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“Put My Mother on the List Too!” – Reconstructing the Deportation Lists of the Szeged Jewish Community

Abstract: The Jewish Community of Szeged, Hungary has a rich cultural and historical heritage hearkening back two centuries. Like most Jewish cities in Europe, much of the Szeged Jewish population was destroyed in the Holocaust. Szeged was the main deportation centre for Csongrád County (southern Hungarian villages) and parts of current Northern Serbia (Bačka region). Most of the Szeged Jewish Communities’ archive stayed intact. Recently the documents of this archive were catalogued, indexed, and partly digitized in a two-year project, including deportation lists and lists of survivors. Currently, in an international project funded by the Jewish Claims Conference, all available records are compiled to build a database and to identify all the ca. 10,500 Jews who were deported from Szeged. The project aims to integrate genealogical and historical data culled from Yad Vashem as well as oral (the USC Shoah Foundation) and written testimonies (e.g., degob.org by the National Committee for Attending Deportees) to reconstruct the deportation events of May and June 1944. The paper aims at presenting and analyzing the fates of the Jewish deportees and returnees of the Holocaust in the transborder region around Szeged.

Introduction

In June 1944, five Jewish leaders were sitting in a shed in the brick factory of Szeged and, by German command, made various lists of their fellow Jews. Without knowing the purpose of the lists, they decided who ought to get a chance of survival.¹ After the war, the lists created by them got lost. In a research project in 2020/2021, an international research team led by the author of the current article tried to reconstruct the final list created by the Jewish leaders and the other transportation lists of Jews deported from Szeged in the last days of June 1944. The research was conducted based on archival material and testimonies, complemented by state-of-the-art data science. The current paper describes the

1 Lipót Löw, one of the compilers of the list: “Testimony”. Available at: <http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3618>. Last accessed: 06.09.2021.

events around the deportation and the process of the reconstruction of the deportation list(s).

Szeged's Jewish Community in Hungary was established more than two centuries ago and has a rich cultural and historical heritage. Similar to other Jewish populations in Europe, several Jewish citizens from Szeged were killed during the Holocaust. The Hungarian authorities deported 437,000 Hungarian Jews in less than two months,² and in many cases, no records have survived on the deportation, neither on the Hungarian side, nor at the destination, which in most cases was Auschwitz. The majority of the deported were killed within 24 hours upon arrival, with no records.³ As a major regional centre in Southern Hungary, the city of Szeged was the main deportation centre for the surrounding villages (Csongrád County) and parts of current Northern Serbia, the Bačka region, at that time under Hungarian occupation. Approximately 2,000 Jews living near Novi Sad in Bačka were ultimately transported to Auschwitz or Strasshof in April and May 1944 via Szeged. In June 1944, 8,617 people, including all the Jews of the surrounding cities and villages, were deported from Szeged in only three days.

The first train went to Auschwitz, with most victims being murdered. The second train was uncoupled, with half going to Auschwitz and half to Strasshof, a labor camp north of Vienna, while the third train was sent to Strasshof too, with most of the Jews surviving. A third destination was Budapest, for a small group consisting of 66 people, they too were transported with the third train. The setup of the three transports resulted in the fact that the Jewry of Szeged was after the war one of the most intact Jewish communities in the Hungarian countryside with an exceptionally high, an estimated 50 to 60 percent rate of survival, including babies, children, and elderly. In the case of Szeged, this also means that a relatively large number of testimonies and memoirs from people of all ages and backgrounds is available.

Several questions can be raised regarding both the process of the deportations and the reconstruction of the events: How were decisions made on who was to be transported with which train? How precise are the testimonies? Are the estimations of the number of deportees accurate? Were cases of birth and death kept track of in the assembly camps? What raised the chance of survival in the case of Szeged's Jewry? Is there a correlation between certain aspects,

2 Randolph L. Braham and Zoltán Tibori Szabó (eds.): *A magyarországi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, volume 1, Budapest: Park, 2007, 7–92.

3 Laurence Rees: *The Holocaust. A New History*, London: Viking, 2017, 392.

such as occupation and the rates of survival? Can the network of Szeged’s Jewry be reconstructed based on the documents related to the Holocaust?

The current article describes the methodology of an ongoing research project⁴ conducted in the Szeged Jewish Community (SzJC), describing how missing vital sources on the Holocaust such as the non-existing lists of deportation can be reconstructed based on different sources. These sources are the newly catalogued, indexed and partly digitized archives of the Szeged and Novi Sad Jewish Communities,⁵ the regional and national archives, the already existing background literature, oral and written testimonies from several sources, various Holocaust-related online databases as well as genealogical sites. The project aims to identify and recreate the names of those 10,600 Holocaust victims deported from or via Szeged⁶ and reconstruct who was deported with which train by using, merging, and reconciling every available source. The project also aims to find patterns and combine personal stories and big data to reconstruct the happenings of May and June 1944.

This article presents the methodology and the findings of this research focusing on the approximately 4,000 deportees belonging to the Szeged Jewish Community. The article aims to present innovative solutions for central methodological issues, provide a valuable framework for novel directions in Holocaust research,⁷ and describe how to use and, if needed, replace missing primary documents when reconstructing the history of the Holocaust.

4 The author wishes to thank the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (the Claims Conference) for making the research project possible.

5 The digitization project was made possible with the support of the Rothschild Foundation Hahnadiv Europe.

6 The extensive list of Jews deported from the Bačka region was recently published, see Alexander Bursać, Vladimir Todorović and Petar Đurđev (eds.): *Deportation of the Jews of Bačka in 1944*, Novi Sad/Ramat Gan: Archiv Vojvodine – Bar-Ilan University, the Sal Van Gelder Center for Holocaust Research & Instruction, 2021. Although some of the sources include male forced laborers, the scope of our research does not include collecting their names.

7 The author would like to express her gratitude to Mrs. János Horváth, née Terézia Löw, Mrs. George Gara, née Vera Pick, István Salamon and Katalin Varga, who recounted their memories of the deportation process in Szeged in June 1944.

Previous Research

The history of the deportations from Szeged has been researched mainly by Judit Molnár, partly from the view of the perpetrator.⁸ Júlia Dunainé Bognár together with Ferenc Kanyó has published the names of the victims of Szeged, which was supplemented by a second volume of names by Ferenc Kanyó in 2000.⁹ However, both books list victims of the Holocaust together with military and civilian casualties. The lists are not complete, nor do they contain the list of survivors. The books were composed based on the list of martyrs on the memorial hall of the Szeged New Synagogue, the death registers, and articles published in the *Délmagyar* newspaper from 1945 to 1948, where missing people were listed.¹⁰ Meanwhile, new documents have emerged, and it turned out that there are several mistakes in these registers (e.g., people with the same names were not identified, survivors were listed as being murdered, some victims' names are missing); thus, it is high time to revise these lists.

In 2004, the Hungarian Research group of Yad Vashem Archives, led by László Karsai and Judit Molnár, together with Kinga Frojimovics, the director of the Hungarian Section in Yad Vashem Archives at that time, had made a basic categorization and had also put onto microfilm the documents of the Szeged Jewish Community related to the Holocaust. A copy of these microfilms is in the Szeged Jewish Community, and another copy, together with a digitized copy of it, is available on site at Yad Vashem. However, none of these is publicly accessible through Yad Vashem's website.

8 Judit Molnár: *Zsidósors 1944-ben: az V. (szegedi) csendőrkerületben*, Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1995; idem.: *Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók: válogatott tanulmányok a magyar holokauszt történetéből*, Szeged: Szegedi Zsidó Hitközség, 2000; Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár: *Szeged – Strasshof – Szeged: Tények és emlékek a Bécsben és környékén "jégre tett" Szegedről deportáltakról. 1944–1947*, Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politológia Tanszék; Szegedi Magyar–Izraeli Baráti Társaság, 2021.

9 Volume 1: Júlia Dunainé Bognár and Ferenc Kanyó: *A második világháború Szegedi hősei és áldozatai. Tanulmányok Csongrád Megye XXIII.*, Szeged: Szeged Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996; volume 2: Ferenc Kanyó: *Szeged és környéke második világháborús hősei és áldozatai. Tanulmányok Csongrád Megye Történetéből. XXIII/A*, Szeged: Szeged Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 2000.

10 Dunainé Bognár and Kanyó, *Hősei és áldozatai*, 145–147.

The Events in Szeged in May and June 1944

One of the core focuses of our ongoing project is the reconstruction of the events and the circumstances under which the ghettoization list and the list of transports were created, even though or exactly because the latter has not survived. Who, how, and when compiled the list, and what aspects and factors were considered when deciding whom to include?

The German army occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944, and the fate of the Jews of Hungary has been finalized. In Szeged, on April 29, 1944, chief count Sándor Tukats instructed deputy mayor Béla Tóth to establish the city ghetto. The mayoral decree on the ghettoization of Jews was issued on May 17, and the ghettoization of the local Jews was planned to be started on May 22.¹¹ The ghetto consisted of designated buildings around the Old and the New Synagogue with the synagogues and the community building in its center.¹² At the request of the local Christian leaders, Jews who had converted to Christianity were accommodated in three buildings outside the ghetto.¹³

The public administration had no chance (and will) in Szeged to neglect the orders against the Jewish population since there was a German consulate in the city. In the nearby city of Hódmezővásárhely, deputy mayor Pál Beretzk interpreted the orders differently and decided not to send the local Jewry to the ghetto.¹⁴ This decision, of course, did not save them from deportation, but they were allowed to stay in their homes until then.

The evacuation of the ghetto started on June 16, 1944, when the Jews were taken to the territory of the Szeged brick factory, a transit ghetto. The Jewry of nearby settlements had been already taken there, thus there were altogether 8,617 people in the brick factory. Eventually, out of the 3,827 people sent to the ghetto, 3,095 Jews went to the brick factory. There were 737 people exempted from deportation for various reasons: 127 people had been interned in the meantime, 57 had died, 22 became exempted from the regulation, and four had been granted Swedish citizenship. In addition to them, there were also 505 converted Jews and 22 so-called prominent people who got an exemption from the interior

11 Randolph L. Braham: *A magyar holocaust*, volume 2, Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1988, 55.

12 Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive: “Report cards of the Jewish communities in the Hungarian countryside”. Available at: https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/ZsidoSzervezeteKliratai_1944_D_5_1/?pg=728&layout=s. Last accessed: 05.05.2021.

13 Molnár, Csendőrk, 79.

14 Imre Makó and János Szigeti: “Vihar és vesz közepette”. *A holokauszt hódmezővásárhelyi adatai*, Hódmezővásárhely: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 2014, 22.

minister.¹⁵ Among the 22 Jews exempted from deportation were university professors, high ranked military officers, and those regarded as counterrevolutionaries in the Aster Revolution of 1919.¹⁶ An exemption could only be granted to those who applied for it in writing, so conversion and intermarriage did not mean exemption automatically from ghettoization and deportation. In many cases, even filing a request to be considered as an exempt did not help either, because the decision on the requests depended on the Hungarian officials. In some cases, people under exemption were deported. In other cases, the approved decision on exemption was sent out after the deportation.¹⁷

The most important source for our research is the ghettoization list written in May 1944, consisting of 94 typewritten pages. It is with the help of this list that we can reconstruct the fate of the Szeged Jewry. Since the actual deportation list did not survive, the only way to reconstruct it is to compare testimonies and the ghettoization list. Thus, what happened to whom in those four to five weeks between the ghettoization and the deportation can be pieced together, and the process and aspects considered when people were chosen for the three transports become evident. Pap was the president of the Jewish Community in Szeged until the German occupation, after that one of the members of the Jewish council. His account describes how he was forced to compile the list:

Two weeks before moving in, a statement had to be made who is to move into the ghetto. I was in a terrible situation because a couple of medical doctors, university professors, and military exempts did not have to move to the ghetto, and I did not put them on the list. However, they [the Hungarian authorities] told me that according to another regulation, no one could be omitted [from being added to the list], so patients who had a surgical operation two days earlier and women who just gave birth were also brought into the ghetto.¹⁸ I fought a great fight not to take at least these patients [to the ghetto], they promised to leave them [in the hospital], but it seems the higher forum did not allow them to do so, and on the last day, they were also taken out to the brick factory.¹⁹

The ghettoization list mentioned and compiled by Pap contains all Jewish residents of Szeged who officially had an address in Szeged at that time. It does

¹⁵ Molnár, *Zsidósors*, 172.

¹⁶ Ferenc Kanyó: "A szegedi zsidóság holocaustja", in *Szeged*, June 1994, 46.

¹⁷ Molnár, *Csendőrök*, 129–130.

¹⁸ This claim is supported by Ilona Müller, a survivor from Szeged, quoted in an article in *Délmagyar.hu*. See Arany T. János, Dombai Tünde and Szabó C. Szilárd: "Ott álltunk anyaszült meztelenül". Available at: <https://www.delmagyar.hu/szeged-es-kornyeye/ott-alltunk-anyaszult-meztelenul-2528608>. Last accessed: 01.04.2021.

¹⁹ Róbert Pap: "Testimony". Available at: <http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3560>. Last accessed: 28.04.2021. Translation by the author.

not list the Jews living in the surrounding towns. In 2018, eight researchers, including the author of this article, copied the list into an excel spreadsheet in a few months so that it can be used for research purposes. The original document can be found at the office of the Jewish Community of Szeged, and the digitized and transcribed material was handed over to be made available on jewishgen.org, ushmm.org and the online archive of the Arolsen Archives.²⁰

The list includes the names of men and, in most cases, the married names of women, including previous names, place and date of birth, occupation, address before the ghettoization, and remarks, for example, concerning forced labor, exemption or 'mental problems'. Kathy Glatter from Gratz College did extensive research in 2019 to restore the identities of the married women on the list. With the help of the digitized marriage records available on the website macse.hu, a database of Hungarian vital records, she researched the maiden names of approximately 700 women.

The ghettoization list has 3,881 names altogether, including names that were added later in handwriting. 1,178 people were born in Szeged; 57 percent female and 43 percent male. Besides these data, there are pencil-marked notes on the papers. However, the meaning of these pencil marks (check marks, round shapes, and hyphens) has not been deciphered yet, nor do we know who made the notes when; thus, further analysis is necessary. The marks might have been added at the time of the move to the ghetto when compiling the transportation lists or upon the return of survivors to Szeged. Some names are not marked, some are marked twice, and others are marked with two different marks. Based on the use of the marks, it can be excluded that they indicate who survived and who died.

Although according to the filing jacket the list is referred to as a deportation list, it was written before the deportation at the time of ghettoization.²¹ The exact determination of the date of creation is possible through deaths of which the dates are known. The death certificates of Szeged are openly accessible on familysearch.org, a webpage displaying vital and other registers. Thus, Ilona Szabó, who had been added to the list, had already died on May 3, 1944. Her death was reported only on May 5, indicating that her name was added to the list before May 5 or that the Community was informed later about her death. Several other cases of death in May 1944 give us a hint on the dates. While Mrs Miksa Wertheimer's name appears on the list, her husband, Miksa Wertheimer, who

²⁰ USHMM: https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=49350. Last accessed: 12.09.2022.

²¹ On the misleading term deportation list (*Deportationsliste*), see the article by Christian Groh and Kim Dresel in this volume.

died on May 10, 1944, is omitted, indicating that the list was compiled after May 10 and thus only the name of the newly widowed Mrs Wertheimer was added. Szidónia Wilhelm's name is also included on the list, although she died on May 30, 1944. Thus, it can be concluded that the ghettoization list was written in about 20 days, between May 6 and May 30, and that circulation of the information was difficult at that time.

The Szeged Jews, at least those who were also obliged to wear a Jewish Star on their clothes, 3,827 people in total, had to move into the ghetto of the city within eight days starting from May 22, 1944, according to the order of vice mayor Béla Tóth, thus by then, the ghettoization list ought to have been ready. The Jews were allowed to bring 50 kilos of luggage and food for 14 days into the ghetto.²²

A recurring motif in the testimonies is that of the suicides committed on the night before the move to the brick factory and that on the same night many people converted to Roman Catholicism. Despite the rabbi's efforts of convincing his fellow Jews not to leave their religion last minute, in the end, he even had to assist them converting:

Around four AM, a pilgrimage started towards my apartment. Dozens of people came and asked for falsified certificates that they had converted in the past. In vain did I explain that it could not help them either. All I could do was hand out a stack of ministerial paper (250 pcs.), my fountain pen, and the seal of the rabbinate. I told them to write whatever they want to, and I will sign everything. Lest they believe that me refusing to give them a certificate will aggravate their fate. That morning I was taken out to the sports complex, from there to the brick factory. Later I heard that after that, the Christian priests indeed entered the [brick factory] and baptised indiscriminately.²³

²² Molnár, *Zsidósors*, 79–82.

²³ Rabbi Frenkel remembered the events and described them to his predecessor. See rabbi József Schindler in a letter quoted by Zsolt Markovics, rabbi of Szeged. Available at: <https://www.orzse.hu/resp/mtud2005-markovics-frenkeljeno.htm>. Last accessed: 22.03.2021. Translation by the author. See also József Schindler: "Megjegyzés a 'Zsidómisszió vagy zsidóüldözés' című cikkez", in *Theológiai Szemle*, 7/8, 1960, 243–244. The oral testimony of Vera Gara (née Pick) confirms the series of events. See Vera Gara: "Ottawa Holocaust Survivors Testimonial 2016". Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y62rEDkR-bw&t=575s>. Last accessed: 19.05.2021. See also Vera Gara: *Least Expected Heroes of the Holocaust*, Ottawa: Vera Gara (self-published), 2011, 8–9.

The Compilation of a List for the Third Transport

The first transport left Szeged on June 25, 1944, with 3,199 people. Based on the testimonies it seems, that certain groups were automatically included in that group, such as converts and ill (especially mentally ill people). Mrs. Ferenc Szendrei, née Zsuzsanna Német (born 1920 in Hódmezővásárhely) had to work as a nurse in the brick factory. Later she was transported to Auschwitz with the first transport. She gave an extensive account of both the days in the brick factory and how people for the first transport were selected. According to her, the patients treated in the temporary hospital-like institution in the brick factory, the poor and the mentally ill people were sent off with the first transport. She also claimed that Jews who had converted to Christianity too had been transported on June 25:

My two relatives and I were among those meant to be first transported from the brick factory. [...] As far as I could judge there, the first transport taken included those who converted to Christianity, the poor and those who did not have good relations with the members of the Jewish council. For this reason, my grandmother's siblings and family members did not get into the first transport because there was a doctor and a lawyer among them, and they were wealthy compared to us. [...] All of the patients treated in the “hospital” and all the mentally ill Jews in the brick factory were sorted into the first transport.²⁴

In the meantime, the selection of people to be transported to Strasshof also took place: On June 20, Argermayer²⁵, an SS-Hauptsturmführer appeared at the gate of the ghetto, called the five representatives of the communities, and handed them a letter written by Ernő Szilágyi, a leading member of the Zionist Rescue Committee (Va'ada). In the German-language letter, Szilágyi asked them to select 3,000 Jews from the people in the ghetto, prioritising the following: families with many children, families of laborers, relatives of prominent Jews.

Testimonies often describe even minor events and enable the reconstruction of the series of events. However, these first-hand accounts are often not precise, and in some cases, they originate from survivors who were children at the time of the Holocaust, yet their testimonies too are essential to find out about the details. The accounts of the personal experiences describe different aspects of the selection criteria and highlight the series of events uniquely. The testimonies reflect

²⁴ Makó and Szigeti, *Vihar és vész*, 127–130. Translation by the author.

²⁵ An alternative spelling is Angermayer. The Hauptsturmführer could not be identified and there are no official documents proving the existence of a German officer with this name who served in Szeged at that time. Molnár, *Zsidósors*, 147.

strategies of predominancy and how, when and based on what motivation pre-existing networks were used to ensure that a family's members would be added to the list of the third transport.

One of the essential sources in this genre is the written testimony of Lipót Löw (born 1889 in Szeged, died 1966 in Jerusalem), the son of chief rabbi Immánuel Löw, who was one of the five-membered commission preparing a list of notable people who were intended to be sent to Strasshof instead of Auschwitz. He gave an extensive account of how the original order of compiling a list of 3,000 names, supposed to be sent to Strasshof yet unbeknownst to the members of the commission, was changed. Once the list of 3,000 was ready but not yet made public, the German Hauptsturmführer limited the number to 2,400 without giving a reason:

Naturally, as committee members, we had no idea that the selection was a decision between life and death. We did not know either about the death camp in Auschwitz, that our brethren in Szeged would be transported there, or that the people on the list would be sent to Austria to chiefly benevolent people. [...] Apart from the Jews of Szeged primarily the Jews scattered around in the neighbouring towns and villages were gathered in the brick factory: from Makó, Hódmezővásárhely, Mindszent, Kistelek, Dunapataj, Kiszombor, Csanádpalota, Pitvaros, Magyarcsanak, Földeák, and Újkécske.²⁶

Attached to Szilágyi's letter was a list with the names of 160 prominent Jews in the Szeged ghetto, compiled in Budapest by the Zionist Rescue Committee. Instead of 160 prominent personalities, only 66 were placed in Kasztner's special group, and this was because the compilers of the list were not allowed to see the original instruction. Lipót Löw found out about this only later: "We noticed that when the captain had given us the order to prepare the list for the entrainment, he let us see the original instruction; also, the fact that he failed to give us the official dispatch and did not let us consult it either. We were sure that the dispatch listed even more names."²⁷

Teréz Löw, the granddaughter of chief rabbi Immánuel Löw, was one of the 66 prominent to be saved by Kasztner due to the merits of her grandfather. She has vivid memories of the transportation:

²⁶ Lipót Löw: "Testimony". Available at: <http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=3618>. Last accessed: 09.05.2021.

²⁷ Randolph L. Braham: *A népirtás politikája. A holocaust Magyarországon*², volume 2, Budapest: Belvárosi, 1997, 697–698. Lipót Löw lists only the heads of the family and the number of family members to be included, however, due to this fragmentary information it is difficult to reconstruct the 66 names. See Lipót Löw: "Testimony". Available at: <http://degob.org/index.php?showjk=3618>. Last accessed: 09.05.2021.

In the end, it was only one wagon of people, and then, all of us [were deported]. We arrived at the outskirts of Budapest, and then our wagon was opened; it was not sealed. And the train went on, we stayed there, and they put us in, I do not know anymore, probably in a bus, and so we got on the Aréna Road, to the synagogue where there were already people from Kolozsvár, and it turned out that those who were concentrated there were, in principle [...] meant to be sent to Palestine sometime.²⁸

Due to Immánuel Löw’s critical condition – he contracted bilateral pneumonia in the brick factory while lying for days on the floor²⁹ – the Löw family did not reach the Mandatory Palestine but stayed in Budapest where Immánuel Löw died a couple of weeks later.

József Radó, president of the Hódmezővásárhely Jewish Community, also gave an extensive account of how the list of the third transport was created. In August 1945, he described the same dilemmas that he as the leader of the Hódmezővásárhely Community had to face and why the five-member committee decided not to include converted people into the third transport. His testimony is also a vital source that reveals that after the arrival in Strasshof no difference was made between people who were chosen to be taken to Strasshof (third transport) and those who ended up in Strasshof by accident (second transport):

To compile the final third list, the captain decided that we could now stick to the original Szilágyi intentions, and the families would not have to be torn apart. We continued to work, dead exhausted. [...] The secrecy was over, people rushed, and everyone demanded from me that I add them to the list. There were 880 members of the Hódmezővásárhely community, and I could not admit more than 300 with any soul. I tried to keep to Szilágyi’s instructions. [...] It does not, therefore, include those who have left the community of faith and thereby have denied our community of destiny. [...] Anyway, we still had the hope that they would take me to Palestine, and those who flee their own Jewry would not be there.³⁰

Irma Bognár was deported with her baby girl and her mother to Strasshof. She described the experience that initially only her ten-months-old baby was supposed to be included on the list of exempted and the confusion that the announcement caused:

28 Mrs. János Horváth, née Terézia Löw, and Tamás Ungvári: “Interview”, in Máté Hidvégi and Tamás Ungvári: *Löw Immánuel Válogatott Művei*, Budapest: Scholar Kiadó, 2019, 280–291, here 281. Translation by the author.

29 Hidvégi Máté: “Löw Immánuel utolsó hónapjai”. Available at: <https://remeny.org/remeny/2015-4-szam/hidvegi-mate-low-immanuel-utolso-honapjai/>. Last accessed: 21.02.2021; László Marjanucz: “Löw Immánuel tragikus sorsa a háború végén. Adalékok a zsidó törvények szegedi végrehajtásához”, in *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis*, 114, 2002, 115–124, here 122.

30 Makó and Szigeti, Vihar és vész, 131–134. Translation by the author.

Then another announcement: whose parents are on the list can sign up; the same goes for the parents of the children listed. One must check in at the office at three in the afternoon. As soon as the news was heard, the well-informed rumoured that there were only a thousand and four hundred spots on the list. Those who were above the quota would stay behind. At the set hour, people were pushing, treading, beating each other in the hallway in front of the office door. [...] By the way, no one knew exactly what this list was, whether it was good to get on it, or maybe we would just seal our death sentence with it. I saw a good friend of ours in the office, engineer Szívós, who typed the names. I did not have enough time to stop at the window, and the crowd moved on. I shouted: Elemér! Put my mother on the list too!³¹

The final list with 2,400 names was read aloud on June 26, 1944, and whoever was not mentioned was included in the second transport, which left the next day.³²

Circulating information and keeping track of people must have had its challenges. The number of the population in the contemporary documents is based on daily roll calls, the so-called *Appelle*. People were counted every day. We do not have information on how the gendarmerie kept a trace of babies born in the ghetto, those who were sick and were unable to stand in the yard during the roll calls, and those who died.

Jenő Ligeti recalled that many babies were born in the brick factory: “a musty little tool chamber was set up to conduct the births. I do not have an accurate report, but the number of new Hungarian citizens born in the brick factory’s dust is about 60”.³³ The birth registers of 1944 cannot be researched according to the Hungarian archival law due to their strictly personal content and the fact that the vital registers include the sensitive data of living individuals. However, the number of newborn babies mentioned in the testimony seems to be an overstatement considering that the average number of live births in 1944 must have been around 19/1000. This rate would mean seven to eight births in two weeks and 9,000 people.³⁴

31 Irma Bognár: “*Adjanak hálát a sorsnak ...*” *Deportálásunk története*, Budapest: Sík Kiadó, 2004, 16–20. Translation by the author.

32 Lipót Löw: “Testimony”. Available at: <http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3618>. Last accessed: 15.12.2021.

33 Jenő Ligeti: “Testimony”. Available at: <http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3555>. Last accessed: 17.05.2021. Translation by the author.

34 Hungarian Central Statistical Office: “Népesség, népmozgalom (1900–)”. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_hosszu/h_wdsd001a.html. Last accessed: 15.12.2021.

The Calculation of Survivors and Victims

The primary aim of our research project is to trace back the individual fates of people who were deported from Szeged. This is only possible if the ghettoization list written in 1944 is compared with all possible sources to determine who survived the war and who vanished in the Holocaust. The data and the numbers in different both primary and secondary sources are contradicting.

The Szeged Jewish Community had 2,852 members in April 1944, according to a survey that the communities had to fill in.³⁵ Based on documents from 1944, Braham stated that 8,617 Jews had been concentrated in the Szeged ghetto, slightly less than half of whom originally lived in the city.³⁶ Between April and June 1944, more than 1,000 Jews must have moved to Szeged. The remaining approximately 4,000 Jews came from nearby settlements. They were transported in three days to three different locations: Auschwitz, Budapest and Strasshof.

The list of trains going through Kassa (today: Košice) is available online.³⁷ István Vrancsik, the commander of the Kassa train station, compiled this data. He made notes on the trains passing through Kassa and the number of deportees.³⁸ Vrancsik recorded every day at the station how many trains passed through the railway station, from which area of Hungary they came, and how many Jews the trains carried. According to him, the wagons were opened at the station, and people were counted and handed over to the German and Slovakian railway staff. The rail car doors were then resealed. Vrancsik's acquaintance, lawyer Gaskó, helped in preserving these records.³⁹ As such, this is one of the most important sources on the number of victims of the Hungarian Holocaust.

According to these lists, the first train that left Szeged on June 25 arrived in Kassa on the 26. It had 3,199 passengers, out of whom 2,747 were killed. The subsequent transport left on June 27 to Auschwitz, to which wagons from the Bács-

35 Kinga Frojimovics and József Schweitzer, *Magyarországi Zsidó Hitközségek – 1944. április. A Magyar Zsidók Központi Tanácsának összeírása a német hatóságok rendelkezése nyomán. Adattár*, vol. 1. Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1994, 636.

36 Randolph L. Braham, *A népiirtás politikája. A holocaust Magyarországon*², vol. 2. Budapest: Belvárosi, 1997, 694.

37 Quoted without reference to the archival number of the Yad Vashem Archive by Michael Honey, “Research Note on The Hungarian Holocaust”. Available at: <http://www.zchor.org/hungaria>. Last accessed: 15.12.2021.

38 Molnár, Csenedőörök, 193–194, footnote 37.

39 Gellért Ádám: “Csatári László és az 1944 – es kassai deportálások”, in *Betekintő*, 3, 2014, 209–246, here 209.

salmás ghetto were also attached. Thus, a total of over 6,000⁴⁰ people were sent to Auschwitz. Part of this train was disconnected at Felsőzsolca under circumstances still unclear, and 2,737 of its passengers were directed to Strasshof. The other part of the train passed through Kassa with 3,737 passengers, out of whom an estimated 3,332 did not survive.⁴¹ The numbers indicated have been calculated according to the Vrancsik list and Michael Honey's estimations.⁴² The third train, with 1,684 people which left Szeged on June 28, never reached Auschwitz since it was directed straight to Strasshof. In Budapest, a group of 66 people travelling in the last 'selected' car was disconnected. They were transported to the ghetto set up in the Aréna Road Synagogue. According to Braham, based on Lévai, 5,739 people in the second and third transports were sent to the Strasshof camp in Austria, and the majority survived the ordeal.⁴³

Since the data in various lists and databases are different and even contradicting, further research and analysis are necessary to combine the available data and the information gained from the testimonies to determine the exact number of deportees and survivors. Some of the below numbers refer to the number of Szeged Jewry only, while the higher numbers include Jews from other villages. The numbers below demonstrate the complexity and the problems involved when trying to reconstruct the exact data, both in regard of the total number of deportees and the other number referring only to Szeged.

Jewish population of Szeged in 1941 ⁴⁴	4161
Survey, number of members of the SzJC, April 1944 ⁴⁵	2852
Ghettoization list of Szeged, SzJC, May 1944	3881
Jews in the Szeged ghetto, May and June 1944 ⁴⁶	3827
Jews from Szeged in the brick factory ⁴⁷	3095

⁴⁰ Molnár, Csenedőörök, 194.

⁴¹ According to these data, the number of people in the second transport is $2,737 + 3,737 = 6,474$ people.

⁴² Michael Honey: "Research Notes on The Hungarian Holocaust". Available at: <http://www.zchor.org/hungaria>. Last accessed: 08.05.2021.

⁴³ Braham, Magyar Holocaust, volume 2, 57.

⁴⁴ "National census of 1941". Available at: https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/NEDA_1941_demogr_adatok_kozsegek/?pg=27&layout=s. Last accessed: 06.09.2021.

⁴⁵ Kinga Frojimovics and József Schweitzer: *Magyarországi Zsidó Hitközségek – 1944. április. A Magyar Zsidók Központi Tanácsának összeírása a német hatóságok rendelkezése nyomán. Adattár*, volume 1, Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1994, 636.

⁴⁶ Document nr. 847/1944, Csongrád County Archive, quoted by Molnár, Zsidósors, 93.

⁴⁷ Molnár, Zsidósors, 172.

Ferenczy report, June 29, 1944, total number of Jews in the brick factory ⁴⁸	8617
First train with Jews from Szeged and surrounding, June 25, 1944 ⁴⁹	3199
Second train leaving Szeged, calculated as per account of Lipót Löw ⁵⁰	3018
Second train with Jews from Szeged and Bácsalmás, June 27, 1944 ⁵¹	ca. 6000 or 6474
Third train with Jews from Szeged and surrounding, June 28, 1944 ⁵²	2400
Lévai, Jews deported from Szeged to Strasshof ⁵³	5739
List of survivors in Szeged, SzJC, number of index cards	1760
List of survivors, SzJC, number of survivors mentioned on the index cards	1894
List of survivors from Szeged, Arolsen Archives	1105
Names of the victims in the memorial hall of the Szeged New Synagogue ⁵⁴	1910
Szeged Jewish population in 1946 ⁵⁵	2332
Szeged Jewish population in 1949 ⁵⁶	2124

⁴⁸ Quoted in Braham, *Népiptás*, volume 2, 686.

⁴⁹ List by István Vrancsik quoted in Michael Honey: “Research Notes on the Hungarian Holocaust”. Available at: <http://www.zchor.org/hungaria>. Last accessed: 15.12.2021.

⁵⁰ Lipót Löw: “Testimony”. Available online: <http://www.degob.hu/index.php?showjk=3618>. Last accessed: 10.01.2022. The sum can be calculated as followed: 8,617 (number of Jews in the brick factory according to the Ferenczy report) minus 3199 (the number of people in the first transport) minus 2,400 (the number of people in the third transport) which equals 3,018.

⁵¹ See footnote 41 of the current article for the calculation.

⁵² Including Jews from the list of the third transport. Out of 2,400, 66 Jews were taken to Budapest.

⁵³ Jenő Lévai: *Zsidósors Magyarországon*. Budapest: Magyar Téka, 1948, 264, quoted in Braham, *Népiptás*, volume 2, 699.

⁵⁴ The names in the memorial hall include forced laborers, Jews born in Szeged but not deported from Szeged, relatives of Jews who restarted life in Szeged and wanted to commemorate the victims of their families even if they were deported from another village. There are also names on the memorial wall that were added by mistake, such as survivors.

⁵⁵ Braham, *Népiptás*, volume 2, 712, footnote 69.

⁵⁶ Theodore Lavi (ed.): *Pinkas Hakehillot Hungariya, Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities. Hungary*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976, 393.

Zombori, list of Jews from Szeged, killed between 1941 and 1945 ⁵⁷	2214
Dunainé Bognár/Kanyó ⁵⁸	2214+400 to 500
Kanyó ⁵⁹	2519

Lists of Survivors and the Creation of a Database

Several sources can be regarded as suitable for the reconstruction of the list of survivors from Szeged. Besides various correspondence and requests, there exist two extensive sets of data. One are the returning survivors' report cards kept at the Szeged Jewish Community (SzJC), consisting of 1,760 cards, transcribed into an excel table in 2019. The information on returning survivors was recorded at the railway station in the summer of 1945 upon arrival. Teréz Löw, aged 14 in 1945, remembers filling in the cards: "I was also among those who received people returning from deportation at the Szeged station, we asked them where they had been, with whom, whose fate they were aware of. I didn't know I was an employee of Degob [the abbreviation of *Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság*, eng.: National Committee for Attending Deportees]".⁶⁰

The transformation of the individual report cards of the Archive of the Szeged Jewish Community into a unified excel sheet included several challenges: the details of the relatives of the returning individuals were listed on the same cards. Thus, this information also had to be added to the database. Children did not have their own report cards, but their data was often listed on several documents – for example, on the report cards of both returning parents –, thus 1,760 cards hold information of altogether 1,894 people (i.e., 134 underaged children). Thus, several names occurred multiple times in the database, and these had to be merged. Individuals were assigned a unique ID code consisting

⁵⁷ István Zombori: *A szegedi zsidó polgárság emlékezete*, Szeged: Móra Ferenc Múzeum, 1990, 163–200. The list includes the names of men in forced labor and Zombori did not try to reconcile clashing data (e.g., people with the same names).

⁵⁸ Dunainé Bognár and Kanyó, *Hősei és áldozatai*, 146. Dunainé Bognár and Kanyó republished Zombori's list of 2,214 plus an additional "400–500 names" (*ibid.*, 146) of Jews who were born in Szeged but were not necessarily deported from Szeged. The list includes forced laborers, and names of Jews who committed suicide before the deportation.

⁵⁹ Kanyó, *Szeged és környéke*, 11. The list includes forced laborers, and names of Jews who committed suicide before the deportation.

⁶⁰ Email correspondence between the author and Mrs. János Horváth, née Teréz Löw, 19.05. 2021. Translation by the author. On the *Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság* (Degob), see the contribution by Johannes Meerwald in this volume.

of their names and year of birth. With the help of a data cleaning desktop app, data consistency was improved by faceting, clustering (e.g., measuring Levenshtein distances detecting minor differences between two unique ID codes), and sorting the information.

We tried to extract as much data as possible from these listings: the birth-date of listed relatives was not indicated, only their age (in years or, in the case of babies, in months). Nor was their fate written down straightforwardly, thus it had to be assumed that they shared the fate of their returning relatives, i.e., they had been deported on the same train to the exact location and returning from the same concentration camp. Assumed information is indicated as such in the database. The record cards also include information on those who have disappeared or died since the survivors listed all their relatives. In several cases, the same person was listed on many report cards, and duplicates had to be eliminated. The gender of individuals had to be added manually.

There is no date on the report cards when they were created. Based on the cases of surviving babies,⁶¹ for example, those born in the months before the deportation or even on the train at the time of the deportation, the age indicated at the time of the return, the date (year and month) of the creation of the cards can be deducted. Thus, the report cards were written after May 1945, most probably in June/July 1945. The cards function as a catalogue of people returning to Szeged, but the text does not state that they were also deported from Szeged.

The other list of survivors is kept at the Arolsen Archives, indicating the family name and the maiden name of the survivors, their year and place of birth, and their parents' names, as well as the address and occupation after the return.⁶² This list records only survivors, 1,105 people. The list is not dated, but the Central Tracing Bureau, the predecessor institution of the Arolsen Archives, received it in April 1946 from the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Budapest. No information is included on the circumstances of its compilation.

For the database, the ghettoization list and the two lists of returnees had to be merged. All data were put into separate columns, and typos were cleaned. The whole database was translated into English, including information on family relations and occupations. To enable merging for people registered on various lists, an individual ID has been created consisting of the first name and last name and the year of birth of individuals. Once the IDs were created, they were clustered

⁶¹ Due to the protection of privacy, we do not include the names of these individuals.

⁶² List of Jewish survivors in Szeged (Hungary), 15.04.1946, 3.1.1.3/78774448 – 78774504/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives. Available at: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/archive/3-1-1-3_676000/. Last accessed: 17.05.2021.

based on various algorithms, and duplicates were filtered with the help of a facet. The overlap between the ghettoization list and the list of survivors of the Arolsen Archives is 495 out of 3,881 names, and in the case of the report cards, the number is compared to the ghettoization list 1,011 out of 3,881. These ratios might be explained by the fact that not all survivors returned to Szeged and that there were survivors who were not included on the ghettoization list because they had lived in a small village close to Szeged but returned to Szeged and not to their respective hometown. The two lists of survivors were recorded at different times, and survivors might have migrated in this period. Further investigation and analysis are needed to find out about the reasons behind these numbers.

There are several additional data hidden in the lists of survivors. A rough ontology of primary social status can be compiled that reflects the social position with at least acceptable uncertainty and that enables following the changes by comparing the occupations to those indicated in the ghettoization list. The address of the individuals at the time of the ghettoization can refer to the financial situation, as there were neighbourhoods that were better off than others in Szeged. The current research can be the basis for developing a social network model, which can function as a sample network for the computerized exploration and analysis of the genealogy and network of Szeged's Jewry. Comparing social networks with the fate of individuals during the Holocaust, considering age, relationships, health and other factors, the research will be able to answer whether higher socio-economic status represented advantage or disadvantage in the changing historical situation, such as, for example, did a medical doctor or a lawyer have a higher or lower chance of survival than a seamstress or a merchant.

The research project combines historical-philological methodologies with methods from the digital humanities and data science. Naturally, when attempting not only to gather but to combine different data and information, as shown above, several challenges are to be overcome: the multitude of sources, the changes in the data, and the quality of the data are to be taken into consideration, before preparing for the in-depth analysis of the material. From the point of view of computer science, the multitude of sources must be overcome by the fusion of many sources containing fragmented and frequently uncertain data. The evolving field of graph databases helps deal with such unstructured large amounts of data by describing individual data elements and their relations from the historical records. Whenever a relation between two data can be detected, a whole network of relations can be revealed, which interconnects the knowledge fragments for example, the relations of neighbors (relation based on location), a particular profession, age groups, and the branches of families.

Modern analysis methods used in knowledge discovery for revealing the regularities in such networks are widely used in business analytics or social network-based pattern recovery. In the case of the Holocaust, these methods are promising as well. However, the entire historical context needs an active contribution of historians. An example of this is handling different family names. During the lifetime of the generations of Jews living at the time of the Holocaust, there was a wave of name changes, the originally Germanized surnames were changed to Hungarian-sounding ones, and this trend peaked at the end of the 1930s under the government of Gyula Gömbös. Members of the same family would even use different Hungarian surnames.

Similarly, Jewish people had two different names, one for civilian use and one as their Hebrew names. Depending on the level of observance, they preferred to use one of these. In the case of the primarily Orthodox Jewish community of Makó, the Jews preferred using their Jewish names instead of the civil ones. The task of a historian obviously includes dealing with all these issues, such as tracing and recording alternative name forms and name modifications and other changes that can occur during a lifetime, and the tools of information technology can aid traceability.

Conclusion

The core aim of the current research is to create the most extensive list of individuals who were deported through Szeged with their numeric and demographic information and allow a possibility to analyze the material in-depth and allow for further analyses. One potential outcome is a social network model that can direct genealogy-based social research as a sample network. Comparing this with the fate of individuals during the Holocaust, considering the age and health-related factors, we might be able to answer whether the higher socio-economic status represented any advantage in the changing historical situation and how it affected the chance of survival.

Several decisions were made even last minute before the deportation. Birth and death cases occurred in the ghetto and the transit camp and on the train, which were not tracked in all cases. Connections, previously existing networks, social status, and employment by the Jewish communities significantly raised the chances of survival. Despite the chaos, individuals who found a way to be included on the third transportation list in the Szeged transit ghetto turned out to have a 75 percent chance of survival. Most people on the third transport must have known each other either through family connections or through

other networks. Many aspects related to the reconstructed transportation lists need further investigation and analysis.

A fine granular analysis can target how individuals' social and economic status influenced their fate during the Holocaust. This needs the fusion of the information hidden in different data repositories and searching for typical patterns along the timeline and the level of social-economic embedding. Digital historical fine granular database investigation is a continuous process of information fusion, ordering, clustering, and finding contradictions or nontrivial phenomena necessitating further information, thus triggering further research, data collection and conclusions based on the new sources and once again triggering new research.