

THE MAIN POINTS OF THE PhD THESIS

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THE HISTORY OF THE JÓBA PRINTER FAMILY FROM 1879 TO 1944

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1. The aim of the research, choice of subject

Nowadays, at the time of the imaginary or real crisis of the Gutenberg-galaxy, local history records focus more and more on the earlier history of the printed mode of communication. In Nyíregyháza the foundation of the first printing offices was in line with the national tendency, through which between 1866 and 1900 the number of local printing offices sextupled and the printing industry was modernized in Hungary. This large scale development was induced by the freedom of industry and the press as well as the systematically working public education system based on compulsory education.

Among the basic conditions of the foundation of printing offices were the economic-, social-, and cultural conditions of the given settlement as they insured the cost of living for the printer and necessitated the establishment of printing offices. In Szabolcs County the industrial development got behind from the national average due to the strong agrarian nature of the territory. In this region, thank to its number of inhabitants, economic situation and mostly transport conditions, Nyíregyháza stood out and became the administrative, traffic, craftsmanship, cultural centre, then from 1876 the administrative seat of the county.

The reason for the choice of this subject: though the history of our town has been compiled by many authors, nevertheless, very little has been said about its printing industry so far. **I was motivated by** this absence related to cultural history. This way **the aim of my work** - which fits into the reviving research of the history of printing offices – is to explore when and how the first typographical workshops were established in Nyíregyháza, which one was the most significant among them and how their fate shaped until the nationalization. The social and industrial modernization

brought to Nyíregyháza the appearance of local newspapers, and planted the origins of new types of administrative printed products. Beyond these, the liveliness of the local social and cultural aspiration required the preparation of isolate publications in great numbers, for which more and more printing offices were required.

In my work I would like to prove the hypothesis that during the examined period the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office was the most significant, technically the most well-equipped, and the largest typographic enterprise of Nyíregyháza, where the most printed products were made. Since this hypothesis cannot be answered without making comparison with the other local printing presses, I examined all the offices of Nyíregyháza which operated during the period in question. Please refer to the appendix for the result of this research. The comparison points out the efforts and difficulties of the Jóba firm and helps us understand the manifestation of local and interbranch rivalry.

My topic determinates the time limits of the analysed period as well. **On the one hand, my aim was** to look over the first century of the printing industry in Nyíregyháza – starting from 1866, the time of the first printer enterprise until 1949, the nationalization of the last three printing offices in private ownership – and to analyse the history of its development. **On the other hand,** by examining the characteristics of the industrial, cultural, press, political, administrative, etc. history of the period, I wanted to reveal the role of the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office in the history of the city's printing industry, giving a true picture of the history of this three generations enterprise that lasted from 1879 to 1944.

I also examined the current economic, social, political events of the period. The line starts with the creation of the necessary conditions that helped the foundation of printing offices in Nyíregyháza, such as the freedom of industry and press, and the development of middle-class status in a certain

level (the existence of offices that required printed products, the growing need for publications etc.), without which the printing houses could not have developed and remained in Nyíregyháza.

I also refer to the requirements the development of the printing technology meant for the printer entrepreneurs of the era, and how they could keep pace with these. On the basis of the available literature I intend to give an overview of the technical standard of these enterprises and also on the standard of living they could provide for their owners. I also mention the effect of the First World War, the uprisings, the Romanian military occupation, the economic depression and then the Second World War, on the printing offices of Nyíregyháza. Finally, I will depict the history of the typographical workshops after 1945 up until their state ownership. I also mention several contemporary legislative acts and measures concerning the printing industry and the printing products (industry acts, press acts, acts and measures of government for deposit copy) and how these were executed on local levels.

The thesis first summarises the circumstances of the foundation of the Jóba company. In the beginning, Elek Jóba, the first lead the little office as a one of the owners. However, it did not take long until he became the ultimate owner of the little office, which developed rapidly into the biggest printing and publishing company of the town.

The company flourished under the leadership of the founder's son, Elek Jóba, the second from 1906 until the end of the First World War. During this decade the company's activities peaked in the most important fields of the printing business. The Jóba family printed more than thirty newspapers and periodicals for years, - apart from their own newspaper, *Nyírvidék*, which is quite a remarkable achievement from a local periodical with its fifty years of existence. Apart from this, they printed nearly five hundred volumes of literary and scientific books, liturgical works, school reports, textbooks,

deputy-lieutenant's reports and other official printed matters. For decades they provided a wide range of forms of public administration to ease the arrangement of cases at the civil authorities in almost all the settlements of Szabolcs County. Elek Jóba, the second equipped his printing office with modern printing machines which met the requirements of the era, and also, he had a modern headquarter built to live up to the printing house of excellent quality.

Finally, I follow the history of the company after the early death of Elek Jóba, the second, when it was lead by his widow and the professional master of the firm between 1918–1933. It was at this time, when the printer dynasty began to decline and the printing office was slowly closing down. After this, I examine the efforts Elek Jóba, the third made to save the enterprise and I also intend to depict his life and publishing activity.

In the course of my research I tried to find the answer for the following questions:

1. How could the local printing offices satisfy the increased demand caused by the development of the middle-class?
2. How did the development of printing manifest in a country town?
3. Which were the most outstanding printing offices with respect to the content, quality and quantity of their products?
4. I intend to either deny or to back up the hypothesis that the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office stood out as the most significant one in Nyíregyháza in the examined era.

My aim was not to present the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office with a one-sided view focusing only on its history, but I also tried to compare its work, development and decline with

other offices in different settlements of the country in the light of the events in the national printing industry.

2. Resources used, methods employed

During the course of my work, I mainly utilized the data available in primary resources, library documents and some privately owned documents which survived. Beside the primary literature of pecuniary nature, I could also rely on rich secondary resources.

The mere fact that these manuscripts were spread in the resources of archives and often they were incomplete created an obstacle to my work. For example, in the Hungarian National Archives there are no data about the Jóba Printing Office. In the Archives Hajdú-Bihar County I could have a look on the records of the Local Chamber of Trade and Industry of Debrecen from the period between 1866 and 1879 where I gained insight to the data concerning the foundation of the Jóba Printing Office.

I found the widest range of materials in the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. The recordings of Nyíregyháza's mayor from the period between 1861 and 1950 contain quite a few details concerning the history of the printing industry: foundation of printing offices, documentation about starting and finishing publications, different acts, decrees, reports and accounts, open tenders between printing office owners, industry inspectors' reports about security controls within the enterprise, etc. The documentation of Orphan's Court in Nyíregyháza from the period between 1873 and 1944 proved to be important as well. Due to a family tragedy in August, 1918 the early death of Elek Jóba, the second three young children were left orphaned and up until October, 1931 when the youngest child has been declared adult, all the events affecting the family business were recorded in the materials of the Orphan's Court as well. I

found a lot of useful information concerning the printers and press of the town in the official documentation between 1863 – 1909 of the industrial chamber of Nyíregyháza and also in the collections of professional certificates from the period between 1884 and 1989. Furthermore, the records of the first deputy-lieutenant of Szabolcs County in the period between 1862 and 1871, and those of the Legal Authority Committee from the period between 1872 and 1950 quite often refer to the newspapers and printing press of Nyíregyháza. The copies of the National Register of Births of Szabolcs County between 1895 and 2001 were much of a help in revealing the dates of birth and death of the individuals referred to in this thesis and also helped in finding the relationship between different relatives.

A very important source of my work was the documents in possession of the Jóba family and the oral presentations of Elek Jóba, the fourth, because they provided additional information concerning the lives of Elek Jóba, the first and that of the third.

I also attempted to make use of the historical sources (newspapers, products of the Jóba Printing Press) which could be found in the Collection of Local History of the Zsigmond Móricz County and City Library, and in the Collection of Local History of the Central Library and Professional Information Centre of the College of Nyíregyháza. I studied the different retrospective bibliographical collections: *Hungarian Bibliography*, the press bibliography of county by Ms Géza László which is rich in data and the *Collection of School Reports from Szabolcs County* edited by her as well. All these added to the completeness of the presentation relating to the bibliography about the products of the Jóba Printing Office.

3. The results of the research

In my work I follow the short century of the printing history of Nyíregyháza between 1866, when the first press was founded until the nationalization in 1949. During this era a total of 48 printing offices (out of which 42 were privately owned) operated in the city. Out of these 31 functioned parallel with the independently registered Jóba Printing Office (between 1884 and 1933). The professional standard of Nyíregyháza's printing offices was more or less on a level equal to the local standard of the age, and could entirely satisfy the increased demands of the developing city with books, periodicals and printed products or forms used in public administration and as such, they fulfilled their aim.

The first printing office of Nyíregyháza operated between 1866 and 1877, led by Sándor Dobay. The second one was founded by Károly Mauer in the summer of 1874, and at the end of 1889 it was still in business. Elek Jóba and János Piringer founded Nyíregyháza's third private printing office in October, 1879 under the name of Piringer and Jóba Co. Both of the owners started an individual business in April, 1884. During the period between 1883 and 1892 the printing office of Mr and Mrs Mikecz also worked under the name of „Ébredjünk”. Between 1892 and 1893, József Kalina, and from 1897 to 1904 Mór Nagy and his wife also led a press in the city. Between 1899 and 1901 Ede Sebők's Bessenyei printing press operated in the city, too.

Sándor Tóth and Lajos Holik's workshop operated between 1903 and 1912. Later on, Ignác Klawter founded Nyíregyháza's second biggest and second longest living (40 years) press in 1904. The descendent of the Piringer Printing Press was lead by the Borbély brothers between 1906 and 1919.

From the 1910s the number of permanently working presses was continually increasing. If we set the criterion of

the permanent existence for two years, then this requirement was fulfilled by five presses in the 1910s, namely the Jóba, Klafter, Sándor Tóth, Borbély, „Szabolcsvármegye” (1910–1917) printing offices in the order of their date of foundation.

In the 1920 the number of workshops increased to seven. The most important ones of the 1910s still existed, for example Jóba and Klafter, but five new ones could survive the tough times, these were the printing offices of József Nagy (1920–1945), the Hungária Printing Office (1921–1926), the Bocskay Printing Shop (1925–1929) and the Merkur Printing House (1923–1928).

In the 1930s, on average eight typographical workshops existed permanently in the city. The private enterprises of Jenő Heiszler (worked until 1939) and Jenő Nágler (worked until 1944) were founded in 1930. The other businesses founded earlier also worked on without any disturbance. A drastic change took place in 1933, when the Jóba Printing Office shot its doors. After the close of the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office beside the other five typographical workshops of Ignác Klafter, József Nagy, Károly Orosz, Jenő Heiszler and Jenő Nagy four new businesses were set up: the Burger and Wohlberg printing press in 1932, and Andor Klafter’s and Lajos Fülep’s printing offices from 1936. Together with the above, between 1933 and 1939 the number of typographical workshops in Nyíregyháza increased to nine. The enterprise of Lajos Károly Venkovits started its operation in 1941.

Another drastic change took place in April, 1944, with the deportation of the Jewish people from Nyíregyháza. Among the deported we could find the owners of five printing offices: Ignác Klafter and his son, Andor; Jenő Nágler’s partner, Mózes Scharfstein; Béla Burger and his partner József Schwimmer, and also Jakab Wohlberg. With the exception of Ignác Klafter’s, Burger’s and Schwimmer’s printing shop these printing offices were closed finally. Ignác Klafter’s business was further led by K. Lajos Venkovits for a short period. In the

Burger's office Bernáth and Murczkó's „Szabadság” has been launched in November, 1944. Only József Schwimmer returned from the above mentioned printers of Jewish descent, who would have liked to continue his business on its own under the name of „Világosság”, but he was denied the official permit.

After 1944 only three printing houses worked in the city: the printing offices of Károly Orosz, K. Lajos Venkovits, and the joint business of László Bernáth and Károly Murczkó. Despite of the frequent reporting of mayor János Fazekas about the fact that the remaining three presses are unable to satisfy the city's demand, their number did not change.

Only those printing offices that were able to invest in technological developments could resist the challenges of the time. These were the printing presses of Elek Jóba, Ignác Klafter, Károly Orosz, János Piringer, the Borbély Printing House and the private enterprises of József Nagy, Jenő Nágler, József Burger or of K. Lajos Venkovits.

Looking through the examined 83 years, there were only three printing offices which worked for a considerably long time and took a significant part in satisfying the city's needs in printed products:

1. The Elek Jóba Book Printing Office – for 49 years,
2. The Ignác Klafter Book Printing Office – for 40 years,
3. Károly Orosz' enterprises – for 28 years.

If we look at the amount of printed products they produced taking time into consideration, the order somewhat changes as follows:

1. The Elek Jóba Book Printing Office,
2. Károly Orosz' enterprises,
3. The Ignác Klafter Book Printing Office.

The figures back up the hypothesis that the Elek Jóba Book Printing Office was the biggest and most productive typographical enterprise in Nyíregyháza.

The products of The Elek Jóba Book Printing Office mainly raised the interest of Nyíregyháza's and the surrounding area's citizens. The business was engaged in printing and in some cases publishing literary and professional works of the authors of the Nyírség area; beside these, they printed clerical works, school reports, official reports of the institutions of the city as well as local weekly and monthly papers and printed products and forms used in public administration. The above mentioned products were produced in the greatest number by this printing office.

On the basis of the surviving copies one can state about the products of the Jóba Printing Office that they were made on quality paper with tasteful typography. It is true of all their other types of printed products such as periodicals, school reports and forms of public administration, too, among which we can hardly find any printed product of poor quality.

The other too typographic enterprises of the city already played an important role in the preparation of the printed products of Nyíregyháza during the functioning of the Jóba Printing Office and they finally took over the place of their great rival after 1933. It was mainly Károly Orosz and Ignác Klačter who continued with the preparation of the periodicals, separate volumes and printed matters of administration used in the daily work of the local authorities, most of which were previously printed by the Jóba family.

The book published in the topic of the PhD thesis

Katalin Bordé-Tóth: The history of the Jóba printer dynasty. Nyíregyháza, 2005. 95. p.

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Selection from the publications of historical nature

Katalin Bordé-Tóth: Imre Kner and the public life. Nyíregyháza, 2001. 238 p.

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