

LÁSZLÓ BÓNA

**Contributions to the Ethnic Changes of Késmárk in the 19th Century
II.**

Pro&Contra 4

No. 2 (2020) 29–49.

Abstract

The study examines the ethnic changes of Késmárk in the age of dualism. In the course of my research, I attempted to map the operation and contemporary situation of the city in a complex way. The extremely voluminous source material did not allow us to present Kežmarok in an arc of studies, so this study is only with the nationalization of the Dualism era, the local historical society, local schools, local newspapers and the state of community norms. The study also includes research on religious differences, as well as local Hungarian and Slovak national building efforts.

Keywords: Késmárk, Kežmarok, Dualism, National struggles, Ethnicity in Austria-Hungary

Hungarianization efforts with modest results¹

As the main county offices were in Lőcse, Hungarian immigration was much more moderate in Késmárk. At the local level, the starting point of the Hungarian identity was definitely represented by the school system as the Hungarian students sent to Késmárk to learn German and later their teachers represented the Hungarian language base in the city, with which the citizens could come into contact on a daily basis. The Hungarian-minded elite of the cities of the Szepesség, led by Lord-lieutenant Gyula Csáky and the staff of the *Szepesi Lapok* fought for a long time to keep a high-quality Hungarian theatre company in the Szepesség.

The Szepesség undoubtedly had a German-dominated culture until the end of the 19th century. The cultural consumption of the Slavic majority of the county, mainly its Eastern Slovakian (Slovjak) and Ruthenian inhabitants, as we have seen above, was extremely modest.² Several German-language newspapers appeared in Késmárk, and the local weekly newspaper called the *Karpaten Post*, which was a determining factor until the

¹The first part of this paper was published in *Pro&Contra* Vol. 4. No. 1. (2020): 5–29.

²For the Slavic population of the Upper Hungarian region, primarily the narrower region was considered to be the homeland, the main identity-forming factor. The eastern region had its own dialect, which is still different in the everyday language. For more information, see: Ábrahám, *Szlovákok és Szlovjokok: a nemzet határai*. [Slovaks and Slovaks: the borders of the nation]. in: *Limes* 16 (2003). 3. 55-66, Or: Gábor Stancs: *Dialektus, kontaktusjelenség vagy magyar propaganda? Adatok és értelmezések a keleti szlovák (szlovják) etnikai régióról*. [Dialect, contact phenomenon or Hungarian propaganda? Data and interpretations about the Eastern Slovak (Slovak) ethnic region]. (Somorja, Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle. 2016/3.)

end of Dualism, was published in German with the exception of a few advertisements or smaller articles until the end of the era. After the Compromise, the Hungarian national life in the county became more intense. It was primarily Lord-lieutenant Albin Csáky (in 1888 he was also Minister of Religion and Public Education for six years) and his family that were very active in this field. Although there was a local, occasional theatre company in Késmárk, it performed in German.³ However, it tried in vain to meet the “needs” of the age by sometimes donating all of its income, in 1883, for example, half of it went towards the travel expenses of the Csángó Hungarians and the other half towards the local industrial school, which was in the course of being established, and the language in which it performed soon became “outdated”. In 1884, the FMKE’s request came to the city of Késmárk to help recruit members. “Acknowledging it”, the city council placed it in the archives without discussion. The German elite took the matter more seriously only when it came to the reinforcement of the office, the notice of Szepes County – although the subject was the same as in the previous one – the signature of vice Lord-Lieutenant had the desired effect. It was made public by being posted, “if a member were to be admitted to one of these associations, it would be included in the signature form [...] and sent to the vice Lord-Lieutenant’s office.”⁴ Despite this, although the notice was sent by post to all major cities in the Szepesség, the local FMKE board in Szepes County did not start its activities until the summer of 1891.⁵ The statutory general assembly was also held only in June 1892. Moreover, even the 1894 board meeting turned into a fiasco as only 9 of the 55 board members were present at the meeting in Lőcse. The correspondent of the *Szepesi Lapok* tried to spin a positive view of the question, according to which “those present were very zealous”, but despite the fact that Lord-Lieutenant Gyula Csáky was presiding, the number of board members present speaks for itself. According to Csáky, the local board “has members who will be able to get the society’s cart stuck in the mud back on the road.”⁶ In addition, many did not pay the annual fee, either. At that time it had already 276 members, of whom only 226 had paid their membership fees, there were no new members, and four people indicated their intention to leave.⁷ The local board held its

³ Szepesszombat Archives –unprocessed material. 1883 III. 4 April 1883. Captain Alexander V’s letter to the vice lord-lieutenant.

⁴ MGA. 1884.

⁵ The local elite probably believed, “Szepesség is not disturbed by ethnic excitement, here everyone calls themselves Hungarian of their own accord and is happy to consider themselves Hungarian [...] here there is no need for Hungarianizing associations [...] because all the different inhabitants are equally good Hungarian...” *Szepesi Lapok* 13 September 1885.

⁶ *Szepesi Lapok* 18 March 1894.

⁷ *Szepesi Lapok* 25 March 1894.

annual general assembly a few months later, which was scheduled for the county general assembly “because they hoped that a greater number of members would appear,” yet only slightly more than twenty people turned up.⁸ They, too, were mostly mayors, but the Lord-Lieutenant and a parliamentary representative were also there.⁹ It was then acknowledged that until then, the branch association had not been able to start actual work as the local FMKE was always concerned with other organizational problems. Namely, “complaints arose against the administration of the Centre of the Highland (Felvidék) Hungarian Cultural Association and several members of the general assembly emphasized that if the situation did not improve, it would be most appropriate to establish an independent Hungarian cultural association in the Szepesség.”¹⁰ In addition, it was also pointed out that multilateral support and interest would be needed. The problems within the organization were finally smoothed out at the General Assembly held in the autumn of 1894.¹¹ The difficulty involved in starting the association is also shown by the fact that Arnold Miskolczy, one of the regular writers of the *Szepes Lapok* became the notary of the local board, “whereas the former resigned along with the treasurer, instead of whom Frigyes Sváby took up the post as “no one wanted to accept the position”.¹²

“Every start is difficult,” said Gyula Csáky, president of the local board in 1895 in Késmárk, where the first FMKE roving conference was held. According to the newspaper article, the city supported the meeting, at which 30 new members joined the association. After the meeting, a joint dinner was organized, followed by a dance party.¹³ In the same year, the Késmárk city committee of the local board was formed, followed by the establishment of the Igló and Lőcse committees a year later. In fact, this is when the real activity of the association started. By the end of 1895, the Szepesremete (Késmárk) nursery school was

⁸ *Szepesi Lapok* 29 July 1894. The annual general meeting of FMKE was held on 25 July.

⁹ The Szepes County Board had held its meetings with the Szepes Junior School Teachers' Association several times since 1898 as “a large number of people are more impressive”. *Szepesi Lapok* 20 July 1902.

¹⁰ *Szepesi Lapok* 29 July 1894.

¹¹ *Szepesi Lapok* 28 October 1894. Géza Koszszsky, the secretary of the central presidency in Nitra also attended the general meeting. In fact, the case was dragging on as during 1895, the treasurer of the Szepes County FMKE complained that the membership fees had been sent to the center of Nitra on July 17, 1894, still some members were pestered to pay the arrears even though they had done so a long time ago. These people asked the treasurer for redress in embarrassing letters. The treasurer says he will resign his post as an official of the FMKE if the county board does not compensate him for the damage to his reputation. In Nitra, things are handled carelessly, accounting is inaccurate, etc. *Szepesi Lapok* 7 July 7 1895.

¹² *Szepesi Lapok* 21 July 1895. Miskolczy soon wrote his name as Miskolczi.

¹³ *Szepesi Lapok* 21 July 1895. It was written in the same place that according to the resolution passed at the last general meeting and the original statutes, entry is for 10 years, so if someone wants to resign, it will not be accepted. They soon decided that membership be for three years because many did not join due to the ten-year membership, which they find too long. *Szepesi Lapok* 31 January 1897.

also opened.¹⁴ It was then that the usual activities of the cultural associations, such as the distribution of teacher applications, prayer books and other books to “appropriate” (mainly educational) places, also began. By 1896, about four dozen people had already attended the general assemblies, but paying the membership fees did not go smoothly, either as, for example, the membership fee for 1895 was paid by 43 of the 186 regular members and 13 of the 87 supporters until August 1896.¹⁵

However, the activities of the Szepes County Board are mostly about the efforts made for the benefit of the local theatre company and the support of the Hungarian-language press. Throughout the era, the local board was struggling with low membership numbers and the delayed payment of membership fees: “our members pay the membership fee scarcely ever without warning . . .” wrote a report.¹⁶ It can be said that the FMKE of Szepes County enjoyed support mainly from the members employed in the state administration, and only with great difficulty.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was in the mid-1880s that the issue of Hungarianization came to the fore in a small part of the local elite.

In the 1880s, the *Szepesi Lapok* complained in several small articles that the performances in German in Késmárk delighted a full house while people hardly attend those in Hungarian.¹⁸ In a short time, three Hungarian theatre companies visited Késmárk – the *Karpaten Post* says – Sággy’s Hungarian theatre company, for example, “although it does not yet have high attendance levels, it still receives satisfactory support from the art-loving audience.”¹⁹ According to the articles, the reason for the failure could be the quality of the performances of the rural Hungarian theatre companies, which did not yet represent a sufficient standard.²⁰

¹⁴ As early as 1894, the idea was raised that a nursery school be established in Lublo and Béla, and a third nursery school in Márkusföld was to be financed by the centre in Nitra. *Szepesi Lapok*, 18 March 18 1894.

¹⁵ *Szepesi Lapok* 1896. August issues, 31 January 1897. In 1896, 400 crowns 50 pennies should have come in for FMKE, but only 137 crowns 50 pennies came in, which was also difficult. *Szepesi Lapok* 24 July 1898. At that time FMKE already had 302 members, but due to the fragmentation of the payment I quote “this register is also a mere formality.”

¹⁶ The treasurer therefore applied for recovery by post in 1886, by which some of the members immediately announced their resignation, and some of them refused to pay. The article complains that it is mainly the supporting poor folk teachers who pay; the so-called middle-class “patriotic” intelligentsia sent harsh letters to the treasurer, who argued that the entry into the association was for 10 years, he had the original signature of the members and they could not resign. *Szepesi Lapok* 20 September 1886.

¹⁷ We know of 35 members of Késmárk. Most of them were civil servants, lawyers, manufacturers or teacher-pastors, as well as the city or a savings cooperative. *Szepesi Lapok* (8 December – 22 December 1895 – a list of FMKE.

¹⁸ *Szepesi Lapok* 19 September 1886.

¹⁹ *Szepesi Lapok* 21 August 1887.

²⁰ Lajos Bogyó, the director of the theatre company, picked up the rental fees in Késmárk and walked away, the complaint is that such behavior did not really increase the credibility of Hungarian actors, and that the national theatre company could pay attention to such things, and the lack of quality is worrying. *Szepesi*

There was a lack of protagonists with a characteristic feature, singers with a beautiful voice, or excellent drama actors although, according to the articles, it was not yet possible to attract an audience with roaring cannon, clomping and Greek fire.

Although the *Szepesi Papers* worked very actively to support Hungarian acting, it did not manage to “recruit” the teachers at the Késmár Lyceum. The newspaper stated that “the teaching staff there took care of the matter; the slogan is to sell all the tickets, Long live the teachers! they do the Hungarians service.” The headmaster of the Lyceum, Ernő Grózs, refuted this saying that although they support all similar initiatives, “the teaching staff did not take the lead and did not guarantee that the tickets would be sold.”²¹

Nevertheless, supportive articles were continuously published to establish a permanent Hungarian theatre company, but until this was possible, the articles suggested that Lőcse, Igló and Késmárk should come together as the audience would welcome a good theatre company for six weeks as well. Some also suggested that there be a Hungarian – German performance alternately, after all, this was also the case in other cities (Zombor, Pozsony and Temesvár were mentioned as examples).²² The paper called for the formation of local associations that could provide financial assistance to their invited theatre company in exchange for season tickets of various durations. The first such association was founded in Lőcse in 1891. The article written by Arnold Miskolci, the secretary of the local FMKE in 1894 illustrates well the layer of the local German elite supporting the idea of a nation as a political community. “The altar of the Hungarian theatre should therefore be the first where we will present our patriotic sacrifice; secondly, we should also give performances in German [...] Let us not allow representatives of foreign cultures join our circle.”²³ According to Miskolci, it is nonsense that only those who know Hungarian well should go to the Hungarian theatre because the language and feeling of the homeland are reflected in the theatre.²⁴ However, this effort was in vain, the Boody theatre company operating in Lőcse and Késmárk in 1893–94 closed the season with a deficit of more than 1,500 Forints.²⁵

A few months after the case was made public, with the support of the cities of Késmárk, Igló and Szepesbéla, the Hungarian Society for the Patronage of Dramatic Art

Lapok 13 November 1887.

²¹ An article titled Színészek Késmárkon [Actors in Késmárk] in *Szepesi Lapok* 2 October 1887 and the next issue 9 October.

²² *Szepesi Lapok* September–October 1887

²³ *Szepesi Lapok* 11 March 1894.

²⁴ *Szepesi Lapok* 11 March 1894. In the same issue, the paper reported on the launch of a Hungarian-language course by the Artisan Self-Help Society of Késmárk.

²⁵ *Szepesi Lapok* 25 November 1894. One of the articles blamed the intellectuals of Szepes County for what happened.

of Szepes County was finally established with the centre of Lőcse, the members had to pay a membership fee of two Forints.²⁶ However, the higher support was obvious as the ministry gave the three cities 800 Forints for this purpose. The president of the society was the secretary of FMKE, Arnold Miskolczy. The inauguration of the Hungarian society of amateur and patronage of dramatic art of Késmárk in 1897 was of a similar character as Tivadar Genersich, the mayor asked that the city council elect three members into it.²⁷ The society of the patronage of dramatic art itself operated by pre-determining the number of weeks in which the supported company would be in that city, and members received a 15-20-25% discount (individual event tickets, partial season tickets, full-season tickets).²⁸

The first permanent theatre building in Szepesség opened in Igloo in 1902. This year, Selmecbánya, Liptószentmiklós, Rózsahegy, Alsó–Kubin, Trencsén, Turócszentmárton, Léva, Aranyosmarót, Szliács, Breznóbánya, Zólyom and Kőrmöcbánya also joined the Szepes theatre district. The theatre district also changed its name, thus establishing the “*Hungarian Higbland (Felvidék) Theatre District*” that met the increased art requirements. “Seeing the encouraging signal of the development of Hungarian dramatic art and culture, the members of the Késmárk city council welcome it with message of patriotism [...] and they joined it for three years.”²⁹

After achieving this goal, FMKE made increased efforts to organize local public libraries. However, the city of Késmárk rejected this on the grounds that the city already had a public library established by private donations, and “the national culture in our city is not endangered at all, and it gains more and more ground every year.”³⁰ Késmárk suggested that FMKE invested this patriotic support for cultural activities where it was needed more, but if it still wanted to do it here, the people of the city wouldn’t mind supporting this patriotic cause.³¹ Due to this kind of polite rejection, FMKE no longer tried to approach a public library with a request in Késmárk.

Religious differences

It can be said that despite the proportion of the population and the Slavic predominance of the area, the imported Slovak nationalism fell on barren ground, and even the Hungarian nationalism with powerful state support – based on the Hungarian consciousness, which

²⁶ *Szepesi Lapok* 24 March 1895. It was established on 3 February.

²⁷ MGA. 1897. No. 176. Kéler Pál, Dr Alexander Béla, Wien Károly.

²⁸ Cities often provide wood and classrooms free of charge.

²⁹ MGA. 1902. No. 12. 8 January.

³⁰ MGA. 1902. No. 205.

³¹ MGA. 1902. No. 205 sz.

survived in the region in the 19th century – achieved only more modest results mainly due to its excellent adaptability of the local elite. In addition to local patriotism, it was rather the denominational issue that especially mattered in the Szepesség and Késmárk. This is indicated by several factors, such as religious frictions at school, local rhetoric, or legacy – scholarship funds, most of which did not deal with the language spoken but with religion.³² This is partly confirmed by the memoir of Imre Fest, according to which in the first half of the 19th century the county was under the leadership of the lower nobility and the clergy, and then a gradual increase in the weight of the petty bourgeoisie element was observed.³³

The town of Késmárk was ruled by a Lutheran community with a stable majority from the middle of the 19th century until the end of World War II. The Jewish citizens who moved into the region in the middle of the 19th century enriched Hungarian cities, including Késmárk, with a new denominational palette. After the Polish uprising of 1830, many Polish emigrants settled permanently in the Szepesség, but their influence was insignificant in comparison to the Jewish families who first appeared in 1841. The first Jewish person to manage to buy the house number 123 in the city was David Lux.³⁴ Two years later, the first Jewish wedding was held in Késmárk.³⁵ At that time their synagogue was already being built, which was completed in 1853. The documents of the local community were originally written in Hebrew, but they were already translated into German by Baruch Glücksmann, president of the Second Jewish Community.³⁶ The ministerial decree of 1889, according to which only a Jewish mother who had completed a civic school and spoke the state language could keep the civil status register, found everything in order in Késmárk.³⁷ The local Jewish community was also active as an association. The Késmárk Jewish Women's Association had more than 100 members. The women's association was founded in 1897 and was mainly engaged in the care of the poor and sick, fundraising, and giving lectures for the workers of Késmárk. By the period of Dualism, they had formed the most active and dynamically developing social group in the city. According to Győző Bruckner, “the Gorals, Ruthenians, and Jews [...] live in

³² It is not about the study area, but about a similar trend in Transylvania, see Judit Pál, *Felekezet és politika Erdélyben a 19. század közepén [Denomination and Politics in Transylvania in the Mid-19th Century]*. (eds. Gyulai Éva, *Úr és szolga a történettudomány egységében* (Miskolc, Miskolci Egyetem BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2014)

³³ See: Fest Imre, *Emlékirataim*. [My memoirs]. (Budapest. 1999)

³⁴ Baráthová kol., *Život v Kežmarku v 13. až 20. storóči*, 234.

³⁵ See previous note.

³⁶ The first rabbi of the Jewish community of *Adat-yesurín Késmárk-Leibütz* was Noach (Jonass-Jonatan) Kircz (1800-1883), then the second was Abraham Grünburg (1839-1918) and then his son, Nathan Grünburg (1884-1944), who was born in Késmárk in 1884).

³⁷ The Szepesszombat Archives, unprocessed material. III. May 12, 1883 Report of Major Hercogh.

greatest numbers in Késmárk, in the Késmárk district.³⁸ [...] According to Bruckner, of the ones listed above, the urban Jews were best adapted to their environment.³⁹

In Késmárk in the era of Dualism, the most severe fighting took place between the Hungarianizing German elite who protected their positions and the Jewish population that settled in in the middle of the century. These struggles took place mainly in the economic and power sphere. For two decades, the old elite of the town of Késmárk fought against Jewish door-to-door sellers from Galicia. As early as 1882, the city general assembly discussed this issue and made a motion to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce against the peddling merchants who traded in scrap and obsolete products — damaging the ones who sold goods of consistently fair quality and the people of the city – to ban these practices.⁴⁰ However, the motion was rejected by the Szepes County General Assembly on the grounds that the ministry had recently rejected Gölnicbánya’s request with a similar content and justification. However, the city of Késmárk remained adamant referring to the “Polish Jews engaged in smuggling, coming from the neighbouring country of Gács”, who avoid paying taxes and harm local producers.⁴¹ The city also turned to the Kassa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which did not support the draft, either. The Chamber of Industry proposed that the city adopt a regulation on door-to-door selling and draft it in agreement with the local board of merchants.⁴² However, the city continued to insist on a categorical ban and did not do so. Meanwhile, local craftsmen and traders constantly complained to the city in letters and oral submissions. The *Szepesi Lapok* also published a number of articles supporting the local industry and reports rejecting door-to-door selling.⁴³ Finally, by the end of the 1880s, a committee had been appointed to draft the regulatory ordinance, but the ministry had not adopted it, either. Késmárk continued to remain faithful to its old citizens and interests until in 1899 the ministry gave way and allowed the city to ban door-to-door sales. In 1900, Szepes County also banned such activities on its territory, which the city council was pleased to note.”⁴⁴

However, the local native-born Saxon German-speaking merchant and artisan layer, which was gradually becoming Hungarianized, was also confronted with the fact that more and more merchants of Jewish descent settled in and around the city. I do not have exact data on how many people actually settled in Késmárk in the period under study, I could

³⁸ Bruckner Győző, *A Szépeesség múltja és mai lakói*. 22.

³⁹ Bruckner Győző, *A Szépeesség múltja és mai lakói*. 22.

⁴⁰ MGA. 1882. No. 16.

⁴¹ MGA. 1882. No. 110.

⁴² MGA. 1882. No. 166.

⁴³ *Szepesi Lapok* 16 August 1885.

⁴⁴ MGA. 1899 No. 87. and 1900 No. 69.

only count the number and origin of the persons claiming citizenship locally. According to this, between 1880 and 1914, the city general assembly discussed the naturalization of 17 residents of Gács, 10 unknown ones, 3 Austrians, 2 Czechs, and 1-1 residents of Silesia, Prussia, and the United States.⁴⁵ In most cases, the General Assembly envisaged their granting fully-fledged citizenship after fulfilling the requirements determined by law, which meant the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship and the payment of the local taxes. In the case of native-born citizens, the city council assessed positively only the applications of persons who had been demonstrably active in Késmárk for several years and contributed to burden-sharing. Of course, the number of people who settled in the city ignoring paperwork could be exponentially higher than this.

Frigyes Sváby pointed out that in terms of numbers and significance the most important were immigrants, mainly Jewish ones who came from Galicia to the towns of the region.⁴⁶ “They dominate the retail and wholesale trade so much that the older local [...] more demanding traders will all be pushed out.”⁴⁷ But they were also extremely successful in other areas.⁴⁸ Sváby defended the old, ancient generation of Jews. Following the path of the German elite, according to the social contract of assimilation, “many of our excellent people came from them [...] but also out of a well-conceived interest, and at the same time they are always enthusiastic patriots.”⁴⁹ Moreover, “the Galician rigid orthodox newcomer cannot be said to be a welcome guest even by his fellow believers, either.”⁵⁰ The majority of Jews settled in the area –, according to Sváby, – usually started with brandy selling, and the associated small store serves only as an excuse, as noted by Sváby. However, there were plenty of “customers with the American craze” looking for their consolation in brandy in Késmárk.⁵¹ Nevertheless, according to Sváby, there is no trace of anti-Semitism in the

⁴⁵ The large number of unknown individuals is, on the one hand, the result of negligence as while the origin and details of the person were conscientiously and accurately recorded at the beginning of the era, they were not after the 1900s.

⁴⁶ Sváby Frigyes, *A Szepesség lakosságának sociológiai viszonyai a XVIII. és XIX. században*, 69.

⁴⁷ Sváby Frigyes, *A Szepesség lakosságának sociológiai viszonyai a XVIII. és XIX. században*, 69.

⁴⁸ Mlinárik 29: According to Mlinárik, the government reduced the settlement of the “Wasserpóláks” from Gács (Wasserpólák – the Polish water border across the Dunajec and Poprad rivers) Mlinárik argues in the same way as Sváby: “Skillful, hardworking and successful in their business.”2005.

⁴⁹ Sváby 69. 1901. The positive effect of Viktor Karády’s social contract on the Jewish individual can be felt. Although Sváby does not mention it, a part of the local German elite took a similar path. However, the theoretical background that can still be applied to the national German elite does not clarify the fact that a part of the German elite of Késmárk (of Szepesség) escaped into religion, or the attempt to avoid this, the support of Hungarianization. See: Karády Viktor, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, asszimiláció Tanulmányok* [Judaism, Modernization, Assimilation Studies]. (Budapest, Cseréfalvi, 1997)

⁵⁰ Sváby Frigyes, *A Szepesség lakosságának sociológiai viszonyai a XVIII. és XIX. században*, 69.

⁵¹ Many associations dealt with anti-alcoholism as it was the greatest social problem of the era, along with emigration.

Szepesség – in my opinion, his own utterances can already be considered as such – “but we could say that the majority of Jews considers Anti-Semitism as a Growing Apprehension.”

⁵² The local Jewish elite also established a freemason’s lodge in 1894, which by the end of the era had more than half a hundred active, influential members.⁵³

However, the border region did not only have a “less beneficial” role in store for the people of Késmárk. According to Sándor Belóczy, the headmaster of the civic school, it is visited by 7,000 Galicians a year for business purposes”, thus helping the local shops with good reputation and traders of the town and the neighbourhood selling goods at the weekly fair.⁵⁴

The difference between the religious communities of Késmárk is also reflected in a number of other sources. While, for example, the funding for the Lutheran and Catholic elementary schools were unanimously approved in one round by the city, the applications of the Jewish school were approved several times, after much wrangling, usually after a Commission review (reducing the size of the grant, rejecting it, or accepting the full grant). In 1888, a quota system was introduced in the local denominational elementary schools to replace the initial opaque, irregular application-based financial support system. Quotas were set for a period of ten years based on the number of students required to attend school.⁵⁵ The quota system adopted by the denominations was challenged by the Jewish community after barely three years, the proportions had shifted significantly in their favour.⁵⁶ This resulted in a serious legal complication, an appeal to a Level II authority and tension.⁵⁷ Finally, the motion of the Jewish community was defeated; their application for school allowance for a further 28 schoolable children was rejected on the grounds that they had agreed to the duration of the quota system when it was adopted. The other denominational schools generally asked for firewood to heat the school premises, but none of them bought into the quota system because of the shift in proportions to their detriment. In 1900, Samu Kotler et al. proposed that the re-establishment of quotas be determined not by the number of schoolable children but by the number of students who actually attend schools.⁵⁸ Two years later, the education committee of the city suggested that the amount of support should

⁵² Sváby Frigyes, *A Szepesség lakosságának sociologiai viszonyai a XVIII. és XIX. Században*, 70.

⁵³ Zmátlo, Peter, *Kultúrny a spoločenský život na Spiši v medzivojnovom období*, 127. The Freemason’s lodge of Késmárk had 20 regular members in 1899, and by 1917 it had already 58 members, mainly manufacturers and craftsmen.

⁵⁴ Bruckner Győző – Bruckner Károly, *Késmárki Kalauz* 4.

⁵⁵ MGA, 1888. No. 122. (decision No. 103) 861 children, 443 Rom. Cath. 306 Augustan 112 of Moses’ religion.

⁵⁶ MGA, 1891. No. 96.

⁵⁷ MGA, 1892. No. 3.

⁵⁸ MGA, 1900. No. 148. After the examination it turned out that the difference between schoolable students and those who attended school was close to 30%. MGA, 1900. No. 192.

be determined on the basis of the number of members of local denominations. The latter proposal was adopted by the city council.⁵⁹ After all, by sweeping away the proposal of the Jewish representatives, the rate of distribution of grants was determined on the basis of the number of believers. Apparently, the local Roman Catholic school came off best by that, and the Jewish one benefited least from it as they would have been better off in terms of their demographic vitality and higher school attendance as well.⁶⁰

The local Jewish community also tried to have the cattle fair rescheduled because a Jewish holiday fell on its original date. The German-majority city council immediately rejected this as “the Jewish holidays do not have much influence on the cattle fair” ...⁶¹ The city council also gave spectacular support to the local Lutheran elementary school. When the school’s teachers asked for firewood to heat their own homes in 1911 — although this practice was discontinued several years before — the city council complied with the request for fairness.⁶² Of course, news ran around the city, so a Jewish religious teacher also applied to be provided with firewood. However, this request was rejected on the grounds that “a number of other civil servants could apply for a provision of firewood on a similar basis, though the city does not have redundant wood, what is more, it does not give such payment to its own officials, either.” A year later, the provision of wood to teachers as salary was again a burning issue. Still, the city’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Finance provided the teachers of the Lutheran folk school with firewood for heating on the grounds that the Augustan elementary folk school and the civic girls’ school have such an important cultural mission in our city that they rightly deserve the support of the people of the city.”⁶³ Just a few weeks later, the Roman Catholic school also submitted a request on a similar subject, and this was created space for only after a “longer exchange of views” and against the proposal of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Finance. According to this, they provided as much firewood to heat the school as the teachers of the Lutheran school were given.⁶⁴ However, at that time the local Roman Catholic school already served a community nearly twice the size of the Lutheran school of the native-born German population. The Roman Catholic school board could experience the favour granted to the local Lutheran church by the city at other times. In 1898, the civic girls’ school of the Lutheran church was made permanent, which had operated only on a

⁵⁹ MGA, 1902. No. 122. It is about 5,400 crowns a year.

⁶⁰ For example, in the 1906/07 school year, 65 schoolable children were not enrolled in the Roman Catholic elementary school in Késmárk. The magistrate of Késmárk. Unprocessed material, September 22, 1906, statement by Ferenc Szufik, president headmaster of the school board.

⁶¹ MGA, 1893. No. 88.

⁶² MGA, 1911. No. 242.

⁶³ MGA, 1912. No. 196.

⁶⁴ MGA, 1912. No. 221.

temporary basis until then. The school, funded by the city, received an additional 600 Forints and 10 cords of firewood from the city in addition to the support for elementary schools.⁶⁵ The school was open to all denominations “without denomination and class distinction,” yet it was the local Roman Catholic elementary school that applied for regular 965 Forints in addition to the regular support per year, which the city made available to the Lutheran civic girls’ school. It was pointless for the city to offer such arguments as the city’s plight and the denominational openness of the school, as well as the fact that the school was not on equal footing with the elementary one, the Roman Catholic school board brought the question before the Hungarian Royal Administrative Committee.⁶⁶ The committee ordered that extra funds be paid to the Catholic elementary school, to which the city general assembly reacted in a pragmatic way; it also stopped funding the Lutheran girls’ school lest the extra funds be made available to the Catholic elementary school, either.⁶⁷ Today it is impossible to detect, but it is likely that during the very sensitive vandalism event that happened in 1888, 38 8-year-old lime trees of the Lutheran church were damaged by unknown perpetrators for religious reasons.⁶⁸ However, the Jewish community, which played an especially important role in the economic life, could not be stopped gaining ground; in 1921 51.8% of the inns and 78.4% of the shops in Késmárk were owned by Jews.

However, the city’ elite made sure to show themselves “outwardly” in a favourable light trying to emphasize the equality of the denominations. The custom remained from the old days that the city councillors elected their own Lutheran parish priest from the three candidates of the Bishop of the Szepesség at the city general assembly: ... “We, the people of the free royal city of Késmárk let everyone know [...] we choose a man who, especially between the different religious denominations, maintains peace and mutual understanding...” of course, in addition to religious zeal, hard work and virtue.⁶⁹ They took care to enforce the principle of parity in scholarships, measures, or donations, that is, to prevent such conflicts. For example, the local poor funds meant to help a Roman or Greek Catholic urban poor person in the first year, a Helvetian or Lutheran one in the second, and a Jewish one in the third year. While one part of the local German elite fought for the location of the new church and produced analyses of the specifications of the church locations in the *Karpaten Post*, the other part tried to put an end to the division of the new Catholic cemetery. Denominational orientation may have been a problem even in the care and admission of patients. At the very least, this is

⁶⁵ MGA, 1898. No. 86.

⁶⁶ MGA, 1900. No. 184.

⁶⁷ MGA, 1900. No. 203.

⁶⁸ *Szepesi Lapok* 9 December 1888.

⁶⁹ MGA, 1884. No. 87.

indicated by the donation of Tivadar Generich and his wife Ilona Szontágh by will, amounting to 40,000 crowns intended for the local hospital to be built, provided that “denominational orientation cannot be the guiding principle and an influential factor in either the admission of patients or the employment of staff in any way.”⁷⁰ After all, it was a national movement that helped to solve the quota complexity around elementary schools, namely the nationalization of elementary schools, which was discussed by the General Assembly in 1908. According to a written note from Szepes County school supervisor, the Roman Catholic and Jewish parishes adopted a position in favour of nationalization, but the Augustan Lutheran school board, i.e. the local German bourgeoisie opposed it⁷¹. The General Assembly warmly welcomed the establishment of state schools, especially if it was implemented without differences in titles and wealth. It did this in the hope that it would finally not have to struggle with the requests and petitions of certain schools. Nationalization was necessary because even then the schools of Késmárk were not able to admit about 200 students required to attend school. Késmárk continued to support the schools with 5,400 crowns, for which it collected an additional 5% tax from Roman Catholic and Jewish parents.⁷² After a long financial and organizational wrangling – the city became virtually insolvent by 1913 – teaching could begin in the new building in the fall of 1913, this time for all the classes at the same location.⁷³ However, the events of favouritism cited as examples above point to the fact that the local German elite was divided in terms of religious equality.

As for the language – minority data of the schools, the secondary schools of Késmárk are not suitable for examining the ethnic relations at first glance as on average only half or a third of the students, and in the case of the lyceum only a fifth or less were from Késmárk. In the case of simple ethnic studies, the local elementary schools are the most relevant. However, of the data of the three denominational schools, usable resources remained only in the case of one.⁷⁴ The table below lists the data of all available schools:

⁷⁰ MGA, 1913. No. 40. However, they themselves helped the Lutheran Church better as well; they supported the endowment foundation with 3,000 crowns and the poor foundation with 5,000 crowns, the Bread Fund of the Augustan Evangelical Lutheran Church with 5,000 crowns.

⁷¹ The Lutheran folk school dates back to the 16th century. Dávid Szakmári, i.e. Daniel Cornides, admitted children regardless of gender, age and religion at the age of 6, but vaccination certificates and certificates of baptism were required. The difference was measured materially in the 6 class elementary school, 4 gold in grades 1-4, 6 gold in grades 5-6, 8 gold for believers of a different religious conviction and 10 gold for strangers. The school had religiously mixed classes in 1907, German was the primary language of instruction, and of course, Hungarian was also taught to about 200 children.

⁷² MGA. 1908. No. 120. With the exception of two representatives, the decision was adopted.

⁷³ MGA. 1913. No. 176.

⁷⁴ From the second half of the 1900s, the city councilors sought to merge the local Jewish and Roman Catholic schools. The two churches nodded approval, the local Lutheran school board rejected it. Eventually, they were unified by 1910, and in 1913 a new, common school building was built.

Augustan Evangelical Folk School of Késmárk		Civic Girls' School	State Upper Commercial School	Augustan Evangelical Lyceum	Village Civic Boys' School	
Time of sample collection	1895-1916	1895-1916	1892-1916	1866-1917	1911-1917	
Number of sample collection	5+1	5+1	1+1	6+1	1+1	
Total number of students in the sample	1233	721	579	2132	281	
Native language						
	Hungarian	24,10%	26,80%	49,57%	40,62%	12,10%
	German	73,70%	70,87%	32,12%	46,81%	77,94%
	Slovak	1,10%	1,60%	18,13%	9,94%	3,91%
	Hungarians after 1914	19,80%	32,29%	56,02%	50,00%	8,81%
	1914 után					
Religion						
	Roman Catholic	14,44%	19,42%	28,84%	18,71%	26,33%
	Greek Catholic	0,81%	0,30%	1,38%	1.26%/2	0,36%
	Augustan Evangelical	68,61%	40,92%	26,08%	49,20%	31,67%
	Evangelical Reformed	1,30%	2,22%	9,84%	15,07%	2,49%
	Jewish	14,52%	37,31%	33,33%	14,44%	33,45%
	Greek Orthodox	0,00%	0,01%	0,35%	1.26%/2	0,00%
Students from Késmárk		85,64%	57,59%	9,28%	20,97%	44,26%
Students from Szepesség		na	na	22,16%	36,76%	33,61%
Students from Foreign		5,92%	39,94%	68,56%	39,85%	13,93%

Table 4 The ethnic and religious data of the schools in Késmárk in the era of Dualism

That religious affiliation was indeed relevant is a good indication that even in the 1890s only denominational affiliation was indicated in some schools in Késmárk. Thus, the data of the Lutheran folk school are the most relevant in the table, in which the proportion of urban students was on average 86%. According to this, about a quarter of the local German and Jewish elites already had Hungarian as their mother tongue.

Summary

What was the coexistence of the ethnicities of the city of Késmárk at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries like? Analysing the literature and the sources of the Szepesszombat and Lőcse Archives of the Eperjes Archives for Késmárk, we can state that religion was still a more important factor in the formation of the old urban elite than the nationality that can be ascertained through mother tongue and culture. In Késmárk, there were disagreements not only between the Jewish, but also between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran believers. In terms of ethnicity, a part of the Jewish population, along with the growing number of officials and businesses settled in the city, gradually became both a consumer and creator of Hungarian culture. The Hungarianizing German Lutheran elite were confronted with the Neolog Jews, who were increasingly endangering their economic interests and only agreed mostly on the issue of Hungarianization. By the end of the era, Hungarianization had slowly affected about a third of the population of the city of Késmárk. In addition to the religious division, this section of the Késmárk elite could see a new unifying force in the spread of Hungarian nationalism as the definition of a political nation here did not exclude the element of another language and ethnicity. In other words, its interpretation as a unified political nation in Késmárk does not mean a complete break with the multiculturalism and multilingualism of the multi-ethnic local urban community in the period under study. It is a fact that the Hungarian language gained ground relatively quickly in all areas, but German and partly Slovak were also present at the scenes of the city's public language use. The local, nationally self-conscious Slovak stratum was weak and small in number, and the Slovak minority in the Szepesség could not be said to be nationally self-conscious even at the end of the era.⁷⁵ The industrialization of the town attracted hundreds of Slovak workers and artisan families from the surrounding villages, thus the proportion of Slovaks was also able to increase. Besides, the German elite was also divided. The more active half showed a high degree of cooperation in fulfilling the aspirations for the Hungarian nation-state, and the other, the smaller half turned into passivity, mostly dealing with scientific publications in German. Thus, the Slovaks settling in the city could not choose between two adaptation strategies, their own and those similar to the Hungarian ones, but from three. Thus, most of the individuals of Slovak ethnicity origin chose – more precisely, it was not a conscious choice for most of them – to adhere to their Slovak roots.

⁷⁵ *Szepesi Lapok*, September 11, 1887 an article by József Vidonyi, about the Slovaks. “They are loyal, unassuming and they do not listen to the ringleaders as they can learn in their own language in their churches and elementary schools,” although in our cities [...] they could take more care to learn the language of the bread-giving citizens, they could adapt a little better to the circumstances.”

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