

Reform Era (1825-48)

A political era in Hungarian history, during which Hungary distanced itself from Habsburg rule. This period with the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and ended with the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution for independence.

Neo-Absolutism (1849-67)

Absolutist Austrian rule begins after Hungary's failed attempt to win independence.

Dualist Monarchy (1867-1914)

After the Compromise, Hungary enjoys increased autonomy; culture flourishes, especially around the fin de siècle.

1840

Mór Ballagi publishes *A zsidókról* ("On Jews"), the first book written in the Hungarian language by a Jewish author. It outlines Jewish history and religion for a Hungarian readership.

1844

The **Magyarization Society** is founded by Jewish medical students at Pest University to promote the assimilation of Jews into Hungarian culture via language courses and a Hungarian-language library. The society also aims to enrich Hungarian literature with the works of Jewish writers.

1848

On March 15, 1848, Hungary begins its **War of Independence** against Austrian rule. Many Jews fervently participate, but are later excluded from the revolutionary efforts; anti-Semitic violence breaks out. The revolution is quashed in 1849.

The **First Hungarian Jewish Calendar & Almanac** becomes the first Hungarian text to solely publish works written by Jews.

1867

The **Great Compromise** initiates the Austro-Hungarian Empire, crowning Franz József King of Hungary and granting Hungary increased autonomy.

1868

In the **1868 Emancipation**, Jews gain full citizenship. Popular humor magazine *Borsszem Jankó* launches, run by the Jewish editor Adolf Ágai. Jewish Budapesters constitute much of its readership.

1882

Jewish residents of the Hungarian village **Tiszaeszlár** are accused of 'ritual murder' after a Christian girl goes missing. Anti-Semitic uprisings and blood libel cases sweep across Eastern/Central Europe.

Egyenlőség ("Equality") is founded as a weekly Hungarian-language Jewish political paper after the Tiszaeszlár blood libel.

1884

Like *Egyenlőség*, the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* ("Hungarian Jewish Review") launches in the wake of the Tiszaeszlár blood libel. It becomes the predominant journal for Jewish studies.

1890

Poet József Kiss founds the modern literary magazine *A hét* ("The Week") and co-edits the publication with his brother-in-law Tamás Kóbor (author of *Ki a gettóból*) and Emil Makai. Both Ernő Osvát and Ignóty (born Hugo Veigelsburg) are editors at *A hét* before founding *Nyugat*, the most esteemed literary magazine in 20th-century Hungary.

1895

By the **Law of Reception** (Act 42) in Parliament, Judaism officially becomes a "received" religion, opening the door for state benefits, such as the official right to intermarry.

The **Israelite Hungarian Literary Society** (IMIT) is formed. As part of its aim to invigorate cultural life, IMIT starts publishing yearbooks of Jewish history, literature and criticism, and academic texts.

1908

As Hungary's preeminent literary magazine, *Nyugat* seeds a generation of distinguished Hungarian writers now known as the "Nyugat generation." The

magazine bore no official relationship to Judaism, though multiple founding editors were Jewish, as was a large percentage of its readership.

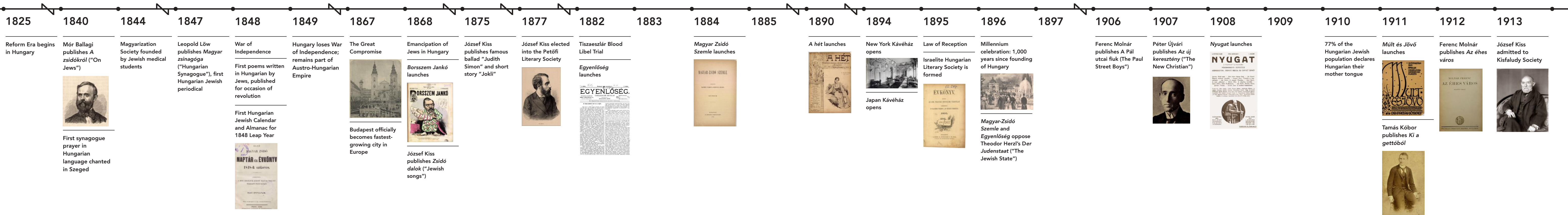
1911

Múlt és Jövő launches as a Jewish literary/cultural publication with a Zionist bent, edited by József Patai.

Tamás Kóbor publishes *Ki a gettóból*, about life in the proverbial Jewish ghetto in Budapest (the VII.).

1912

Ferenc Molnár's novel *Az éhes város* tells the satirical story of a money-poor Jewish teenager who marries an American heiress, becoming phenomenally wealthy.



Timeline of Hungarian Jewish Literature

Text: Stephanie Newman © 2024

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World War I (1914-18)

Part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary counts itself among the Central Powers and loses the war.

Revolution & Upheaval (1918-19)

At the dusk of WWI, Hungarian social democrats stage the Aster Revolution in October 1918. A more brutal Red Terror follows. Many Jews participate as revolutionaries and are later persecuted during the White Terror in 1919, prompting a wave of emigration.

Horthy Era (1920-44)

Miklós Horthy becomes Regent of Hungary. The country contends with territorial loss and damage from World War I. In this era of conservatism and nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia rise.

1914

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated, leading to the outbreak of **World War I**. This marks the end of Hungary's Dualist Era and the cultural Golden Age to which the fin-de-siècle gave rise.

1917

In a seismic event for the Jewish literary community, sociological journal *A huszadik század* puts out a survey to readers, asking whether there still exists a **"Jewish question"** in Hungary. A subsequent issue shares responses from a range of readers, both Jewish and not.

1918-19

Over 1918-19, a series of uprisings leads to the **Aster Revolution** and subsequent founding of the Hungarian Communist Party, which rules four months known as the **Red Terror**.

In 1919, the conservative **White Terror** backlash begins, prompting a wave of emigration. The literary exodus includes Lajos Hatvany, Lajos Biró, Illés Kaczer, György Lukács, Anna Lesznai, and many others.

1920

Hungary is reduced to one-third its former size as part of the peace treaty signed by Allied powers after WWI and must also pay reparations.

The **Numerus Clausus** law is passed, limiting the ratio of Jewish students who can enroll in university in Hungary to 6%. (In 1910, enrollment was 15%).

1921

While in Vienna in exile, Lajos Biró publishes *The Jews of Bazin*, about the blood libel case in 1529 near Pressburg, where Jews were burned at stake.

1927

The first volume of *Urak és Emberek* ("Lords and Men") traces the generations of a wealthy Jewish family, shining light on the culture of bourgeois Budapest Jews and the difficulties of assimilation.

1929

Péter Újvári publishes the *Magyar-Zsidó Lexikon* as an encyclopedia of Hungarian Jewish culture. Many writers, reticent to be labeled as Jewish or affiliated with Judaism, declined to participate.

András Komor publishes *Fischmann S. utódai* ("The Descendants of S. Fischmann"), a novel about Jewish siblings who inherit their mother's village store. Critic Zsigmond Móricz's 1930 review of the book in *Nyugat* rekindles debates on Hungarian Jewish literature.

1935-37

Károly Pap's *Zsidó sebek és bűnök* ("Jewish Sins & Wounds") causes controversy for its rejection of both Zionism and assimilation. Two years later, he publishes

Azarel, which chronicles a Jewish grandfather-father-son triad in early 20th-century Hungary.

1938-39

Hungary passes the first of several anti-Jewish laws that curtail equal rights for Jewish citizens, define Jews as a race, forbid intermarriage, and limit economic participation. Aladár Komlós, literary critic and long-time reviewer of Hungarian Jewish literature, becomes editor of *Ararát*, a journal of Jewish intellectuals.

World War II is declared. Hungary allies with Germany.

1941-43

The third Jewish law is passed. The 1895 Law of Reception is invalidated.

1944 and after

Germany invades its ally Hungary in March 1944. 565,000 Hungarian Jews are murdered. Most are deported to Auschwitz and immediately gassed. Others, including renowned poet **Miklós Radnóti**, die on death marches. (In 1946, Radnóti's final poems are discovered in the pocket of his corpse.)

Nyugat poet Ernő Szép returns from forced labor and writes *Emberszag* ("The Smell of Humans"). Journalist Béla Zsolt, forced laborer and Nagyvárad ghetto survivor, writes his memoir *Kilenc koffer* ("Nine Suitcases").

Hungary becomes part of the Soviet bloc. Using the word 'Jewish' is now taboo. For decades, this history suffocates under a veil of silence.

