

**Kaposi, Zoltán and József Vonyó, eds. 2022. *Pécs története VI: Iparosodás – Polgárosodás: Pécs a Dualizmus korában* (The History of Pécs VI: The Growth of Industry and the Middle Classes: Pécs in the Era of Dualism). Pécs: Pécs Története Alapítvány and Kronosz Kiadó. 559 pp. Illus.**

**Reviewed by George Deák<sup>1</sup>, Associate of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University**

Histories of particular Hungarian cities can be of interest to a broad audience, especially when they are of such a beautiful city as Pécs, a city that has preserved much of its long history in its physical environment. Such works can connect local residents and those who hail from there to their roots. They are also important to historians of Hungary as a whole because they illustrate national trends as they operated in a specific place. This volume covers the history of the city from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and ends with the occupation of the city by Serbian forces at the Monarchy's dissolution in November 1918. While reading it, I had many "aha" moments about the history that shaped the life of my ancestors, German speaking Jews who moved to the city sometime at the beginning of this period and started to leave the country only after the period covered here. As a historian, I also found the illustration of general trends of Hungarian history illuminating. In the case of the history of relations between Jews and Christians in the city, a topic that particularly interests me, I was pleased to see the level of detail given, though I wished that the analysis had gone a bit deeper than it does. Admittedly, this is much to ask in a book of such broad scope.

This volume is the fourth to appear in what is planned to be an eight-volume series covering the history of Pécs from ancient times to the end of communism in 1990. The volumes are not appearing in chronological order, but rather in the order in which primary and secondary sources become available so that a rich, fact-filled summary can be compiled. The preparatory work has been going on since the early 1990s by a team of scholars, their students, local archivists, and museologists. The two editors of this volume, József Vonyó, a political historian and former head of the department of history at the University of Pécs (also the general editor of the series), and Zoltán Kaposi, a specialist in modern economic and social history in the economics department of the same university, are to be commended, as are the other five authors who contributed chapters. The book is structured along disciplinary lines, starting with city administration and politics (by Imre Gábor Nagy); economic development (Kaposi); social history (Kaposi); religious institutions and denominations (Norbert Csibi); education (Andrea

---

<sup>1</sup> deakgy62@gmail.com



Pásztor); cultural life and the arts, holidays and “everyday life” (Mónika Pilkhoffer); and changes in the built environment (Pilkhoffer). Each author is a specialist in their area. Three final chapters, written jointly by several contributors, including Éva Szlanyinka, break with this structure and present certain “momentous” events that get increasingly momentous: they proceed from the visits of Emperor Francis Joseph to the nationwide industrial fair held in 1907 and a contentious conference on adult education that was held in Pécs in the same year, to the way the city experienced World War I.

The era of the Dual Monarchy is often thought of as the Golden Age of late modern Hungarian history. Factories were formed or expanded in branches of industry such as ceramics (Zsolnai Works), leather goods (e.g., Hamerli Glove Works), metalworks, church organs (Angster), and breweries, which replaced to a large extent the city’s wine production, ruined by the phylloxera epidemic that made its way to Pécs in the mid 1880s (111). Coal mining expanded in the northeastern outskirts of the city in the otherwise bucolic Mecsek mountain range. Those mountains, situated north of the city, had earlier been a barrier to commerce with Pest and much of the country, thus orienting Pécs toward the Balkans and the Adriatic, but this relative isolation was overcome during the period with the expansion of the railroad that skirted the mountains. Banking, financial services, commerce, and education expanded, as did public administration. All these provided opportunities for the growth of an urban population from industrial workers to various strata of the middle class.

But the creative destruction of capitalism brought conflicts in its wake, which in this book’s telling are seen as growing pains. Conflicts and accommodations marked relations between property owners and the growing labor force, especially the miners, among whom the Social Democratic Party and its labor unions made great strides. The Catholic Church made serious efforts to counter that party by forming Christian Socialist unions (256). The Danube Steam Ship Company, which owned the coal mines, attracted workers from outside the region, mostly from the Czech lands and Krajina, and built housing, schools, and churches. Miners’ salaries were high compared to that of other local industrial workers (226). Strikes did occur, some with bloodshed. They led to improved working conditions and greater social security without causing serious problems for the enterprises. Pécs was the first city in Hungary where a Social Democrat, the local party secretary, József Szabó, won a seat on the city council, in 1909, despite the restrictive suffrage that excluded the working class. Two other Social Democrats were soon elected, in 1911 (36).

The town’s traditional elites at the beginning of the period were the Catholic high clergy and ethnically German industrial entrepreneurs and artisans. Many of the latter were displaced by the new industries, some of which, though not the majority, were owned by Jews. The town excluded Jews until the early parts of the nineteenth century but was forced to admit them in the period of absolutist Austrian rule that followed the failed war of independence of 1848/49. Jews gained full citizenship in Hungary in 1867. By 1869, at 6.8 percent, Jews made up the largest non-Catholic religious denomination in the city of 23,863 (18). Their share (but not absolute number) reached a peak of 9.17 percent in 1890, at 3,124 souls (275). Jews held nearly half the jobs in banking and commerce in 1910 (204). Conflicts between the Christian population and Jews accompanied this growth, though, as the book points out, the integration of Jews into the ruling elite occurred, for the most part, peacefully (207). The wealthiest Jews automatically gained entrance to the city council as “virilists,” those who paid the most taxes. Those just below them in income as well as those in professions like law and medicine also had suffrage, so they

could elect their coreligionists. Jews, who had immigrated mostly from Moravia, assimilated to the Hungarian language and many aspects of culture, perhaps because after 1867 that culture provided avenues for advancement. This was equally true, or more so, for other ethnic groups, for example, South Slavs, until the integration was undone by World War I.

A good history text always prompts further questions. Personally, I would have liked to have seen a fuller analysis of the ways that anti-Semitism was retained in the town so that one could better understand not only this period but the one that followed World War I and culminated in 1944, when most residents of Pécs stood by as their Jewish neighbors were deported to Auschwitz. Incidents described in several chapters make clear that anti-Semitism was present in the city in the era of the Dual Monarchy. Even before, in 1848, the government had to intervene to quell a bout of anti-Semitic *hangulat* (sentiment) (276). In the section on the police force, we learn that in 1882, a department for store guards had to be set up in response to atrocities committed against Jewish merchants (52). In 1896, in a section on parliamentary elections, we read that Jews, who tended to vote for the governing Liberal Party, were blamed by adherents of the Independence Party for their narrow defeat. A rampage ensued against Jewish-owned stores. It took the deployment of two regiments—that is, more than a thousand soldiers—to restore order (90).

Anti-Semitism intensified toward the end of World War I, when food shortages were blamed on Jewish merchants. Were these outbursts of anti-Semitism driven by certain institutions? What role did the local or national press play? Did the Catholic Church, a major force in the town, help or hinder the spread of such sentiments through its schools, churches, and many social institutions? The chapter on religion, written by Norbert Csibi, a lecturer at the University of Pécs, has a section on the history of the Jews during the period. That would have been a good place to delve more deeply into the topic of anti-Semitism. For example, Csibi tells us that Bishop Nándor Dulánszky (1829–1896), the city’s bishop from 1877 to 1896, placed great emphasis on tolerance in his relationships with the leaders of other religions, including the chief rabbi of Pécs, Dr. Sándor Kohut. (254). Csibi makes no such statement about other bishops, including Gyula Zichy (1871–1942), the city’s bishop from 1905 to 1926. In a section, entitled “The Pécs Great Conference of Catholics in 1907,” Csibi informs us that Bishop Zichy invited Ottokár Prohászka (1858–1927), bishop of Székesfehérvár, to hold a mass in the Cathedral of Pécs in 1907. He does not tell us that Prohászka was an outspoken anti-Semitic leader of the fight against the reception of the Jewish, officially, Israelite religion. (The “Reception Law,” Act 45 of 1895, provided Hungary’s Israelite communities with the protection of the state. Its most controversial provision made it possible for Israelites and Christians to intermarry and for Christians to convert to Judaism.) One immediate result of the Catholic Conference in Pécs in 1907 was the publication of the weekly *Új Lap* (New Paper) in the city (423). The book leaves unmentioned the fact that this publication was explicitly anti-Semitic. (See for example the pejoratively titled article “*Jön a Samu*” (Here comes Sam) on page 3 of the November 3, 1907, issue.)

These criticisms should not obscure the great value of this fact-filled, often insightful, handsome publication. We anticipate the future volumes of the series.