested the House to adopt the amendments as they were formulated in committee. "Assimilation must be permitted. Christianity has the power to shape the character of man, to develop his soul, and to bring about assimilation. Acceptance of Christianity, Christian education, and a Christian environment are of such influence that no doubt can be cast upon their value."

He related how, in 1895, as a young student, he was an eyewitness to an aroused mob denigrating the cardinal and spitting on him as he stepped out of the Upper House, for he had opposed the full emancipation of the Jews:

"Today, too, excitement is rife, but let us not be afraid of the thunderings and the storms, for even after the most violent storm the skies clear up—and then we shall rejoice and be happy, for we will have seen that our conscience is clear and that our soul is undamaged. I pray for the unbelievers, as well, and they must understand the viewpoint of the Christian church: Christianity is not our uniform, our symbol, our boy scout garb—it is a spiritual renewal, revelation, Jesus' mystic mercies, and thus it is
immeasurable mathematically; it must be believed in.” He said that the committee’s amendments satisfy him absolutely and he requested that they be adopted.86

The minister of law spoke once again, saying that in contrast with the opinions expressed considering the possibility of assimilation, he relied on the views of great men, including the famed late Hungarian bishop, Ottokar Prohaszka, in stating that assimilation is impossible. The minister even referred to the insulting of the cardinal mentioned by Glattfelder: “The dastardly event which occurred to the cardinal forty-five years ago merely demonstrates that it was not a Hungarian spirit which prevailed in the land at the time. For this reason it is important for the Hungarian spirit to prevail in Hungary.”87

The Upper House adopted the proposed bill with the committee’s amendments and referred it back to the Parliament. The amendments to paragraph 1 of the bill were intended to increase the number of converts to whom the law would not apply.

A parliamentary committee considered the Upper House’s amendments and expressed its disapproval of most of them. One of those who rejected the amendments was Mihaly Kolozsvari-Borcsa, who, relying on statistics, claimed that the amendments would enable tens of thousands of converts to circumvent the law, and pointed out “the harmful influence the Upper House amendments might have on the Christian nature of the press.”88

The Parliament reconvened and debated the question without delay. The chairman, Janos Makkai, said that the proposed bill, as prepared by the Parliament, had the support of over 90 percent of the population. He indicated that adopting the Upper House amendments would result in the problem not being solved.

A representative of the ruling party, Imre Molnar, made his party’s opinion clear: “The conception and birth of the proposed bill express the common desire of the entire nation; they were not brought about by a single party.”

Another representative of that party, Domonkos Festetics, denied that the government had imposed the rejection of the Upper House amendments upon the party. He expressed his rage at “the forming of the impression that we are quarreling and debating the number of degenerate, valueless Jews, whereas we should be discussing serious topics. I do not accept the proposed amendments because in my opinion anyone born a Jew with Jewish ancestors is a Jew.”

The Parliament voted to reject the alterations proposed by the Upper
House to paragraph 1 of the proposed law, adopting in their stead a few amendments of lesser significance.\textsuperscript{89}

In light of the disagreement between the two houses, the chairmen of the Parliament and of the Upper House had to summon a joint committee of reconciliation. In the discussions of the joint committee, held on April 26, 1939, Bishop Glattfelder was one of the speakers for the Upper House. He opened by pointing out that the Upper House had no intention of preventing the adoption of the bill:

It will suffice to note that among the members of the Upper House there are those who, forty or fifty years ago, focused the nation’s attention—both orally and in writing—on the fact that the strengthening of the Jewish spirit was not to be tolerated.\ldots We announce openly that every word uttered in the Upper House was intended solely to free converts to Christianity from the limitations of this bill. All steps taken by the Upper House were aimed at achieving this goal. All the Christian churches agree that every resident living in this country who has accepted the Christian religion is entitled to enjoy all the rights of citizenship. This concept is a very old one for us; it has been a foundation stone of our political regime ever since the days of St. Istvan.\ldots All the Christian churches are united in their view that one’s adherence to Christianity confirms one’s links with Hungarianism. No one can possibly be interested in nullifying ideas proposed by the Parliament, ninety-five percent of which are acceptable to the Upper House, because of a miserable misunderstanding between the two houses. No one can be interested in such a situation—except for the Jews. Therefore, we must strive to find the denominator common to the views of both sides.\textsuperscript{90}

Bishop Ravasz, too, voiced the opinion that

there is no difference in national feeling, in good will, and in self-sacrifice between the two Houses. Why, then, are we to assume there is no possibility of the two legislative bodies getting together?\ldots In accepting the amendment to paragraph 1 as proposed by the Upper House, it is as if we are expressing our appreciation of the Hungarian genius for its assimilatory ability and of Christianity for its regenerative, remedial force. We must do everything we can to reach agreement.\textsuperscript{91}

The conceptual difference that led to the disagreement between the two houses was expressed clearly and succinctly in the summary made by the chairman of the joint committee of reconciliation, Janos Szeder: “The proposed bill, as worded by the Parliament, casts a doubt upon the possibility of Jews assimilating and even denies the concept of assimilation as a possible solution of the Jewish problem. The stand of the Upper House contradicts this view, and views assimilation and inter-
mingling in a positive light.” In his opinion, it was important to adopt the proposed bill as prepared by the Parliament in order to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem.92

Cardinal Seredi and bishops Glattfelder and Ravasz were among the delegates of the Upper House in the subcommittee.93

Seredi proved reconciliatory, and announced that by virtue of the reasoning voiced during the debates of the committee of reconciliation he himself tended toward a compromise. He was even taking into consideration the good will shown by the Parliament in its willingness to reach a compromise in light of the efforts at mediation made by the minister of law. For these reasons he accepted the proposals of the subcommittee. He took “into account the fact that this difficult problem has caused considerable anxiety in our public and social lives, and has threatened to lead our political lives into crisis. A solution to the problem adopted in a tranquil atmosphere will provide both our country and our political lives with the required calmness.” The cardinal did not miss this opportunity to utter his declaration, with its predictable content and style, making it clear that “he, and all the members of the Upper House together with him, without exception, had spoken up in defense of their Christian brethren when they had presented their amendments to the proposed bill as it had been referred to them by the Parliament.”94

After the adoption of the compromise amendments, the proposed bill was very similar to the Parliament’s original proposal. The amendments enlarged to some extent the group of converts to Christianity to whom the law would not apply. The Hungarian legislator heaped compensation for this concession upon the shoulders of the Jewish populace, as the historians have said: “But to balance this concession the economic restrictions on Jews were increased.”95

The amendments proposed by the subcommittee were approved by the joint committee of reconciliation by 149 votes to 59, and were referred to the Parliament.96 The law was adopted on May 4, 1939, made public on August 22, 1939, and included in the Law Code under the heading “Law to Limit the Expansion of the Jews in the Public and Economic Domain.”

The law did considerable harm to the Jews of Hungary. Its main effect was economic. According to the minister of law, some twenty thousand jobs previously occupied by Jews would now pass into Christian hands. In the opinion of certain economists, between sixty and seventy thousand breadwinners lost their positions as a result of the second anti-Jewish law. Including their families, some two hundred thousand people were harmed.
The law caused other damage, as well: to the right of the Jews to vote, to their employment in the civil service, to their acceptance into the universities, to their membership in professional organizations, to their activities as newspaper editors, publishers, and correspondents, for example. Jews were forbidden to acquire lands or forests, except at public auctions, and even then only by special permit. The authorities were entitled to compel Jews to sell or lease their lands. The number of Jews permitted to be employed by various industrial plants was fixed at 6.2 percent, their relative weight in the general population. Considering the fact that various sectors of employment (such as the army, the police, and most of the government service) had been almost completely closed to Jews for a long time, while other occupations were now closed to them by the anti-Jewish legislation, it is clear that the livelihoods of a very large number were liquidated, while many were even reduced to starvation.

I have made a special point of citing excerpts from speeches made during the parliamentary debates, despite many of these statements being mere repetitions of speeches made earlier. The detailed description of the legislative process has been adduced in order to cast light upon the atmosphere generated in Hungary in those days and upon the attitudes of those whose roles were central in generating that atmosphere.

It is interesting to note the unanimity prevailing between secular government members and legislators and the church leaders, members of the Upper House. Both groups described the exclusion of the Jews from economic, social, and cultural life as justified self-defense. Both groups stressed the danger inherent in the spirit of Judaism to Christian superiority and to the Christian Hungarian nation. One group would speak of "poison," the other of "corruption," their intention and the consequences were the same. Just like Prime Minister Teleki, the bishops, the leaders of the churches, voiced their descriptions and theories of the Jewish race, upon which they based the justification for their demand to remove people of the alien Jewish race from their community—to place them outside the camp and outside the law. Both groups made considerable efforts to make their hostile and condescending attitude toward the Jews and Judaism heard and seen, and both groups agreed that in the anti-Jewish legislation they saw a significant Christian step, executed in the spirit of Christianity, the perpetrators of which were worthy of being blessed for their efforts. They complimented one another and made their opinions known in public. They were in full agreement all along. The only area in which they disagreed was with regard to the converts.
to Christianity and the time period during which their Christianity held validity.

The link between the speeches of 1939 and the deeds of 1944 is not coincidental.

Extra-parliamentary Activity during and after the Debate on the Second Anti-Jewish Act

In light of the great interest in the legislative process that the general public showed, the debate on the second anti-Jewish act did not limit itself to the four walls of the legislature. Both during the parliamentary debate and after it, various public figures referred to the legislation and commented on it from different points of view. Just as the church leaders took an active part in the preparation of the law during the legislative debating, so they also expressed their views of it outside the legislature, both orally and in writing. This widespread public preoccupation guaranteed that the second anti-Jewish act remained central in public interest after it was adopted, members of the priesthood thus playing a major role in the cyclic, long-winded public treatment of the law and the public interest in it.

It is interesting to listen to the speeches delivered on the subject of Jewry and Judaism and to study publications concerning the proposed bill issued during the debates and after they were over. The material adduced below is only a small portion of the material produced during that period.

At an advanced stage in the discussion of the second anti-Jewish law, in a speech delivered in the town of Cegled on April 24, 1939, at a rally of ruling party members, the director-general of the ministry of law, Istvan Antal, referred to the delays in the Upper House:

Our party has been a right-wing party ever since the days of the Szeged revolution in 1919, and is the heir of the right-wing, racial political movements and organizations struggling against the radical left with its attendant phenomena for the formation of an exclusive political and economic government by members of our Hungarian race.... The disintegrating leftist forces are at present waging a weak, last-ditch battle despite the general confusion on their ranks. The drawn-out, complicated struggle going on in the legislature over the proposed anti-Jewish law is one of the signs of this last-ditch battle. The twelfth hour has arrived for the completion of the anti-Jewish legislation, for otherwise the Christian masses will be so dis-
appointed that there is no way today of foretelling the possible outcome of such a disappointment."

This speech seems to indicate that the Christian masses had been tensely following the stages of the debate. They were justified in deducing from the tone of the participants in the debate that the solution to many problems of life in Hungary was linked to the completion of the anti-Jewish legislation. Not completing the legislative process would be tantamount to depriving the Christian masses of the solution they yearned for, and so, in the speaker's opinion, their disappointment and outburst of rage would be justified.

In the Catholic periodical *Egyedül Vagyunk* (We Are Alone) there appeared at the beginning of 1939 an article analyzing the Jewish character. The magazine saw fit to introduce the writer of the article in the following way:

This courageous and clear exposition is written by a Catholic priest, one of the outstanding members of the teaching staff of the Theological Institute of Kalocsa, the young instructor, Dr. Andor Szorenýi. Szorenýi was engaged in Rome for three and a half years in the study of Oriental languages and of the Holy Scriptures, and in 1936, at the age of 28, he arrived at Kalocsa. It is difficult to find so learned an expert as he in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature.

Szorenýi wrote:

The wandering Jew is the terrible symbol of the Jewish nation, the race persecuted throughout the world.... Gold served as his homeland, and with the help of the vast amount of gold he has amassed at home, he controls various peoples. However, despite his bulging pockets he remains alien and hated everywhere. People do speak with him, while mocking him. They are even willing to suffer his presence for a certain period of time, but in the end murderous persecution breaks out against him with powerful force.

I base my description of the nature and characteristics of this wandering Jew upon the Holy Scriptures, the Talmud, and their official book of regulations, the *Shulhan 'Arukh*.... Judaism is a race, and Judaism is a people. True, Judaism does have a special religion, which in modern terminology may be defined as a national religion, but beyond this the Jews are a race and a people, and they retain their racial characteristics even if they convert to another religion.... Judaism has always been a material nation, adhering to materialism and living for earthly sensuousness and physical pleasures. It was the role of Providence to lead Judaism toward revelation. Judaism has never thought of the World to Come, and from this point of view the Old Testament is incomplete, for it does not include
the revelation in its entirety. It is unfit to include it, for we only received the entire truth and the light in the New Testament, from Jesus.

In the desires of their imagination the Messiah appears as one coming to distribute to them earthly benefits and physical happiness. True, among them there have appeared pure souls as well, such as—for example—the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and others who awaited the Savior. But most of these followed Jesus only after he performed miracles, revived the dead, brought cures for physical afflictions, and distributed bread to the hungry. However, when spiritual nourishment and purity of the soul were on the agenda, they quickly abandoned him and even crucified him.

Their materialistic outlook became more awkward when they turned from a blessed people to an accursed one—at the same time as they denied Jesus the Savior. They adhered inflexibly to their old errors of thousands of years, and fossilized themselves in the terrible spirit expressed in the Talmud, the doctrines of which are nothing but a monstrous distortion of the moral and legal system of the Old Testament. The line characteristic of the Talmud is that it confuses and distorts the concepts of Godhood, angels, evil spirits, the soul, sin, life after death, and of numerous similar concepts. Instead, the Talmud instills unbridled materialism and earthly-materialistic achievements at the head of its hierarchy of values.... Ever since they were granted civil rights in various countries, the Jews set themselves a goal—to achieve the aims the Talmud set before them: imposing Talmudic values and the spirit of Judaism on the nations of the world and, similarly, imposing an unrestrained Jewish government over the other people.

There may indeed be some Jews who are not familiar with the Talmud and who do not speak their language, but the Jewish spirit, thousands of years old, lives in them as well, and Talmudic morality prevails over their outlook, for an exaggerated interest in materialism is the basic component of their souls and their lives. It is sufficient for us to think of Marx and Trotsky, of Znuiev, of Bela Kun, and of the horrible names of their compatriots. Let us think of those controlled by an obsession with gold—the princes of the world of finance, the leaders of the secret cells of the Freemasons, wealthy industrialists and traders, and Shylocks. Only then will my statement be comprehensible, for the most important characteristic of Judaism has been and continues to be brutal materialism.

The priesthood did not merely express its opinions in writing. It was also active among the public. In a small town in the Budapest area, local elections were being held. The list of candidates of the antisemitic right was organized by the Catholic priest, Dr. Geza Decsey. The right bloc included, among other groups, the Christian party and the National-Socialist party. The central point of the right bloc platform was the removal of the Jews from the municipal power centers that were con-
trolled, as it were, by the Jews. The press column reporting the success of the antisemitic bloc bears the headline, "The Christian Citizens of Pestszenterzsebet Say: Finally We Can Walk Upright in Our Town."

After the elections, the priest announced, "I must note that our victory is the result both of human effort and of divine assistance and desire to support our struggle, for we believed that this triumph would surely come—merely the first step in our activities."

It is interesting to read the letter composed by a country Catholic priest, in which he expressed his opinion of the Jews. The priest's letter found itself a suitable publisher: the daily newspaper of the Arrow-Cross party, which published it as an editorial. The ideas expressed by the country priest are very similar to ideas expressed again and again by the leaders of Hungary's churches during the debate on the anti-Jewish legislation. The outstanding difference is the degree of sophistication in the presentation of the subject. Whereas the church leaders succeeded in enveloping their ideas in a reserved and cultured style, as befit their status, the very same ideas were expressed by the country priest in a rough and vulgar style.

The priest himself testifies that his ideas stemmed partially from the literary heritage of the rector of the Catholic University of Sciences at Budapest, Dr. Jozsef Trikal. This is what he wrote of the Jews:

Their roots are not embedded in any nation, which is why they have a supercilious sense of supremacy over all other peoples. They are not related to other peoples, and so they do not like any particular nation. . . . Like a chameleon, so they, too, come to resemble externally the people around them, but internally, in their hearts, they feel scorn for everyone. Their hatred for all who are not their kin is expressed in literature, in theater, and in art.

In places where priests are murdered, the educated are slaughtered, and churches are burnt—that's where the Jew is to be found. Even if no Jew is actually there in a physical sense, his presence is represented there by his venomous literary works. Like naked spirits they drift all over the world, and by means of their filthy moral concepts, their distorted philosophy, and their base artistic schools, they spread their revolting ideas. Their sullied views corrupt the world.

This people of the ghetto are seated on the thrones of rulers and tighten their pressure around the neck of the Christian world. They do not want the Christians to become Jewish. Never! On the contrary, they do desire them to become corrupt and filthy. They want to immerse them in sewage pipes and to rob them of their character, their honesty, their faith, and their trust in God. . . . Today even the government is compelled to recognize the fact that has been clear for a long time to any intelligent person: Judaism
is not a simple religion, it is a race! Blood! Blood which will never be able to deny itself, even if it is immersed in all the baptismal fonts of every Christian church. Who would rule that the state is obliged to assimilate into itself everyone who has converted to Christianity, and even to grant him all those privileges which are the right of scions of the nation, sons of the national race? Why must we assume that every two-faced, scheming Jew who has succeeded in deceiving the Christian church and has converted is entitled to have the nation recognize him as a citizen of equal rights? A Jew remains a Jew, for Judaism is a race.

The fact that today there is anti-Jewish legislation throughout the world and not only in our land proves clearly that only the Jews are to blame for this. If they were humble, honest, and decent, if they were unwilling to betray for financial gain everything sacred to us—there would be no anti-Jewish law in Hungary. By erecting the barriers of economic limitation before the unrestrained jealousy of the Jews, we are protecting our dear nation and the pure bride of Jesus the Nazarene: the church.

Not long before this article appeared, the Synod of Catholic Bishops was discussing the question of Jews converting to Christianity and their motives in doing so. A daily newspaper carried excerpts from a Shepherds' Epistle written in Latin, which Cardinal Seredi had sent to the Catholic priesthood: "At the present time many Jews are turning to us and asking to be accepted into Christianity. It is reasonable to assume that their present troubles are what has encouraged these people to try to ensure for themselves and for their children not only eternal happiness but also earthly happiness." After this introduction the cardinal instructed the priests concerning the way they should relate to the Jews turning to them seeking "earthly happiness" by means of the church.

In the records of the session of the Synod of Catholic Bishops held some three weeks after the appearance of the newspaper report concerning this Shepherds' Epistle, we read more explicit statements:

The Jews expected certain concessions from the proposed [second anti-Jewish] act under discussion at present. This hope aroused so strong a stream of potential converts that certain honorable bishops had to take special measures in connection with those would-be converts, in order to be convinced of the authenticity of all those who would convert.

In a similar vein the Evangelical bishop of Transdanubia, Dr. Bela Kapi, referred to the would-be converts. With reference to the anti-Jewish law he "warned his congregations to accept into their midst only those who desire to be accepted into the church because of the soul-felt religious convictions they profess."
This suspicious treatment of the would-be converts was a direct result of the general attitude toward the Jews and their character.

Premier Teleki appeared at the general assembly of the United National Christian League toward the end of the debate on the second anti-Jewish law. He declared to his audience that his desire was strong to act in accordance with the views of his old friend and mentor, the late Karoly Wolf:

Making amends for past inaction and restoring the ruins resulting from nineteenth-century materialism are the practical significance of the National Christian idea in political activity. The Christian political way requires filling with content the frameworks which political life has succeeded in setting up. Yet it is not enough to legislate laws. Christian society must unite in order to exploit the opportunities opened up before it by this legislation.  

The minister of justice expressed a similar opinion at a party convention in the town of Hajduszoboszlo: "We are convinced that it is incumbent upon Hungarian Christian society to be the lords of Hungary in all walks of cultural and economic life. Now that the anti-Jewish law has been passed, the way has been opened before us to enable us to take immediate control of life in Hungary in general."

The Evangelical church appointed a bishop in the Tisza River district, Zoltan Turoczy. Upon taking office the new bishop declared that "he is not hiding the fact that he holds right-wing views and that he stands strongly upon a national political base. He even believes that in the present period of national renewal God holds exalted things in store for the Hungarian nation."

It is interesting to note that while the bishop placed his hopes in the renewal of national forces, the prime minister, in a speech he delivered three days after the bishop took office, foresaw a brighter future for the Hungarian nation by means of refreshening the Christian forces at the expense of the Jews:

We are striding down the right road to render this state more Hungarian and more Christian, for today many Christians are occupying positions of the kind that until now were under Jewish control. And so we bear witness to the renewal of the nation, and I am convinced that in the future we shall make good progress along this path, for we have sufficient manpower to enable us to establish a Christian economic life."

At his installment Turoczy presented his political identity card. He defined himself as "right-wing." Definition of the term "right-wing," as
it was understood at the time, is offered by an expert, Prime Minister Teleki:

Our party has borne the flag of the constructive idea of Christianity and nationalism without change and without tiring from the days of Szeged up until today. We knew how to initiate and develop active right-wing policies after the collapse of the Red regime. We knew this from the very first moment of our activity and we also knew how to base these policies on those active elements inspired by right-wing Hungarian concepts at all times. This is our national concept. Another concept is our integration into the European community in which we live and to which we have to attune ourselves.**

We do not need to announce a plan of action at this stage. Our program has been made clear many times: enacting social laws, agrarian reform,** and anti-Jewish legislation. We shall proceed and act along this line. . . . We are faithful servants of the aforesaid concepts, and our party is a stronghold of the concept of right-wing Hungarian development. In the name of these concepts we defend this land for the national Christian spirit against all harmful concepts.** [emphasis added]

In addition to presenting his political identity card, Bishop Turoczy also clarified his faith in the substance, the goal, and the role of Christianity:

To this day people have a mistaken opinion of Jesus the pacifist and of the pacifistic church. To this day they view the roles of Jesus and his church as being active behind the front lines of life, as international sanitation workers, as collectors of the injured in life's struggle, who bandage them, cure them, and comfort them—or bury them.

Such an approach is nothing but a distortion of the truth!

Jesus himself announced that he was bringing strife to this world. When he ascended into Heaven he imposed on his representatives an order for total conquest, worldwide, and thus he sent them to take up their roles.

Had the church not been a fighting church, Christianity would never have attained the position it enjoys today.**

We can only guess the conclusion that the bishop's congregation must have drawn when their spiritual leader told them he was “right-wing” and spoke of a “renewal of nationalist forces” and of a “fighting church.”

The anti-Jewish legislation was extremely popular. Just after the law was adopted, Teleki dismissed Parliament and announced the holding of new elections. These took place on May 28 and 29, 1939. The government was returned to power with a stable majority of 187 seats out of 260. The elections were characterized by a clear electoral shift to the
right. The strength of the Social-Democratic party dropped from eleven seats to five. This party, together with the Liberal party, which also lost some of its strength, expressed its opposition to the anti-Jewish legislation. In contrast, the antisemitic Arrow-Cross party gained strength, going from thirteen seats to forty-five. The right-wing, antisemitic leanings of the ruling party were strengthened as well.118

The unrestrained antisemitic invective had found its way into the hearts of the Hungarian populace, which expressed its opinion in the elections. One of the main elements of these diatribes was the juxtaposition of a positive Christianity against a negative Judaism. Various groups joined this antisemitic wave. Christian piety was a basic component of the views espoused by various antisemitic groups, including the Arrow-Cross party.

Accordingly, we read the following news report:

Within the framework of the thanksgiving prayers held at the close of the harvest season, a crowd of 5,000 celebrated the triumph of the idea of the Arrow-Cross. A procession of believers advanced to a flower patch, focusing on a field altar decked out in flowers, set up in the open. As part of the prayer service Odon Jaszovary, head of the Papal Office, delivered a sermon: “We see in our time the realization of the awful curses laid on the Jews, who moved away from the true faith, as they wander from one place to another over the entire earth without a homeland.” Elderly pious women sang devoutly and with tears in their eyes: “Our Mother is a happy woman,” while the youth of the Arrow-Cross party, dressed in green shirts, knelt devoutly as the holy bread was presented during the prayer.

The newspaper goes on to say that the traditional honey cakes sold at such events “were made this time in the shape of the Arrow-Cross and were in great demand.”119

In the town of Pestszenterzsebet was held a cornerstone-laying ceremony for the Reformed church. A Member of Parliament representing the Arrow-Cross party, Kalman Hubay, said in his remarks,

The Hungarian rebirth is based on two stable foundation stones: the one—an awareness of the Hungarian race linked with a profound social emotion, and the other—the undistorted, true Christianity of Jesus. Hungarian life may be compared to the wild rose growing freely from Hungarian soil and climbing on the Cross of Jesus standing at the side of the road. The rose is intertwined on the Cross and embraces it. Were we to remove the rose from Jesus’ Cross, it would surely wither. Similarly, the rose of glorious
Hungarian life cannot come to full bloom if it is removed from the Cross of Jesus.\textsuperscript{120}

Every year the Catholic church held a summer university at the town of Esztergom, the seat of the cardinal, for its intellectual following.\textsuperscript{121} The 1939 summer session was opened by a lecture by Cardinal Seredi, who stressed that “this is the sixth time the gates of the summer university open in Esztergom. The role of the summer university is to set clear guidelines for the intelligentsia of Catholic society in the most important and pressing problems of our era.”\textsuperscript{122}

Another lecturer at the opening session was Professor Janos Ivanyi. He lectured on “The Meaning of the Old Testament.” The speaker argued with the Nazi approach, which denied the value of the Old Testament literature.

According to him the modern attacks directed at the Old Testament are based on three erroneous assumptions. The first error is the view that the Old Testament is the natural product of the Jewish spirit. The second one is the identification of modern Judaism, its religious outlook and culture and mental approach, with the people and culture of the Old Testament. The third error is the view that Judaism and Christianity are equal heirs to the ancient Jewish faith.

On the contrary, the lecturer stated, “The writings of the Old Testament are the creation neither of human hands nor of a human brain. They do not reflect the Jewish genius. . . . Only foolish faith can relate this excellent literature to the creativity of the valueless Israelite nation.”\textsuperscript{123}

The lecturer went on to deal with the people of Israel from the point of view of the Old Testament. Contrary to the view of the new German ideology, and with special reference to its theoretician, Rosenberg, he stated that the idea that modern Jewry was identical with the nation of the Old Testament was to be rejected:

Those who hold this opinion overlook the fact that they are being nourished from the world of thought of the very same Jewry they are so desirous of getting away from. Here they ignore the fact that their concept, the concept of racial purity and blood purity, was introduced into a legal codex for the first time in history by the very same hated Jews they try so hard to keep away from their own racial compatriots because of their identification with them—all with a considerable degree of justice.\textsuperscript{124}

The material adduced here is a random though representative selection of utterances made by secular public figures and by priests concerning
the nature of the Jews. The resemblance between the various utterances is so great that no further detail is necessary.

The Demand for Additional Anti-Jewish Legislation

As early as the debate on the second anti-Jewish law, certain right-wing circles voiced their opinion that the anti-Jewish steps included in the current legislation were inadequate. The following are extracts from an editorial that appeared in the Arrow-Cross party organ:

We have declared on innumerable occasions that we do not view this additional anti-Jewish law as a final solution to the Jewish problem. . . . We are interested in a country which will be rid of Jews. The concept of a country rid of Jews is not a barbaric concept, but rather a basic condition for the existence of proper public life.

The anti-Jewish bill at present being debated will surely make it possible for the more cunning of that race to escape the application of the law. But when our country is established, based on the views of Hungarianism—and this will indeed come to pass, if not today then tomorrow, and surely in the very near future—then all their attempts will be found to be useless, for in the Hungarianistic country there will be no Jews of special status. The Arrow-Cross will strike at each and every Jew to an equal degree.

The pressure applied to the government grew stronger. There were even elements in the ruling party and in the government itself that pressed for additional, comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation. Balint Homan, the minister of culture and education, handed over to the regent, Horthy, a memorandum he had prepared in which he claimed, "We should draw all the consequences from the new European development," and accordingly recommended a more radical line on the subject of anti-Jewish legislation, "to put an end to solutions by compromises." In their stead he proposed enacting legislation "based on racial principles."

Another member of the ruling party, ex-Premier Imredi, criticized the faults of the law, especially in economic matters, claiming that "high-level positions vacated by Jews were not being handed over to the real guardians of the Christian economic forces . . . and government officials and politicians—hired by Jewish money—were being appointed to a high percentage of these positions."

An independent member of Parliament, Ferenc Rajniss, demanded the legislation of a third anti-Jewish act, and demanded of the government a report on the implementation of the second anti-Jewish act.

A representative of the Arrow-Cross party, Karoly Marothy, urged the final solution of the Jewish problem and asked the government to
make the appropriate preparations for the expulsion of the Jews from Hungary. Another representative of the Arrow-Cross party, Matyas Matolcsay, claimed that for the past year and a half no Jewish land had been transferred to Christian farmers, despite the fact that the Jews possessed half a million *hold* of land (1 *hold* = about 5.7 *dunam* = about 1.4 acres).³⁹

In his reply the prime minister said that

> in light of the numerous evasions of the law, the second anti-Jewish act being too cumbersome, he, too, was aware of the law's limitations. Yet he regarded negatively the idea of adopting laws on any subject whenever this is felt necessary, although in view of the faults of the existing legislation he desired to have a clear, basic law adopted which would simplify the entire subject. Thus, in the very near future this task would be completed, and Parliament would then become aware of the far-reaching effects of the reprocessed law.⁴⁰

Despite the prime minister's reply and despite his announcement that he would respond to the request and legislate an additional anti-Jewish law, the representative of the Arrow-Cross party, Zoltan Mesko, demanded, less than a week later, "that the legislation of the third anti-Jewish law be speeded up, and that all business be transferred to Christian hands."³¹

This last demand was put especially to the minister of trade and industry, Jozsef Varga, during the debate on his ministry's budget. The minister calmed the questioner, explaining in detail the steps he had already taken and those he would yet take to meet the questioner's demand. He mentioned the regulations already promulgated and those he was about to promulgate to carry out the idea of Christianizing trade. On a practical level, both sides spoke of preparing a list of merchants, both wholesalers and retailers, who alone would be permitted to market basic products:

The retailers have already been selected by us in almost every area; furthermore, we have completed the list of wholesalers who will be permitted to engage in the sugar trade. Regarding other products, the preparation of the lists is progressing. The wholesalers we have selected are all Christian, without exception. In the marketing of sugar and oil in 90 percent of the cases the Christianizing of the trade has been completed. We shall continue to develop trade in this direction at an accelerated rate of speed. In the very near future I shall publish appropriate regulations, and in this way we shall speed up the trade Christianizing process to a very great extent.
The minister also told of the large loans that had been made to Christian storekeepers and of the goods that had been put at their disposal at comfortable rates of interest.\textsuperscript{132}

The subject was not removed from the parliamentary agenda. During the debate on the budget of the prime minister's office, the premier was asked by Karoly Marothy, a member of Parliament from the Arrow-Cross party, "to implement the anti-Jewish act more strongly." Another member of this party, Gabor Vajna, demanded that the government take strong steps against the press owned by the Freemasons and the Jews. And another member of the same party, Count Miklos Serenyi, demanded the total eviction of the Jews from Hungary.\textsuperscript{133}

The prime minister was clearly angry at the accusations leveled against him and his government, accusations that seemed to indicate that he and his government were not sufficiently firm in carrying out the laws that had already been adopted, that they were not working hard enough to prepare additional anti-Jewish legislation, and that their dedication to the anti-Jewish campaign was not as strong as that of members of the Arrow-Cross party. He took offense at being criticized for no reason at all, as if he were insufficiently devoted to the antisemitic cause. He claimed,

> From my experience I know that whenever my government and I initiate anything, the opposition begins to apply its pressure: they claim that the government does not intend to complete the endeavor it has undertaken. They act as if they had initiated the matter under discussion...this is what has happened in connection with the anti-Jewish legislation. As soon as I pointed out that we were about to advance along this line and that we were preparing for additional legislation, the pressure began immediately.

The prime minister's dissatisfaction with the extremist antisemitic Arrow-Cross party for its attempt to usurp his lead and his initiatives in persecuting Jews is evident.

With regard to implementing the laws which had already been adopted, the prime minister apologized that this did not progress at the rate he would have preferred:

> The situation is that many difficulties in implementing the laws are cropping up. One of these difficulties concerns the knowledge of languages...Very few of our youth know any foreign language. Here we have the case of \textit{Pester Lloyd} [the government's semiofficial organ in the German language]. It is the only Hungarian paper to appear in a foreign language, and when I send them my speeches, it often happens that I myself have to translate them if I want the speech to appear in its original meaning. Thus we in
Pester Lloyd have to employ Jewish newspapermen who know German. On the other hand, in such places of work as have no particular problem, we have enacted drastic changes. 134

To prove his claim that he and his government had not been negligent in implementing suitable steps against the Jews, the prime minister cited data indicating the reduced number of Jews in various positions. In his speech he also announced the imminent promulgation of additional regulations aimed at making the lives of the Jews more difficult, even in those areas not included in the anti-Jewish legislation itself. Like the premier and the minister of trade and transport, other ministers and their ministries promulgated stringent regulations concerning Jews and did their very best to make their lives more difficult. While making their announcements regarding their activities, they voiced—in Parliament and outside it—their credo concerning the need to keep the Jews out of various positions, and to reduce their lebensraum to the greatest extent possible. 135

While the leaders of the country were planning how to render their attack on the Jews more effective, the Evangelical bishop of Transdanubia, Dr. Bela Kapi, delivered a kind of pledge of allegiance to the government and its work, saying that “with regard to the relations between his church and the state, he had full faith in the government of Count Pal Teleki.” 136

The head of the Reformed church went even further. In the summer of 1940, when there was no longer the slightest doubt regarding the nature of the Nazi regime in Germany, Bishop Ravasz stated in a speech he delivered in his central church at Calvin Square in Budapest, “I am convinced that the worldwide struggle in which the German nation is at present engaged is basically a religious struggle.... I am convinced that this struggle will be followed by a deeper awareness of the redeeming and liberating God.” 137

It should be noted that the bishop’s flattering declaration about Hitler’s war was delivered at a time when Hitler and Stalin were allies, and not during the period when Nazi Germany was at war with the Bolshevik regime and was defending, as it were, the Christian culture of Europe.

A no less unambiguous statement was made by Bishop Janos Vasarhelyi, the administrator of the Reformed church in Transylvania, in March 1941, before the outbreak of Russo-German hostilities. After the transfer of the northern part of Transylvania to Hungarian rule, the church held a convention to consider its own organizational structure in light of the new situation. Participating in the convention were the minister of agriculture, who represented the prime minister, and Bishop Ra-
vasz, head of the Reformed church in Hungary. Bishop Vasarhelyi thanked Horthy, the regent of Hungary, for his efforts to restore Transylvania to the Hungarian homeland, and added, "We thank duly our great allies, Hitler and Mussolini, who, wisely and strongly, paved the way for the realization of Hungarian justice." 138

The enthusiastic comments uttered by the church leaders regarding Germany, Hungary, and the heads of their two governments were certainly interpreted by their audience as granting legitimacy to the acts committed by these governments and by those supporting them. As shown above, the antisemitic line occupied a dominant place in the activities of these two regimes.

"The History of the Jews in Hungary" was the title of the lecture delivered by Bishop Raffay. The lecturer led his audience along some thousand years of Hungarian history in order to show that the Jews had always been the objects of adverse decrees. The bishop extolled the memory of "King St. Laszlo, who was the first to impose decrees on the Jews. The decree he imposed on them in 1092 was a decree for the protection of the race, for it prohibited the marriage of Jews to Christians." While citing the detailed list of antisemitic decrees promulgated during the various periods, the bishop expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that over a period of time the Jews had caused "numerous complications":

King Lajos the Great was the first to take severe steps against the Jews; he expelled them in 1360. However, when the national economy faltered, four years later, he invited them to return to Hungary.... When the Jews returned to Hungary, they demanded the return of their homes. This demand of theirs caused, of course, numerous complications, and as a result Jews and Christians came to live alongside one another in certain streets, and in homes which were owned jointly by members of the two religions, they even lived side by side.

In this way the bishop went on to list the various periods in Hungarian history when decrees were imposed upon the Jews. He concluded his speech with the following comment: "For as long as Judaism has existed, there has also been a Jewish problem; the age of antisemitism is the same as the age of Judaism." 139 Raffay's message in his talk was that the current situation was not without precedent, given the way the Jews had lived their lives in Hungary during the thousand years that Christian Hungary had existed. The present situation was merely the natural and direct continuation of the ancient Hungarian tradition. In other words, the roots of the legitimacy of the negative treatment afforded the Jews are to be found in the historical Hungarian past.
Raffay's statement to the effect that the Jews were different from the other citizens of Hungary was strengthened tangibly by a regulation promulgated by the office of Laszlo Endre, the deputy governor of the district of Pest—the largest and most central of the districts of Hungary—some three weeks after Raffay's talk. Endre's regulation obligated the Christian storekeepers in the district to mark their shops with a sign:

"A Christian-Hungarian Shop."

This order by the deputy governor caused great rejoicing throughout the district... for unfortunately there still are Christian merchants and craftsmen who maintain their relations with the Jews. What now remains to be done is to take steps against those Christian clients who are not ashamed to do their shopping in stores owned by Jews.  

*The Third Anti-Jewish Act*

The second anti-Jewish act did not deal with the question of mixed marriages between Jews and Christians. The third anti-Jewish act was intended to amend this omission. The churches were decidedly interested in this legislation, especially with regard to the converts to Christianity.

The Synod of Catholic Bishops held its half-yearly meeting in the fall of 1940, and considered the proposed third anti-Jewish bill. The bishop of Kalocsa, Gyula Zicsy, suggested,

Now that the prime minister has announced his intention of bringing before the legislature the third anti-Jewish bill, the Synod of Bishops requests his Holiness the Cardinal to ask the premier if the proposed bill includes stipulations which might violate church positions... His Holiness the Cardinal considers it important that Catholics be made to suffer no more from the denial of their rights. It is extremely important that the Synod of Bishops take a uniform stand lest the government think the Synod of Bishops is not united. We are protecting those of our faith alone, and not the Jews.  

At the spring session of 1941 the cardinal reported on his meeting with the prime minister, during which

he stressed the desire of the Synod of Bishops that the proposed bill not make it more difficult for the Christian citizens of Jewish origin, but rather make it easier for them... The prime minister stressed for his part that the new law would be clearly defined. The cardinal himself requested that the wording of the law be clear so that those to whom the law was intended to apply would not be able to evade it without being punished for doing so.  

After his meeting with the cardinal, the prime minister was able to draw the conclusion that even if the paragraph in the proposed bill
encountered church opposition, the bill itself was guaranteed, in general
and on principle, not to come up against church disagreement, since the
cardinal had already expressed his agreement and support for this new
bill, and the government accordingly continued its preparations to present
it to Parliament.

Laszlo Bardossy was appointed prime minister of Hungary in place
of Teleki, who committed suicide.\(^{143}\) He presented his government to
Parliament on April 24, 1941. He referred briefly to the question of
mixed marriages, confirming the need for legislative steps to prevent as-
simulation.\(^{144}\)

In the speech he delivered in the town of Bekescsaba, the chairman
of the ruling party elaborated on the subject:

The two anti-Jewish acts already adopted have achieved extremely positive
and practical results, but we note a great many evasions of the law. If the
law is lacking, we must amend this.... We must try as hard as we can to
enable our fellow Hungarians by race to live their lives in racial purity,
and so the government will be presenting a bill over the next few days,
which will prohibit marriage between Christians and Jews.\(^{145}\)

The bill was presented to Parliament on June 30, 1941. The intro-
duction to the bill mentions the Marriage Act of 1895, and claims that
"that law did not yield good results. Mixed marriages had a definitely
detrimental effect upon the evolution of our national soul. They brought
into a position of influence that Jewish spirit whose harmful effect we
have seen."\(^{146}\)

The Marriage Act of 1895 granted the Jewish community of Hungary
equal rights. The priesthood was the spearhead of the camp that opposed
that liberal legislation.\(^{147}\) The 1941 government, in preparing to enact a
marriage act, based its stand on that of the church and the priesthood
in 1895, which vehemently opposed the bill that awarded the Jews equal
status in their marriages. The legislation tabled in Parliament was worded
in the hostile spirit of the priesthood of almost fifty years before. The
government, however, went beyond the vision of the priesthood, and
proposed that certain Jewish converts to Christianity be considered Jews
as well. This proposal revealed the existence of a disagreement between
government and priesthood, the government even succeeding in arousing
the fury of certain Christian circles. The representative of the United
Christian party spoke out furiously against the possibility of "Hungarian
citizens who no longer have anything to do with Jews" being cast out
of Hungarian society, and of the possibility that "people who behaved
as radical antisemites will be driven back to Jewry."\(^{148}\)
The bill was adopted by the Parliament on July 2, 1941, and was placed before the Upper House. The first speaker was Cardinal Seredi, who opposed the bill. He began his speech as follows: “I would like to stress that my opposition to the bill does not stem from my taking into consideration the good of the Jews, but is rather a matter of principle: the bill places stumbling-blocks before the sanctity of Catholic marriage.” Cardinal Seredi was offended by the fact that the bill under consideration forbade marriages not forbidden by church law, that is, marriages between Christians and converts or between Christians and the descendants of converts classified as Jews by the bill. The cardinal viewed this situation as coercion detracting from one’s freedom of action, and so expressed his opposition to the bill.

Seredi was followed by the representative of the Reformed church, who expressed his own opposition to the bill as well, and explained that he had voted for the first anti-Jewish act because he was convinced that there was a Jewish problem which was to be solved by displacing the Jews in the various economic sectors. Similarly, we had to take from them their considerable influence in directing the cultural life of the nation, for this is one of the important existential problems of the Hungarian nation.

Concerning his voting for the second anti-Jewish bill, the bishop explained that the period was a preelection one, and rejection of the bill might have led to an undesirable deterioration: “However, the present bill is more harmful to Christians than to Jews.... I admit it is right to state that a person born Jewish does not improve substantially by converting to Christianity, yet the Churches are unable to agree that a person born Jewish remains Jewish forever, even if he accepts Christianity.”

The delegate of the Evangelical church, Bishop Kapi, expressed his fear that the bill, though presented for positive reasons, will not achieve its aim, and might even cause harm to the sanctity of married life, harm to the nation and also to Christianity.... According to the outlook of the Evangelical church, marital ties are not merely a matter for the church, but also for the state, and the state has the right to make suitable arrangements in the matter of marriage. But here we see that the state, by virtue of its legislation, takes up its position at the entrance to the churches and declares: I permit these marriages, but I forbid those.... Such a confrontation between church and state cannot serve the state's interests.... This legislation clearly does not harm the Jews, but rather those Christians who will once again be compelled to consider themselves Jewish. This bill is merely a tool in the hands of the Jewish-missionary concept, for those Christians harmed
by the bill will have no choice but to fall back among those people from whom they had already detached themselves, they and their forefathers."

A former prime minister, Istvan Bethlen, also expressed his opposition to the proposed bill. He was unable to accept the paragraph in the bill "which views children of mixed parentage as Jews... They are Christian to the same extent that they are Jewish, and all that can be said of them is that racially they are of mixed blood. Yet besmirching them as Jews degrades them." Bethlen went on to propose the adoption of a positive approach to children of mixed marriages. They must be allowed to marry only Christians, and then within a few generations it will be possible to approach closer and closer to that purity of race the proposed bill sets as an ideal. This is the correct way to solve the problem, for in this way we shall gradually limit their Jewish blood, and in this way we shall create pure-blooded Hungarians, and not contribute our Hungarian blood to enlarge the number of Jews to be treated as citizens of a lower rank.

He was not willing to agree to the adoption of such a step, for "even in Germany children of mixed marriages are treated with more understanding than in the bill under discussion."  

In light of the opposition, the bill was sent for discussion to a subcommittee, where slight changes were inserted in paragraph 9 of the bill, which defined the Jewishness of the children of mixed parentage, and the subject was returned to the plenum of the Upper House for debate. The church leaders elaborated on their opposition to the bill, expressing their anger at the harm done to the converts and their offspring. Cardinal Seredi made the following statement:

In the recent past I have made my opinion known even in delicate situations so as to place myself on the side of truth and justice... The divine founder of the Catholic church instructed his church to preserve the way of truth and to avoid following erroneous paths... I hereby solemnly declare that my attitude to the proposed bill reflects that of the Synod of Bishops and the spirit of the Catholic church... Thus, while the bill under discussion is supposed to be counteracting the Jewish spirit, it adheres faithfully to just that spirit. This bill would seem to support the concept of marriage arrangements adopted in 1895 according to the demands of the liberals and of the Jewish Freemasons, against the adamant opposition of the Catholic masses in those days.

Had this bill prohibited marriages between Jews and Christians, I, too, would have supported it. But the bill does not distinguish between real Jews and those Jews who have already become Christians. This bill, which
is presented to the Christian legislature of Christian Hungary, harms mainly Christians of Jewish origin. This bill will drive them back down to Judaism forever—them, their children, and their posterity—and in so doing will increase to a considerable degree the number of Jews in our midst. . . . We attribute to divine Providence the fact that our nation has made its home in the Carpathian Mountain basin, and so we are obliged—in the name of the same divine Providence—to protect constantly the immunity and the spirit of the nation, and I oppose the trend which predominated in ruling circles in the nineties of the last century: to view the integration of the Jews as a very desirable step. Regarding this bill, had its provisions not harmed the sanctity of Christian marriage, I would have voted for it.

Seredi added, "My opposition to the proposed bill does not stem from my interest in Jewish welfare. I oppose its very principles."

Bishop Ravasz said that his desire was to lessen the suffering of Hungarian Christians, and in this he was merely expressing his basic views—and those of the vast majority of the members of his church:

According to the bill, a Christian of Jewish origin is prohibited from marrying anyone who is not Jewish, for the ex-Jew is liable to have a detrimental influence on the morality of the non-Jewish party. . . . There can be no baser plot against a person, one of whose parents abandoned the Jewish religion, and he himself was educated under the auspices of the Christian church, became a good Christian and a Hungarian—and now he is about to be forced to return to the place he and his forefathers left. This is the greatest possible insult, the most painful punishment.

The bishop declared that he was not prepared to give up those Hungarians whose blood is about fifty percent Hungarian blood, as long as the chance exists for all their blood to become purified and Hungarian. . . . even the legislations of Nuremberg and Italy do not represent the approach demanding the expulsion of people of mixed blood in order to improve by this means the protection of those of one hundred percent pure blood. There has been only one national leader to act in such a fashion. This was Ezra, the leader of the Jews in the days of the return to Zion. The Holy Scriptures relate that the Jews had married into all kinds of peoples during their exile, and Ezra expelled from Israel, mercilessly, every woman and every child born of these marriages.

From a national viewpoint one must not disqualify those marriages which ensure the supremacy of the Christian spirit and Christian morality—merely because the blood of one of the parties is not entirely pure. Driving these away by force and pushing them into the clutches of non-Hungarian life cannot be resolved with the doctrines of Jesus, as they do not serve the interests of the nation."
Bishop Kapi, the representative of the Evangelical church, spoke in a similar vein:

This law limits the independence of the church. . . . According to the outlook of the church, the act of conversion to Christianity turns the convert into a Christian, and so it is natural for the church to defend her believers. The church makes sure they find their place in Christian society as Christian citizens enjoying equal rights; similarly, the church ensures they are not limited in any way when they decide to marry. . . . The state should be interested in creating and maintaining firm relations with the church, in educating its sons in the Christian spirit, and in filling their souls with a sense of justice.

Those to whom this law is a heavy sentence—what are they to do? Shall they degenerate back to the place their ancestors left a long time ago, and wither there?

The minister of justice, Laszlo Radocsay, spoke for the government in defense of the bill. In the main he agreed with the representatives of the churches. He disagreed with them with regard to the degree of assimilation required of the descendants of mixed marriages in order for them not to be considered Jewish any longer and to be deemed fit to enter the Hungarian Christian community. He spoke as follows:

At the end of the last century special Jewish literature and art began to develop, material which was spiritually foreign to the Hungarian public. This development reached such dimensions that there remained no choice but to perceive the danger inherent in it. Theatre, the arts, the press, music—all were saturated with this foreign spirit. An extremely dangerous culture had been created, to which it was impossible to relate calmly. . . . The Jewish control of our economy endangered our nation less than these intellectual assaults which were directed against the very soul and culture of the nation. For this reason we have to put an end to this unsuccessful attempt at assimilating the Jews, a process which lasted fifty years and from which no positive result could possibly evolve—and so we have to adopt the path of stopping the assimilation.

That descendant of a mixed marriage, having grown up and lived in a Christian environment, having been born a Christian and so growing up in a Christian atmosphere, has undoubtedly been completely assimilated, for Christianity has a vast assimilatory force. This bill is based on the assumption that the descendant of a mixed marriage who has reached so advanced a state of assimilation will not be considered Jewish when he comes to marry. The bill draws the borderline in such a way that when he comes to marry, a descendant of a mixed marriage who was born a Christian and whose parents were Christians when they married, will not
be considered a Jew. Nevertheless, we must protect ourselves from any further blood dilution.

It would seem that the minister of justice was motivated by this defensive obligation when he specified his objection to recognizing the Christianity of certain converts for the purposes of the definition in the bill under consideration.\textsuperscript{147}

The joint subcommittee adopted the final version of the bill on June 23, 1941, and after its confirmation in the legislature it was published officially on August 8, 1941.

The material cited above indicates that the differences between the stand adopted by the churches and that of the government were limited to certain groups of converts. The areas of disagreement between the two sides were restricted to details of secondary importance. On the other hand, government and church held similar views on the principles that were the basis of the legislation. Both sides expressed their sorrow at the mistake that had occurred when the Jewish religion was granted full recognition in 1895, and proclaimed the purifying influence of Christianity in contrast to Judaism. The style affected by the church leaders in their speeches was no less abrupt and insulting to the Jews than the style of the secular government representatives. When the leaders of the priesthood stood up to defend the status and Christianity of the converts, they expressed their fear of “the degeneration” of the latter back to Judaism. The chairman of the Neologic Jewish community in Budapest spoke up against the insult directed at Jews and Judaism by these expressions: “as if Jewry, the Jewish religion, which was both the first to declare monotheism and was the cradle of Christianity, is of such a low category that adherence to it implies regression.”\textsuperscript{158}

While the debate on the bill was going on and after the bill was adopted, the expression “fajgyalazas” (shaming the race) was adopted by wide circles in Hungary. The expression was not a new one, especially since the Nuremberg legislation, which included the phrase “Rassenschande”—but after the Hungarian legislation it was commonly used by all. According to the legal definition, any sexual connection between a Jew and a Christian woman—except for prostitutes—was considered “shaming the race.” The expression rapidly made its way to articles in the press, speeches, and popular antisemitic songs, alongside other expressions referring to the occupations the “Jewboys” enjoyed, such as evading taxation, spreading false, evil rumors, etc. These songs were sung by wide circles on many occasions, and in this way the concept came to enjoy wide popularity and distribution.
Thus historians view the act:

Karsai:

The Race Protection Law had only a little influence on the material situation of Hungarian Jewry. The Jewish population of Hungary regarded mixed marriages with a lack of enthusiasm, and from this point of view the law caused no special problems. On the other hand, from a moral viewpoint the law had an extremely debasing effect. The debates in the legislature, especially in Parliament, provided an opportunity to level accusations against the Jews and to attack them violently. Among those who exploited this opportunity, extreme right-wing members of Parliament were the most conspicuous: members of the Arrow-Cross party and the Imred faction. The former discussed at especially great length the degenerate moral level of the Jews, with specific reference to their extramarital sexual relations and their illegitimate births. According to the speakers, Jews were involved in between 60 and 80 percent of these cases. These sensational debates and speeches were widely reported in the press and of course had their effect on the attitude of the Christian population toward the Jews.

Katzburg:

But beyond its humiliating effect on every Jew as an individual and on Jewry as a community, the law had an implication which was more far-reaching, and, in the light of later events, fateful for Hungarian Jewry. This law gave legal sanction to the principle of the segregation of Jews as an inferior race. In this respect the Race Protection Law can be regarded as a major step in the process of the exclusion and elimination of Hungarian Jewry. Noteworthy in this connection is a comment by the Nazi publicist Kurt Ammon: "[With this law] the last word in the Hungarian Jewish question has not yet been said, but nevertheless the Law is an important step toward the final solution, which should be sought only by settling the Jews outside the country."

Braham:

By far the most devastating effect of the law was psychological and propagandistic. Whipping up the hysteria that had been associated with Hungary's entry into the war against the Soviet Union shortly before, the law served as a vehicle for the exacerbation of the anti-Jewish psychosis connected with the "holy crusade against Judeo-Bolshevism." It prepared the ground for the acceptance by Hungarian public opinion of the draconic measures that were to be adopted during the German occupation.

The Labor Battalions Act

The atmosphere prevalent in Hungary from the late 1930s on hardly contributed to the creation of a situation where Jews would be armed
and serve in the army. On December 2, 1940, the Jews who were serving in the army were expelled from their units and stationed in units belonging to "labor battalions." A decree promulgated in April 1941 provided the formal basis for the separation of the Jews from the other recruits. In their new units men of rank were not allowed to wear the symbols of their rank, even if these indicated officer status. The regent confirmed the decree, provided it would not apply to those officers who had served in World War I and earned medals of high distinction.

Separating the Jews and concentrating them in special units enabled the commanding officers of these units to treat their men any way they chose. In most cases they treated them brutally, and life in most of these units was no different from life in the death camps.

Upon Hungary’s joining the war against Russia, and upon the Hungarian army pushing forward into the conquered territories in the Ukraine, the labor battalions, too, were sent outside the borders of Hungary. The torturing of the defenseless Jews reached indescribable proportions. The exact number of victims murdered brutally by their guards in the Ukraine will apparently never be known, but people in the know assume the number is somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand. Adult men and youths representing the best of Hungarian Jewry were put to death in all kinds of bizarre fashions. Several of the commanding officers of the units had received a secret order before they left Hungary to "bring their battalion home in an attaché case." In other words, it would be sufficient to return the list of those who survived after the liquidation of those serving in the labor battalions. In many units the officers of the labor battalions understood that when the Jews in their hands were destroyed, the officers would remain “unoccupied” on the Ukrainian front. Since service in the Ukraine was not performed enthusiastically by many of the officers and men of the Royal Hungarian Army, and since the date of their return to Hungary depended upon the liquidation of their unit, the officers, sergeants, and the staff of each unit competed against one another as to who would contribute more to hastening their return home.

After the labor battalions became established, the government was not satisfied with operating them merely by regulations; the government wanted to base the entire organization on legal action to be taken by the legislature. The minister of defense, Karoly Bartha, presented an appropriate bill to Parliament on June 10, 1942, and—according to a comment made by a member of Parliament—“it was accepted with pleasure by every single member of the House.” The debate on the bill once again provided an opportunity to deliver antisemitic speeches in Parliament.
While the debate was in progress, a proposal was made to concentrate all Jewish women, children, and the elderly in ghettos, paralleling the concentration of the men in labor camps surrounded by barbed wire.

The proposed bill was adopted by Parliament and moved along to the Upper House. In presenting the bill the minister of defense said that the law would apply to all those defined as Jews according to the Marriage Law of 1941. Concerning the importance of the law, the minister of justice said the following:

Let us not forget our bitter experience in World War I, and let us not make such great concessions in the field which comprises the greatest threat. ... It will be catastrophic if within the army framework there will be those who do their destructive mischief, as they did in 1918. Now, on the other hand, in light of the set of anti-Jewish laws we have legislated, they will act so strongly that their actions will dwarf their previous deeds. I am neither able nor desirous of accepting the responsibility for such a situation, and especially now, with our forces engaged in their most difficult struggle against an enemy whose political leadership is almost entirely in Jewish hands.

When the subject was debated in the legislature, the labor battalions had already been in existence for over a year and a half, and everyone was aware of the brutalities those serving in them had suffered. Nevertheless, the representatives of the Christian churches did not speak up against the murder of innocent recruits, a phenomenon that had become commonplace. Instead, Bishop Glattfelder preferred to give vent to his philosophical thoughts on his favorite topic, “The Superiority of the Spirit over Matter,” and indirectly succeeded in linking his topic with the proposed bill and with the harm it would cause the converts to Christianity:

I, and many more like me, whose outlook includes the basic principle of the superiority of spirit over matter, cannot accept calmly the possibility that this topic be decided on the basis of materialistic views. We shall never ignore our spiritual values, the influence of divine mercy, and the formative power of sanctity. This is the subject being considered within the framework of this problem.

The bishop went on angrily and vehemently to deny the suspicion that in defending the converts he was actually defending the Jews. In his speech Glattfelder once again made use of the motif he had raised earlier: he who classifies converts to Christianity as Jews insults them.

The bill also dealt with the premilitary service of the youth, known
as Levente. The bill proposed that the authorities separate the Christians from the Jews in these premilitary units as well. Here, too, the rules of the separation were supposed to be based on the definition of a Jew which was part of the Marriage Act of 1941. Glattfelder protested against this as well:

If we remove from the premilitary units the youths who grew up with a Christian mentality and in a Christian atmosphere, and were never aware of their Jewish origins, and if we compel them now to join the camp of the Jews, and this law forces them to sew onto their clothing the Jewish yellow patch—this will indicate a lack of consistency on the part of the Upper House.  

At the Synod of the Catholic Bishops, too, no notice was taken of the suffering of tens of thousands of Jewish recruits to the army, the bishops preferring to limit their anxiety to "matters of the spirit." The bishop of Kalocsa, Gyula Zicsy, reported to the Synod of Bishops that he had received complaints "that in the Jewish labor camps the converts are made to work on Sundays as well, and they are not given the opportunity to participate in church ritual."  

The law was adopted on July 31, 1942.

The Jewish Religion Status-Lowering Act

Following the enforcement of the anti-Jewish acts of 1938, 1939, and 1941, the formal-legalistic situation that came about was illogical. While the Jews as individuals suffered from the restrictions placed upon them by the anti-Jewish legislation, the decrees, and the supplementary regulations, Judaism as a religion enjoyed a status equivalent to that of the great Christian religions. It will be recalled that after a long and difficult struggle the status of the Jewish religion was in 1895 rendered equal to that of the Christian churches, and it became "an accepted faith," a status preferable to its previous status, that of "a recognized faith."  

Balint Homan, the minister of religion and education, who presented the bill to Parliament, gave fitting expression to the existing anomalous situation:

This bill has no more than declarative significance. It comes merely to grant legal form to the situation already existing in actual fact. This condition of internal contradiction has come about from the fact that the religious community whose members' rights have been limited by previous legislation enjoys the status of a preferred religious community. The pre-
sentation of this bill to Parliament is merely the natural conclusion to which
the anti-Jewish legislation must lead.170

The bill known as “Determining the Status of the Israelite Religious
Community” was presented to Parliament on December 17, 1941.171 In
the ensuing debate in Parliament voices insulting Judaism were heard, as
well as severe criticism of the spirit that had facilitated granting the Jewish
religion a status equal to that of the Christian churches in the 1895
legislation. A representative of the Christian party claimed,

Jewry took rapid control of our economic power, but was not satisfied
with that. With the aid of liberalism, the Jews put their hands on our
spiritual power as well. Who is it who dares claim that in the prevalent
Hungarian atmosphere the value of Judaism is equivalent to that of Chris-
tianity? And so, since there is no way to compare the activities and con-
tributions of the two religions, by granting full rights to the Jewish religion,
Judaism was actually given precedence, and a great injustice was done to
the Christian churches... When the Christian party accepts the bill hereby
proposed, we view it as a confirmation of the correctness of the stand taken
by its predecessors [the Catholic People's party, founded in the 1890s,
which fought a long and stubborn battle against granting Judaism the status
of “accepted religion”]. At this opportunity our party requests that the
Hungarian legislator not settle for the adoption of this proposed bill, but
rather not stop until all those laws legislated during the aforementioned
struggle against the churches... are erased from the Hungarian codex of
laws. Christian Hungary desires to advance along the Christian path with
Christian ideas, and these ideas should be included in Christian
legislation.172

In describing the debate concerning the proposed bill, Katzburg wrote,

An opportunity was provided for attacks on Judaism. Some did so from
a Christian dogmatic point of view; others in more coarse terms, directing
their attacks against the Talmud, demanding that recognition (preferably
toleration) of the Jewish religion should be subjected to an examination
of the tenets of Judaism. An Arrow-Cross party deputy opposed the rec-
ognition of Jewry altogether and instead proposed that Jews be placed
under strict police control; another deputy of the same party demanded
that Jewish pupils be segregated in schools and that the Jews be herded
into ghettos.173

After consideration in an appropriate subcommittee, the bill was
passed to the Upper House. Since the bill contained no attacks on the
Christian faiths, it aroused no opposition among church leaders. On the
contrary, this bill matched their view that granting the status of an “ac-
cepted religion” at the close of the nineteenth century had been a fun-
damentally mistaken act. It should be recalled that while the debate was raging on the proposed second anti-Jewish law, Bishop Glattfelder expressed himself in this vein, praising those members of the Upper House who forty or fifty years before had already fought against the strengthening of the spirit of Judaism and had raised their voices against the granting of equal status to the Jewish religion and to the Christian faiths. When the government began to lower the official status of the Jewish religion, it acted in such a way that satisfied the church, which had demanded such a step, and had awaited it for over forty years.

The act was adopted on July 29, 1942.

It inflicted great damage on the Jewish communities. It ruled out any government support for Jewish educational institutions or participation in the salaries received by the rabbis. The set of anti-Jewish laws that preceded this legislation severely impacted the livelihood of many Jews. This hurt, poverty-stricken population—which had previously borne part of the expenses of the Jewish community—now became a heavy burden on the rapidly emptying Jewish public coffers. And so the Jewish community found itself damaged two or three times over, with the loss of government participation in its expenses, a considerable reduction of the income collected from the Jewish community, and a growing number of people dependent upon community generosity.

Moreover, denying recognition of the Jewish religion struck hard at the public status of the Jews. The act pulled the rug out from under the most important achievement of the Jewish public since it had existed in Hungary. This denial also struck at the self-confidence of the Jewish community—already showing signs of weakening—which had for many years viewed itself as possessing equal rights to those of the other religions and as constituting an integral part of the Hungarian homeland.

*The Jewish Estates Expropriation Act*

On March 3, 1942, Miklos Kallay was appointed prime minister. About a week after his appointment he appeared at a convention of his party, the ruling party. The chairman of the party, Bela Lukacs, who introduced the prime minister, described him as "the man who would lead the nation in the path of the 'Szeged idea,' based on the conception of defense of the Hungarian race." Lukacs went on to request that "he lead us along the road to the full realization of the concept of right-wing policy in the Christian spirit."

In his very first speech, Kallay laid out the internal and external policies of his government. With regard to foreign policy he stated:
The first thing I must say is that the government I hereby present is a cabinet of war, for we are participating seriously in the war. It is a most fateful war, which will not only decide the fates of individual nations, whether they will survive or cease to exist; the fate of the entire human race will be decided in this war. For us the decision was made long ago. This is no temporary decision; neither is it an opportunist one; for we took up arms in support of Germany and Italy before they became world powers. We would neither have been worthy of our Hungarian name nor fitting heirs to our forefathers' heritage, had we not joined the camp fighting against eastern barbarism, had we not stood firm when it became necessary to defend Christianity, when we await the realization of our lofty Hungarian ideals. We belong, without reservation, at the side of our allies, Germany and Italy, and we must take action on the battlefields of Russia, for our Hungarian pride does not permit us to allow others to fight our war. This struggle against Bolshevism is what shall determine the framework of tasks to be undertaken by this government.

In his speech Kallay repeated some half a dozen times that Hungary was at war with the Soviet Union, and spoke of the sacrifices the Hungarian nation would have to make for the success of its struggle.

With regard to internal policy the premier touched briefly on various problems, spending considerable time on the Jewish question while announcing that "within a week a bill will be presented for the total expropriation of estates belonging to Jews." His words were applauded noisily, his audience uttering sounds of encouragement:

The Jews are antisocial beings, both as a community and each and every Jew as an individual. If we look at the balance of Jewish activity in any country, we shall always arrive at the conclusion that, in the long run, they have been detrimental. ...and even if we succeed with difficulty in overcoming the damage they caused us in 1918, we will yet be unable to be sure of overcoming them. And so, this bill speaks merely of amending the social injustice caused us as a result of the activity of Hungarian Jewry. ...Therefore my outlook on the Jewish question is extremely simple: we must perform any task which serves the interests of the nation. Any step serving to advance us in this direction must be carried out without mercy and without considering any other factor. The Jewish problem is a problem of the entire nation.

Displacing the Jews economically is a basic condition for the economical progress of the Hungarian nation, and practically speaking, I am about to deal with only a single topic—the problem of the Jewish-owned estates. From this viewpoint my position is enviable, for I need only carry out what I proposed when I was the minister of agriculture in Gombos's government: the total and immediate expropriation of the estates belonging to Jews. As in the past, today, too, I want to make it clear that I have no
intention of touching any land, even a single parcel of land owned by a Hungarian, as long as it is possible for me to make use of lands owned by Jews . . . and so, in the very near future I shall direct the party and Parliament to facilitate the transfer to Christian hands of all those estates owned by people to whom the anti-Jewish legislation applies.  

Kallay went on to announce that the Jews whose estates would be expropriated would be recompensed in such a way that any large-scale flow of compensation into the economy would be prevented—for such a development might have a negative effect on the national economy. The practical significance of this announcement was that the government would compensate the owners of the expropriated estates by means of nonnegotiable bonds bearing interest at the rate of 3.5 percent, which would be frozen for thirty years. According to the proposed law, the expropriation of the estates could take place even before the sum of the compensation was determined.  

At the end of his speech, the chairman of the party congratulated the prime minister, promising him that “the members of the party would be united in their faithful support of the prime minister and of the trail he blazed in his speech: the way to build a Christian, right-wing Hungary.”  

Less than a week later Kallay appeared in Parliament, presented his government, and once again stressed that the government was a war cabinet. The general line of his speech in Parliament resembled that of the speech he had delivered a week before at the party forum. Again and again he analyzed Hungary’s participation in the war at the side of the Axis forces, the subject cropping up in various contexts in this speech no less than twenty-four times. It would seem that Kallay himself noted his obsessive stressing of the subject, commenting,  

There may be some who think it unnecessary to revert to this subject so many times. However, for as long as I fill this office I shall indeed repeat it again and again . . . In telegrams I have exchanged with the leaders of our allies I have stated in connection with our foreign policy that we have pursued a consistent foreign policy for over twenty years, a policy based on Hungary’s unchanging orientation. The unambiguous significance of this orientation is that, in accordance with its historic tradition, our nation fights against the Asian danger of Bolshevism, thus playing the role of defender of Christianity. A further meaning of Hungarian orientation is loyalty: loyalty and an obstinate support of our great allies and friends, the Axis powers, together with whom we struggle for a more decent world and for a new Europe . . . Just as our place is alongside Germany and Italy today on the battlefield, so it will be tomorrow, too, when peace negotiations take place, at the negotiation table where the decisions for the future will be made.
We have come into this war with our full might, with all the military power at our disposal. We shall support our army with our entire economic effort and with our entire capability. I have already declared that we have come into this war because of ideals, because the Hungarian people fight against Bolshevism with all their might. We must take part in this struggle with all our strength because this war will decide the fate of our nation—survival or cessation. And so once again I beg of you: starting today, starting now, please view this subject as the most central and most important problem of our country and of all our actions.

Another central topic in Kallay's speech was the expropriation of the estates belonging to Jews:

The ministry of agriculture is involved in all kinds of problems, but with your permission, I will not deal with them at present....I assume you read today in the official newspaper that all the estates of more than 500 hold belonging to Jews are, from today, in a state of deep freeze. This deep freeze includes all their equipment, both their living equipment, i.e., the animals, and their inert equipment....We have no intention of carrying out the expropriation of the estates by word of mouth or by all kinds of biological definitions. The proposed legislation will be carried out on the basis of the law for the Protection of the Race, and it is obvious that the legislation hereby proposed will not recognize all the exemptions which were granted to certain Jews within the framework of the second anti-Jewish law.

Incidentally, I must also announce that I have confiscated all the forests which were in the hands of Jews. We are talking of more than half a million hold of forests—in addition to all the other estates, whose combined area itself comes to more than half a million hold....We shall expropriate all the lands in return for bonds, we shall not pay cash for the expropriated estates. The prime minister also mentioned the role of the minister of justice, "who will, in the most immediate future, present a bill for the expropriation of the estates of the Jews."

Kallay also referred to Jewry in general:

I shall not discuss the Jewish problem in order to clarify the question of whether Jewry is a race or not. I am of the opinion that we have already passed this stage, and that it has been clearly demonstrated that Jewry is indeed a race....This is natural and self-explanatory, and I am unable to think of Jewry in any other terms than as a race."

The first speaker after Kallay was the chairman of his party:

Hungarian policy has been based for the past decade on the idea of protecting the race, on the ideas of Christianity and nationalism known as "the Szeged idea."....The various governments recognized the unique jus-
tice of this concept, upon which this party is based and this government relies, and which has always believed in the right-wing, Christian concept of protecting the race. . . . We have engraved this national concept on the pages of history of Hungarian life at a time when many European states were still going astray in the channels of false democracy, and sought their happiness in the spirit of the international idea. This Christian idea did not spring up out of the depth of the hearts of such broad circles in any country other than our own, as has happened in our land, as has happened to us, when we were called upon to found everything on the solid basis of the Christian idea and Christian morality.

After congratulating the premier on his alliance with the Axis powers, the speaker began to discuss internal matters: "The premier’s announcement of the expropriation of the estates of the Jews is welcomed by the members of the Party and by Hungarian circles of a right-wing outlook." He went on to say that the prime minister’s opinion on the role of the Jews caused him much satisfaction; he wanted "to continue to march along the path upon which we marched our first march last year when we adopted the law of Protection of the Race. We must continue this way, thus ensuring the absolute social isolation of the Jews."

The prime minister’s speech was debated that same day and the following. Most of the participants in the debate expressed their satisfaction with the premier’s approach to the Jewish problem and encouraged him in his work. Moreover, the speakers welcomed the prime minister’s clear, unambiguous stand regarding Hungary’s firm support for Germany and Italy in their struggle against Bolshevism.

Count Bela Teleki, a representative of the Transylvanian party, announced that

full coordination must be achieved between foreign policy and internal policy. Our fate will be decided in this war, and we have the opportunity to lay the foundations for a greater, richer Hungary. . . . Our full cooperation with the Axis forces, based on full mutual trust, is the only policy capable of concentrating the entire nation under the banner of war. The residents of Transylvania are ready to suffer deprivation, for they know that this suffering is for their own good.

Bela Imredi, the former prime minister, spoke for his opposition party, expressing his happiness at the premier’s announcement that "this war is our war. . . . Indeed, this struggle is being waged between conflicting outlooks, and we must find the common denominator between our ancient Hungarian heritage and the new spirit permeating Europe. This new spirit is striving to serve nationalistic concepts."

On the following day, the representative of the Christian party ex-
pressed his admiration of Hungary's prime ministers, past and present, saying that "the people must work together in doing a good deal for the sake of a greater, independent, and Christian Hungary.... With honesty and loyalty we are participating in the struggle against the Bolsheviks on the side of our allies." The remaining speakers uttered similar statements.

In his reply, Kallay repeated the main points he had made previously, adding, "for as long as the war lasts we must limit our legislative work to those most important and urgent cases. My proposal relating to the expropriation of the estates belonging to the Jews is an example of this sort of legislation."

Even before the debate was over in Parliament, Kallay won the support and encouragement of his district of origin, Szabolcs. The national council of Christian craftsmen held a convention in the capital of the district, Nyiregyhaza. The honorary president of the organization, member of Parliament Kalman Bertalan,

praised the prime minister's eternal credit in the victory of the concept of race protection.... Kallay was among the very first in the district of Sabolice to speak of the idea of protecting the race, and he fought for the victory of the Christian, socialist, and nationalist concept as far back as twenty years ago. He was the person who began to fight for the political concept of protecting the Hungarian race during a period when the powerful Jewish liberals controlled the souls of the people.... Kallay, who was one of the first fighters for the concept of protecting the race, now brings this idea to its culmination in the expropriation of the estates of the Jews.... In his first act Kallay proved he had won the victory of the concept of protecting the race for everyone.

The resolution adopted at the convention stated,

We believe and we know that by means of his judgment, his strong hand, and his firm resolve the prime minister shall succeed in advancing the Christian idea and social development even in this period of war.... In humility, in brotherly love, in dedication, and in appreciation we congratulate his Excellency and his family, and call upon God to bestow His plentiful blessings upon his work and his deeds.

The local paper devoted an appreciative column to the resolution, and it was quoted in a national paper. It congratulated Kallay for "his first act as prime minister being in the spirit of the concept of protection of the race—expropriating the estates of the Jews. This is not the first time that Kallay stands firm in support of the Christian and social concept of protecting the race. He declared his position while he was still governor of our district."
About a month after the debate in Parliament the enlarged national council of the ruling party convened, with the participation of some thousand delegates from all parts of Hungary, members of the party faction in the legislature, and the provincial governors who were party members. Kallay delivered the main speech at the convention.

In this speech he dealt once again with the subjects that had come up for discussion in his previous appearances at the party forum and in Parliament. With regard to Hungary’s participation in the war—a topic he mentioned more than a dozen times—he said,

> We shall sacrifice for it whatever we are required—in effort, in wheat, and in blood....I declare openly that I accept the responsibility for this war, for I know the goal we are fighting for, and I even know what the future may have in store for us if we lose....If we do not triumph, there shall be no homeland, there shall be no Hungarian people, there shall be no religion, there shall be no prayer “Our Father who art in Heaven,” we shall not have our daily bread, and evil will rule over the face of the earth.

Kallay appealed to the emotions of his audience and said, “Our soldiers are doing their duty so courageously and so successfully that the German High Command has seen fit to express its thanks to them, and it has done so not only in a run-of-the-mill Order of the Day, but also in messages it has sent us.”

Concerning the expropriation of Jewish estates the prime minister reminded his audience that this was actually an old proposal of his, from the days when he served as minister of agriculture in the Gombos government. He repeated his view that in return for the confiscated lands the government would pay in bonds, adding, “We cannot allow the enormous sums of compensation; the Jews will have to find their way to undesirable forms of investment: hoarding merchandise, raising prices, and similar negative activities.”

Kallay seems to have been encouraged by the agreement his antisemitic steps met in the Hungarian public, and announced additional new steps:

> The bill ensures that anyone leasing his field to a Jew will be entitled to cancel the lease....A most important component of the bill is that which states that Jews will in the future be forbidden to settle in the countryside. A Jew whose lands are confiscated will not be permitted in the future to retain more land than the area occupied by his home, together with a small garden, the maximum area being 2,000 square meters.

Kallay even sang his own praises with regard to his practical approach to solving the Jewish problem, and was warmly applauded.
I permit myself to say, that of all those who have held the position I hold today none has treated the subject with the same decisiveness and the same precise definitions as I. I know that further steps must be taken against Jewry. I know that the Jews must be removed from most walks of Hungarian life. I am also aware of the fact that this removal must be executed, not slowly but at an accelerated pace. I know how fast this task must be carried out. I feel I have shown you how fast I work by raising before you such proposals as no one in a responsible position in this country ever dared even dream about, as recently as one month ago.

The Kallay Proposal for the Expulsion of the Jews from Hungary

In the speech he had delivered before the enlarged national council of the ruling party, Kallay brought up an idea that surprised his entire audience:

As long as we are dealing with the Jewish question, I had better put my own standpoint before you. I know there is no final solution to this problem other than the removal [Kallay used the term kitelepites, which may also be translated as “expulsion,” “exiling,” “uprooting”] of the Jews, who number 800,000 people. In the meantime, the Jews must be removed from each and every socially and nationally important position—until such time as the final solution becomes feasible.183

In this part of his speech Kallay made use of two expressions that became catastrophic for the Jews during World War II—“the removal of the Jews” and “the final solution.” With regard to “the final solution,” we shall give Kallay the benefit of the doubt and assume that he used the expression without the significance and the inverted commas that were added to it at a later stage. However, this is certainly not so with regard to the idea of “removing the Jews.” This was the first time in the modern history of Hungary that a person at the very pinnacle of the executive pyramid publicly announced plans to expel all the Jews from Hungary. Such opinions had been expressed previously, but not by so prominent a personality. It should be noted that Kallay hurled the idea of expelling the Jews into the political and public life of Hungary about two years before the German invasion of that country.

The idea was absorbed, began to spread rapidly, and was referred to on a practical basis by various factors, both in Parliament and outside it. It may be assumed that when the time came for the expulsion of the Jews in 1944, the idea of uprooting hundreds of thousands of citizens from their homes had already lost most of its strangeness.

Kallay was ahead of his time, even ahead of the Germans.

As part of the debate on the bill expropriating the estates, which was
held at the end of May, a deputy representing the ruling party referred to the idea of exiling the Jews that Kallay had brought up:

The prime minister has announced that the Jews should be exiled from Hungary. Since the bill before us concerning the expropriation of Jewish property is limited to a single sector, the agricultural sector, we should—in the spirit of the concept of exile as proposed by the prime minister—prepare a series of regulations to comprise a suitable method of expropriating all valuables owned by the Jews.

The debate in Parliament continued into the beginning of June. One member of Parliament spoke of the ideological link between the expropriation of land and the expulsion of the Jews: "Land is not a normal trade item; land is our living space, a part of the Hungarian homeland. Hungarian land and the Hungarian nation are the components of the Kingdom of St. Istvan. The proposed law is an integral part of the program aimed ultimately at the exiling of the Jews from the country."

Other members of Parliament referred to various aspects of the treatment accorded the Jews within the framework of the discussion of the proposed bill and while referring to the prime minister’s various speeches. One Parliament member suggested broadening the prime minister’s proposal to forbid Jewish settlement in the villages; he demanded "that the prohibition on Jews purchasing real estate not be limited to the villages, but rather expanded to include the towns as well." Yet another Parliament member referred to what Kallay had said about Jewish lessees: "Let us speed up the solution to the problem of the estates in the hands of Jewish lessees."

Another speaker referred to the process of expropriating Jewish pharmacies, and proposed that "just like the compensation procedure in return for expropriated land, so we must see to it that the pharmacy owners be recompensed in bonds."

Yet another speaker came to what he felt was the self-evident conclusion to be drawn from the confiscation of Jewish-owned land:

The Jews, who are at the present time busily losing their property and becoming proletarians, comprise a real public danger, since they are involved with the simple, ignorant folk who tend to believe everything. For this reason it is not enough to expropriate Jewish lands and property. After the expropriation, a suitable regulation is to be enacted, one which will rule that all the Jews are to be gathered in a closed area.

It should be noted that the idea of exiling the Jews was deliberated outside of Parliament as well. The Hungarian ambassador to Germany,
Dome Sztojay—who was to become Hungarian prime minister after the German invasion of March 1944—expressed his opinion later in 1942 that "it would be right for the government of Hungary to exile a considerable portion of the Jewish population to occupied sections of Russia." Sztojay spoke of between one and three hundred thousand Jews who were to be exiled immediately.189

The bill was received favorably by Parliament. The minister of agriculture even complimented the opposition for not having expressed any ideological opposition to the proposal.190 One of the speakers, Count Gyorgy Apponyi, did express his reservations regarding the idea of the government offering valueless compensation for the expropriated estates, but he, too, expressed his agreement with the idea of expropriation: "According to the outlook of Christian morality, the right of the individual to property ends where it comes into conflict with the public interest. The right of expropriation exists in every civilized state, but compensation for the confiscated lands must be paid in accordance with the full and true value of the lands."191

Yet another speaker who took part in the debate during that session referred to the problem of expropriation without suitable compensation, asserting, "Let us not worry about certain regulations violating the rights of the individual, for the ancient Hungarian constitution presents us with many examples of this kind. We are living today in a period which obliges us to apply new approaches in place of all kinds of outdated laws, which do not adequately meet the needs of the nation."192

It wasn’t long until a certain member of Parliament even came up with an ideological justification for expropriation without appropriate compensation. "According to the Hungarian constitutional outlook, the source of private property is the holy crown of the kingdom, which represents the general public at its highest level. This is especially true when dealing with real estate. In certain cases the holy crown may have its ownership rights restored."193

The bill was adopted by Parliament on June 10, 1942, and sent to the Upper House.194 There it was considered without delay, the House being united in its positive approach toward it. The bill was weakly opposed by one member of the Upper House, himself a landowner, who expressed his anxiety that the confiscation of Jewish estates without paying suitable compensation might serve as a precedent:

One of the important elements of our constitution has been the procedure whereby in every case of expropriation, the recompense has been deter-
mined by an independent court of law. This deviation from the accepted procedure arouses anxiety that in another period and under changing circumstances the regime may apply this method to other people’s estates as well.\textsuperscript{195}

The minister of agriculture expressed his appreciation of the Upper House for its matter-of-fact approach to the bill. “We do not disagree on the outlook which determines that land belonging to the Hungarian homeland must remain in Hungarian hands.”\textsuperscript{196} The Upper House adopted the bill with minor amendments on June 15, 1942.

The historian Katzburg refers to this bill in the following way: “The significance of the law was chiefly political. Hungarian Jews regarded the right to own real estate as a symbol of their civil equality. The ban on land ownership removed one of the last remnants of Jewish emancipation.”\textsuperscript{197}

The position adopted by the church leaders—especially by those of the Catholic church—calls for special consideration. Contrary to their actual and decisive involvement in the debates on the earlier anti-Jewish bills—especially on the first three bills—this time the leaders of the Christian churches, members of the Upper House, stood out by not participating in the debate on the proposed law. In light of their declared antisemitic views, as these had been expressed in every one of their speeches delivered during the consideration of the anti-Jewish legislation both in the Upper House plenum and in its subcommittees, one cannot be surprised that they did not object to the robbery being carried out in the guise of legislation, though there may have been additional reasons for their silence.

It is reasonable to assume that the fact that the heads of the priesthood ignored the subject resulted from their awareness of the meaning of the expropriation of the estates. The churches were among the largest landowners in Hungary.\textsuperscript{198} At the same time, one of Hungary’s most serious problems was the poverty that was instrumental in the degeneration of her agricultural workers, who had no land of their own and who numbered some three million at the time. Most of this huge population lived under the severest conditions, their status not amounting to much more than that of the vassals of earlier centuries. They lived on the lands of their masters and labored exceedingly hard for a minimal wage. The path to improvement of their conditions, their status, and their education was almost completely blocked, and they had no real hope of improvement. After the events of 1918–1920 the leaders of Hungary realized that it was necessary to find a way to
improve the conditions of this population stratum. Plans were laid for a necessary agrarian reform, but these remained embryonic and never reached the stage of actual implementation.

Whenever the question of agrarian reform came to be of public interest, the Catholic church—itself the owner of huge estates—felt itself threatened, and devoted time and thought to repelling the challenge. Upon the government’s preparing a bill on the topic in the early 1920s, the Synod of Catholic Bishops referred to it in this way:

To whatever extent a fair division of lands is desirable, a far-reaching agrarian reform is equally dangerous, because it opposes the concept of the right to possess private property, it lessens the fruits of labor, it furthers the existence of a revolutionary atmosphere, and strikes at the foundations of cultural institutions. The Synod of Bishops is able to participate in a national campaign aimed against the danger inherent in excess.

The bishops thus determined their basic stand relative to the idea of "agrarian reform." From a study of additional protocols of sessions of the Synod of Bishops, the bishops would seem to have adhered to this stand of theirs for the ensuing twenty years during which the subject periodically came up for discussion. The bishops expressed their desire to assist the government, but stipulated conditions for their assistance:

To further the existence and happiness of the nation, the church is willing to make sacrifices to the greatest extent possible. The cardinal, however, has especially stressed that the church is unwilling to endanger its institutions, for their survival is of supreme national interest. If and when it is proposed that certain lands belonging to the church be distributed in order to facilitate the establishment of small farms, the church will be willing to do so, but only on condition that the leases be drawn up between church and state, and not between church and the lessees. In this way the church will be sure that the leasing fees will actually be paid her.

The Synod of Bishops also announced that it would "be willing to support a Land-Lease bill, on condition that the rights of the church as a landowner are preserved, and that the church receives full compensation for its agreement to the leasing." At another session the bishops expressed their opinion that it was "desirable for some body to be set up to make all necessary arrangements while guaranteeing Catholic interests."

The bishops’ debates and resolutions indicate their awareness of the importance of owning land and their knowledge of how matters could be arranged in such a way as to guarantee Catholic interests. They knew how to word their stipulations in order to ensure their ownership of the
lands even after they were leased—in return for appropriate compensation, the responsibility for the actual payment being the government’s.

Those same bishops, headed by the cardinal, remained indifferent and could not find a single word in favor of “the idea of the right to possess private property,” when the property under discussion belonged to Jews. Similarly, they were not perturbed by the possibility of the existence “of a revolutionary atmosphere and of harm done to the foundations of civilized institutions” in the wake of the distribution of the lands that had been taken from the Jews.

In this light, there would seem to be more than a little cynicism in the speech Seredi delivered about a year after the Expropriation of Jewish Estates Law was adopted, at a nationwide Catholic convention held in Budapest:

> We respect everyone’s right to his privately owned property, which he acquired either courageously or industriously, or which he inherited from his forefathers who acquired it either courageously or industriously. According to the doctrine of Jesus we fearlessly demand the enforcement of justice in the mutual relations between individual and collective. 

In the cardinal’s opinion, “justice according to the doctrine of Jesus” would seem to be powerless to come to the defense of Jewish property.

One of the immediate results the government expected of the agrarian reform was the availability of plots of land on which the homes of agricultural and industrial workers were to be built. In this way the government hoped to appease to some extent the rage of the manual laborers who, despite their rigorous labors, benefited but little from this labor, making no progress whatever toward a better future. The prime minister referred both to this problem and to the opportunities inherent in the expropriation of Jewish lands. A member of Parliament referred to the subject as well, stressing the necessity of a solution for the problem: “The solution of the problem of distributing the plots for the construction of homes should be viewed as one of the most important and urgent matters.”

And so the minister of agriculture expressed his willingness to ascribe urgency to this problem. In his summation and reply to the debaters he said, “First and foremost, I shall devote special attention to the solution of the problem of plots of land for construction and to the furthering of this matter.”

Since the general public considered the solution of the construction lot problem more immediate and simpler to execute than the comprehensive solution of granting agricultural land to millions of landless agricultural workers for cultivation, it also aroused more hope and
expectation in public opinion. The government, with a considerable degree of justification, expected the distribution of lots to the needy for construction to function as a safety valve, releasing to some extent the pressure of that public opinion. In light of the fact that the premier announced explicitly, “I shall not touch any Hungarian land.... as long as it is possible for me to use the land belonging to Jews,” it may be possible to assume that in addition to their traditionally hostile stand regarding the Jews and Judaism, church leaders considered the confiscation of Jewish estates to be useful—that is, the more problems solved by means of the lands expropriated from the Jews, the smaller the number of accusing fingers to be pointed at the churches, the owners of giant estates, for not participating in the effort to relieve the suffering of millions of their landless and homeless congregants.

Another fateful topic raised in the prime minister’s speeches was, as already noted, the idea of exiling the Jews from Hungary. It is interesting to follow the reaction of the churches to this proposal. This reaction was voiced indirectly, but the intent of its message was unmistakable.

Two weeks after Kallay’s announcement of the plan for a final solution to the problem of Hungary’s eight hundred thousand Jews by means of their expulsion, Cardinal Seredi appeared at a ceremony held in the town of Nagyvarad on the 750th anniversary of the canonization of one of Hungary’s first Christian kings, St. Laszlo. Seredi chose the topic of “the obligation to obey the laws of the state” as a central motif for his speech:

We are to learn from our king, St. Laszlo, that as Christians we have to strive for sanctity in all walks of life, and we even have to achieve that sanctity. In order to achieve our goal, we must adhere to our faith according to the example he set us.... We must ascribe to the will of God not only religious laws, but also those of the state, and so we are obligated to obey them to the best of our conscientious awareness. We must view them as obligating us, just as our king, St. Laszlo, did.

The truth is that not only was the great king conscious of Jesus’ commands—“Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and unto God that which is God’s”—he also spread the doctrine of the apostle unto the nations: “Everyone must be loyal to the authorities, because authority is of God.” And so, one who resists the authorities is resisting God, and those who do so merely bring harm upon themselves. It is thus important that you be faithful to the regime not only for fear of punishment, but also because of the command given by your conscience.

In light of this it is self-evident that if we desire to be good Catholics and loyal Hungarians, we have to accept the fact that not only the laws of the church obligate us conscientiously. Our homeland, too, is entitled to legislate obligatory laws, and indeed has such laws. The law of the
church has been clear since its very founding, ruling that the rulers of nations are entitled to pass laws which obligate their subjects from a conscientious viewpoint, for their laws are the logical result of the obligation to further the interests of society. ... And so, the churches protect the interests of their states even more efficiently than the state authorities themselves can do. 109

As already noted, the fact that the Seredi speech followed that of Kallay so closely is what renders the Seredi speech as significant as it is. Regarding the obligation of obedience to secular authority, Christians were instructed by the founder of their faith: “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s”—the conclusion being, “one who resists the authorities is resisting God.” The cardinal did not categorize the obligation of obedience; neither did he express his reservations at brutal announcements made by the chief authority, announcements which I believe are opposed to the laws of both humanity and God.

Seredi even succeeded in ascribing to the ancient Hungarian king and his deeds a dimension of immediacy by adding a number of biographical details concerning him:

Pope Celestine III included him ceremoniously among the saints of Christianity 750 years ago. His knightly Christian behavior—a trait he developed for himself as king of Hungary—established him as an ideal character worthy of emulation, not only in the eyes of those who succeeded him on the throne of the Hungarian kingdom, but also in the eyes of all Christian Europe, who viewed him as its leader, both spiritually and militarily. For this reason the leaders of the Crusades—who had organized themselves for the liberation of those places which were sanctified by our Lord Jesus and which were then under the rule of the Turkish idolators—turned to King St. Laszlo and invited him to be their supreme commander.

We, his descendants, have made a pilgrimage to his town in order to express our admiration of him. Yet let us not forget that this expression of our admiration will be of value to the beloved, holy king, only if each and every one of us does his very best to live in accordance with his exalted example. ... The life of St. Laszlo is so overflowing with religious and patriotic themes that each and every one of us can learn a great deal from him, and we all can advance in the footsteps of the examples he has set for us. 110

In this fashion Seredi succeeded in ascribing immediacy to the leader of the ancient Crusades, an immediacy that managed to capture the hearts of his audience. It will be recalled that in his speech in Parliament of
March 19, 1942—less than two months before Seredi's speech—Kallay referred to Hungary's war against Bolshevism as "a renewed Crusade."

"In accordance with its historical tradition our nation wages war against the Asian danger of Bolshevism and fulfills in this way its role as the defender of Christianity."  

The parallel is clear: the Turks parallel the Russians, and idolators parallel the Bolsheviks.

And Seredi presented the king, the Crusader leader, as a character worthy of emulation. Indeed, the achievements of that king were emulated by Seredi's contemporaries; in fact, the latter surpassed the original. That king was the first Hungarian monarch to enact legislation against the Jews. This occurred in 1092, at a national conference held in the province of Szabolcs.

A convention of the holy synod took place, headed by Laszlo, the faithful Christian king of the Hungarians, with the participation of the bishops, the heads of the monasteries, and the priesthood throughout his kingdom, with the approval of the entire nation. They conferred about the strengthening of Christianity. The synod adopted the following resolutions: prohibition of marriage between Jews and Christians; confiscating the tools of a Jew working on Sunday or on a Christian holy day in a way insulting to the Christian spirit; and prohibiting the owning of a Christian slave by Jews.

Appealing to the tradition of St. Laszlo was, in a way, the closing of a historic cycle. As the historian Venetianer defined it:

The prohibition of the owning of a Christian slave was in itself a severe economic blow at the Jews, for it denied them the opportunity of cultivating their lands. . . . This limitation already contained the seeds of the economic shift which compelled the Jews to abandon agriculture and to turn to other economic fields.

Despite the long period of time intervening between the decrees of the eleventh century and those of the twentieth, the similarity between them is great: the reasoning behind the anti-Jewish decrees in both cases was the desire "to strengthen Christianity"; the church leaders participated in the adoption of the anti-Jewish resolutions; the decrees were adopted "with the approval of the entire nation"; and they forbade mixed marriages. With regard to the prohibition of Jewish occupations, the twentieth-century decrees were far harsher than those of the eleventh century. This applies, too, to Jewish ownership of land. While in the eleventh century denying Jewish ownership of land was the logical result of the decrees, in the twentieth century the aim of taking over Jewish land was
not even disguised. Seredi recommended that his believers “follow the examples set for us by the ancient king.” It would seem that Seredi’s statement that “we are to ascribe to the will of God . . . the laws of the state as well” included Kallay’s ideas of confiscating estates and the planned expulsion. The conduct of the Hungarians in the summer of 1944 proves that the words spoken by Seredi in the spring of 1942 were well received.

A short two days after the Seredi speech the Reformed church held its General Reformed Convent Congress with the participation of the head of the church in Hungary, Bishop Sandor Ravasz. At this congress as well, the idea was voiced that it was necessary for members of the church to carry out loyally government decisions. The main trustee of the church, Jeno Balogh, delivered the central speech, spoke of subjects of immediate concern, and said,

Hungarians belonging to the Reformed church bear the yoke of carrying out national and church roles, and they do so with devotion and with steadfast resolution. The Hungarian nation, in cooperation with her great allies, is fighting in this world-embracing war for important values. We must fight this defensive war of ours for exalted moral values, which in their importance surpass any material value—we fight for our religion and our faith, we fight against the denial of God, which has become established, has developed, and has become a great and organized power.

The Reformed church collaborates with the government in all those areas which are aimed at improving the conditions of those millions of deeply rooted Hungarians, living in villages and working on agricultural farms. Within the framework of our creative policy there already exist useful, beneficent enterprises aimed at strengthening the Hungarian population."

The speaker did not explain the nature of the “useful, beneficent enterprises” aimed at “improving the conditions” of the agricultural laborers, but the hint was supposed to be well understood by the listeners since it was uttered during the last stages of the debate on the law for the expropriation of Jewish estates.

The idea expressed by religious functionaries, that the obligation of obedience to the secular authorities was a religious obligation, served to strengthen the position of the secular rulers of the state. And so it is not surprising that the minister of propaganda, Istvan Antal, voiced a similar opinion. At a eucharistic convention at the town of Szentes he lectured on the subject “Catholicism and Public Life.” He spoke of the roles of the leader and the led, and said:
The leaders must remember at all times that they are to exercise the power entrusted to them according to the laws of God and the exalted principles of justice, love, and freedom. On the other hand, those led are to be conscious of the fact that their obligation of obedience to the legal leaders is in accordance with the laws of God. The most brutal, barbaric, and horrible regime ever to rise to power in human history threatens Christian Europe from the east. By virtue of the flood of its cohorts, by virtue of its untapped material power and its rude brutality, Asiatic Bolshevism strives to subjugate Christian Europe, which has cultivated its culture in the spirit of Jesus' cross.

We are to build a social order based on the laws of Jesus, viz., freedom, justice, mutual social responsibility, human respect, and, in short—Christian brotherhood and solidarity in the spirit of the doctrine of Jesus.

As the war dragged on, disgust with and fear of communism were increasingly voiced, as was the identification of Judaism with communism. Sometimes this identification was merely hinted at, sometimes stated explicitly. From the prominence accorded the struggle of communism against Christianity, one could clearly conclude that communism was not at war with Judaism. On the contrary, communism and Judaism were capable of coexisting harmoniously, at one and the same time:

The minister of propaganda, Istvan Antal, came to the town of Szombathely as the guest of Bishop Jozsef Grosz. In his speech he pointed out the fact that we have to face up to the red danger threatening us from the east. Together with our great allies we are participating in this struggle being waged for European culture and for the Christian way of life.

The bishop of Szekesfehervar, Lajos Shvoy, spoke less obscurely. He was explicit where the minister of propaganda had been implicit. In a Shepherds' Epistle he published on the occasion of the 1943 Lent, he pointed an accusing finger at those he considered responsible for the outbreak of war, and went so far as to reveal to his readers the motives of those who lit the fire of war:

Ignoring the Gospel of our Lord Jesus—just as heretic philosophy and international Jewry have done for decades—is what has led the Christian nations to this point. Heretic Bolshevism and its new idolatry are waging a life-and-death struggle against the Christian outlook, their goal being to wipe Christianity off the face of the earth.

The bishop proved optimistic about the results of the struggle: "A new world and a new society will come about as a result of the difficult birth pangs of this struggle, and the glory of victory will belong to the eternal King of all generations: the Lord Jesus Christ."
With regard to the Jews the message was clear: they have no place in that "new world and new society" to be established after the war was over, for they were among the initiators of the war against Christianity.

With the adoption of the anti-Jewish legislation in the summer of 1942, the anti-Jewish legislative process came to an end, but this did not mean that Jewish suffering was over. For about a year and a half, from the adoption of the anti-Jewish laws of 1942 until the German invasion of 1944, the various government ministries came out frequently with new regulations, operative instructions, and decrees that were aimed at creating the practical frameworks for the implementation of the anti-Jewish laws. A considerable portion of the implementation of the anti-Jewish legislation was entrusted to the local authorities: provincial, municipal, and village councils. Most of these did their best to embitter the lives of the Jews and did more than was required of them by the central government. Not in vain did Kallay praise the village notaries for "their loyalty and their efficiency," while announcing the increased authority of the local councils.

The local authorities, who were most active in implementing the expropriation orders against the Jews, called upon the local population to cooperate with the government, and they responded willingly to this call, as in the following example.

As the dissection of Czechoslovakia began, in the autumn of 1938, territory from the south of that country was annexed to the north of Hungary. The Hungarian authorities set up public committees to examine and reorganize the occupation permits held by the tradesmen and craftsmen in the new territories. The Catholic periodical Uj Elet reported in its first issue of 1943 on the good results of this reorganization:

The excitement aroused by the publication of the instruction issued by the prime minister's office, making mandatory a renewed examination of the occupation permits of tradesmen and craftsmen, calmed down some time ago. This instruction enabled the local population to take an active part in carrying out these changes. In each and every district a local committee was set up to express its opinion of the possessors of permits. The authorities were represented on these committees by a single delegate, all the other committee members representing the various strata of the local populace. These committees well reflected the opinion of the public in the relevant district.

According to the data just published, out of 22,847 possessors of permits 6,220 were Jews at the time of the return of these areas to our Hungarian homeland. During the reconsideration, the permits of 3,748 Jews and of 79 Christians were canceled. It is a wonderful fact that so many
Christian tradesmen and craftsmen have been so rapidly integrated into our economy, after removing so large a number of Jewish merchants and craftsmen within the framework of the changes taking place. . . . According to the data of June 1941, 3,119 permits were issued to Christian craftsmen and tradesmen to replace the 3,748 permits taken from the Jews, and the Christians have already initiated their economic activity. 19

A number of points in this list are noteworthy—first, the expression "the excitement . . . calmed down": the prolonged processes of inciting against the Jews and choking off their livelihood had been normalized, and was treated as self-evident. Though they may have aroused some excitement at the time of their implementation, as time passed by the public learned to regard them as normal, and "the excitement calmed down."

Second, except for the lone government representative, the committees—which stole the bread from the mouths of thousands of Jewish families—were made up of representatives of the people. The compiler of the article cited above was justified in stating that "these committees well reflected the opinion of the public." Third, the Catholic periodical did not stop with a report of the activity of the committees. It also expressed its undisguised joy at what it defined as the "wonderful fact" that the Christian tradesmen and craftsmen, who had replaced the Jews removed from the sources of their livelihood, had integrated themselves so rapidly into the Hungarian economy.

It was not only the merchants and craftsmen who stressed their Christianity and attempted to make the most of it; academic professionals did the very same thing: "The Hungarian Catholic Doctors’ Association and the Evangelical Hungarian Doctors’ Union appealed to their members to hang in their clinics the uniform symbol of Christianity—the cross. . . . to ensure their constant acting and speaking in accordance with the demands of the Christian world of thought." 20

The prime minister spoke of the nature of the "Christian world of thought." On his visit to the town of Ungvar, Kallay said,

We are pioneers, pioneers of Christian thought. . . . We Hungarians have always been the bearers of European culture and we are also the first to fight for the national Christian revival. . . . We have to open our eyes, we have to make doubly sure of what goes on in this land during this rough period. We must not be satisfied with having removed the Jews from various positions; it is insufficient to have removed the influence of Jewish capital. It is most important for us to be rid also of the influence of the Jewish spirit.

The chief functionary of the Greek Orthodox church, Jenő Ortutay, spoke in the name of the local population after the prime minister’s
speech. In the name of the hosts the Greek Orthodox Bishop Sandor Sztojka thanked the prime minister.  

Three days after his visit in Ungvar, Kallay took part in a meeting of the council of his party, where he delivered the main speech. He touched on most of the immediate questions facing Hungary, and voiced a kind of interim summary of the seven months he had been premier:

No change has taken place in our foreign policy, and the meaning of this continuity of foreign policy line is our unquestioned loyalty to our struggle alongside our allies. We shall be prepared to make sacrifices to ensure the continued existence of this alliance, even over and above those sacrifices which are obligatory within the framework of this loyalty. . . . Neither have we changed direction in our internal policies; indeed, it would have been impossible for us to change direction, for the direction we follow is that which guarantees the survival of an independent, right-wing, Christian Hungary.

I hereby inform you that the minister of finance will prepare a bill dealing with the imposition of a property tax on the Jews. We have no choice but to bear the special expenditures connected with our war efforts and it is only natural that we impose the main portion of those expenditures upon those who, over the last few decades, have taken control of a considerable part of our national property. For my part, I shall do the utmost to increase the level of this tax to its maximum.

The housing shortage is one of our social problems. In this field, too, the Jews enjoy a considerable advantage, this phenomenon rendering more tangible their antisocial attitude. This problem, too, I would like to solve in accordance with the outline I have drawn up, and I would also like to assist in finding suitable housing for those Christian circles who have difficulty in this. I shall use all my power to ensure that the important positions are put into Christian hands as soon as possible.

Let Jewry engrave on the tablet of its heart: the Jews must give up all hope! Never again will there be here conditions like those which prevailed under the last regime, a regime which would compel us to return to the Jews their confiscated lands. Our national Hungarian consciousness shall never deteriorate to such a nadir.

And here I want to clarify a certain point: with regard to our treatment of the Jewish question I am prepared to take all the steps aimed at supporting the political, economic, and moral needs of the nation, to respond to them and to further them. On the other hand, I shall not be prepared to tolerate a situation whereby now, in their defeat, the Jews do even more to poison the atmosphere and engage in their destructive activities than they did when they were strong.*

Kallay’s repeated calls to the nation to contribute to the war effort so as to defend Christian values did not go unheeded. In the very same issue
of the newspaper that carried the Kallay speech cited here, there appeared
an article that emphasized the importance of marking "the Day for the
Treatment of the Recruits":

The churches participate in the war effort. This is self-evident, for in
this war the fate of the church and of the altar shall be decided: will their
fate be as it has been in the kingdom of Stalin, or will it be as it is in those
sections of Europe called "Christian"?...One of the astoundingly human
features of this war is the priests who—together with Mountain Hunter
units—climbed to the very highest of summits, and the priest-paratroopers
who landed in their parachutes on the island of Crete [these descriptions
fit the priests who served in the Nazi army].

Our priests, too, are located in the fields of battle near Voronyezs and
along the Don River. But for our churches this is not enough—they have
been contributing to the war effort in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Peace
Maker.... This is the correct way to act! "The Day of Caring for the
Recruits" is one of the most encouraging features of Hungarian
Christianity.

It was clear that from the beginning "the treatment of the recruits" was not meant to apply to Jewish recruits, nor did it include them. The
"caring" of the Jews was determined by the person who was the master
of life and death of tens of thousands of recruits along the Russian front:
General Gusztav Jany was the commanding officer of the defeated Hun-
garian Second Army. Many of the labor battalions in which the Jewish
recruits served had been dispatched to the fields of battle in the Ukraine
and most of these had been attached to Jany's Second Army. Jany, more
than anyone else, was personally responsible for the torturing and mur-
dering of tens of thousands of young Hungarian Jews. After the war he
was executed as a war criminal.

After his return to Budapest Jany came to the offices of the Red Cross
to express his thanks to the organization for its activities on behalf of
his soldiers. He spoke of the importance of helping one's fellow man and
of assisting the suffering. "The special value of these characteristics is
inherent in their stemming from love of Jesus and their being permeated
with Christian love." 234

The ministry of propaganda dedicated its new abode in Budapest: "In
the framework of a moving traditional church ceremony, the Apostolic
Prelate, Zsigmond Mihalovics, sanctified the building and prayed to God
to bestow His blessing of abundance upon the new edifice, upon its
workers, and upon the work which would be carried out within its
walls." 235

The minister of propaganda spoke:
Hungarian propaganda bases its methods upon the ideal contained in the concept of Jesus and upon the concept of a homeland. . . This true, noble, and pure propaganda is merely a desire to preserve in the hearts of men that exalted moral level and to strengthen in their souls those exalted human characteristics. . . The church of Jesus has been maintaining those exalted human characteristics for two thousand years, in the fullness of their exalted purity. . . Hungarian propaganda is guided by two principles: our country must remain Hungarian forever, and the glow of the Cross of Jesus will never fade over Hungary and in the souls of the Hungarian people. 

When the minister spoke of “the desire to preserve in the hearts of men that exalted moral level and to strengthen in their souls those exalted human characteristics,” he chose to shut his eyes to the existence of a group of people in Hungary, half a million strong, who did not benefit from the existence of those characteristics in the souls of the leading circles in the state.

Shutting one’s eyes was the principle guiding Cardinal Seredi as well, when he gave voice to his idea at a national Catholic convention:

> We Catholic Hungarians strive to further a better future for Hungary. . . . We demand justice, both for the individual and for the entire public. We adamantly reject the allegations leveled against us from beyond our borders to the effect that various rights have been denied to our national or religious minorities. . . . There has never been anything like that in our country.

**Conclusion**

At the onset of the anti-Jewish legislative process, the Jews of Hungary were citizens enjoying equal rights—at least in theory, if not in practice. Six years sufficed to take up this group of people and place it outside the public domain. Most of the Jews’ civil rights were denied them. Their livelihoods and their institutions were discriminated against. Their security was undermined. Physical assaults against Jews in the streets became normal events, and the shattering of windows in Jewish homes and shops occurred night after night—and the regime did nothing to protect them. On the contrary, the regime encouraged those attacks, in which thousands of Jews lost their lives.

A short time after Hungary entered the war against Russia, in July 1941, the Hungarian authorities hunted down “foreign” Jews in Hungary’s northeastern provinces. Some thirty or thirty-five thousand Jews were arrested and about eighteen thousand of them were expelled from Hungary, into the Kamenets-Podolsk region of the Ukraine, where they were murdered.
In the town of Ujvidek, in the area annexed to Hungary from Yugoslavia, the Hungarian security forces engaged in "a hunt for partisans." On January 21–23, 1942, the Hungarian army and police force concentrated about three thousand Jews—men, women, and children—and led them toward the frozen Danube River. The security forces opened fire upon them. Those who were not killed by their fire froze to death in the river.

We have already noted the tens of thousands of Jews killed by the soldiers and officers of the Hungarian army during their service in the labor battalions.

In the spring of 1944, as the Red Army crept nearer and nearer to the borders of their country, Hungarians began to sense the Communist giant encroaching on them. Decades of propaganda had succeeded in implanting the fear of communism as the incarnation of evil on earth into the Hungarian public. An integral part of the anti-Communist propaganda was that the Jews were a fifth column, the pioneers of the Communist camp dwelling inside Hungary, while their Communist allies threatened the borders of their country from without.

A newspaper report told of a mass conference in the town of Kiskun-Felegyhaza, held ten days before the invasion of Hungary by the Germans: "The speakers proved objectively, in an unbiased and unprejudiced manner, the absolute identity of Judaism and communism. They also pointed out ways to fight against them."

Of the importance of the war against these hazards we hear, at that time, from the bishop of Eger, Bela Czapik, who was the third most powerful official of the Hungarian Catholic church: "I still maintain the rank of captain which I earned in the Hussar unit. I do not give up my rank, and if problems arise, the bishop of Eger shall once again put on his uniform."

In light of the growing outside pressure, the cooperation between the government and the churches was maintained, and even improved. The authorities found a symbolic way to thank church leaders for their support of the regime. The regent of Hungary granted his archbishop, Cardinal Justinian Seredi, the coveted medal of excellence, the great Cross of the Fraternity of St. Istvan.

This medal of excellence was awarded to only one church leader of the Catholic church. But it must be remembered that while the debates on the steps to be taken by the state against the Jews—"the pioneers of international communism"—were in full swing, the leaders of the churches consistently maintained their three-way solidarity. All three expressed at every opportunity opinions identical in their support of the
steps proposed by the regime. Therefore, the awarding of this medal of excellence to the leader of the greatest of Hungary's churches can be viewed as an expression of appreciation to the leaders of the other two churches as well.

The stands adopted by the churches vis-à-vis the Jews were identical. Furthermore, they strongly resembled—if they were not identical with—the position taken by the leaders of the regime regarding the Jews. The official organ of the Catholic church prided itself in that the Hungarian legislator imbibed his ideas from articles appearing in previous editions of the publication. During the debate on the second anti-Jewish act, on April 20, 1939, *Magyar Kurir* wrote,

> While Jewry begs (like a beggar extending his hand) for a sense of brotherhood among the Hungarian public, it is unwilling to bend even a finger in order to return to the Hungarians those positions it, in its impudent and ruthless arrogance, grabbed control of.... The Jewish question has not yet been solved, and its very existence is stifling and poisonous.... Many important legislators have adopted our rulings, even as our minister of law has adopted them in referring often, openly and lengthily, to what we wrote in earlier issues.

The Hungarian people were well aware of the position taken by its leaders, and its hatred of the Jews who were identified with international communism grew ever stronger—as did its fear of the Red Army approaching the borders of its country. In the spring of 1944 the banners of that army were flying on the northeastern slopes of the Carpathian mountain range, within sight of the Hungarian border. The triangle—the regime, the church, and the people—stood firm in a united front in its opposition to the Hungarian Jewish population, and this population, in turn, found itself helpless, isolated, shunned, debased, beaten, and robbed—at the focal point of waves of hatred, on the most fateful day in its history of hundreds of years, the day of the German invasion of Hungary, March 19, 1944.