

Aspects of the Occupational Patterns of Miskolc Jews

As Reflected in the Statistical Data for 1920

DOROTTYA HALÁSZ

IN 1920 more than 200,000 persons comprising 45 percent of Hungary's Jewry resided in Budapest, the capital city. Despite the huge difference in numbers, the much smaller Jewish community of 11,300 inhabitants in Miskolc ranked second in the country. Since more than one fifth of the approximately 50,000 Jews living in urban centers outside the capital settled in this northeastern city, it acquired a genuinely Jewish character and featured as "the most Jewdified city of the Hungarian countryside."¹

The present state report of one particular Jewish community pursues two basic goals. It strives to explore, in the first place, in an interfaith setting the role the Israelite population played in the socio-economic life of Miskolc as reflected in 1920 statistics. Its secondary objective is to test the validity of the popular notion that Jews were a predominantly commerce- and industry-oriented people with minimal interest in agriculture, the main reason lying in economic independence being their number-one priority in their career choices, which they could most easily accomplish by engaging in commerce and industry.²

The first Jews settled in Miskolc in the early 18th century. Most started to work as distillers or wine traders and eventually leased or owned pubs and inns, the kind of businesses that later became their attribute. Other so-called typically Jewish enterprises included the lease of butcher shops and trade in leather and various goods. Yet Miskolc was more than a commercial center. As an industrial city, it also attracted Jewish craftsmen who established a guild as early as 1836. Its membership included cobblers, tailors, beer brewers, silversmiths, and goldsmiths among others.³

The number of Jewish inhabitants in Miskolc nevertheless remained low throughout the 18th century. Their settlement was hampered by the crown estate of Diósgyőr, by the episcopacy of Eger, and by opposition from rivaling Greek merchants already living in the city.⁴ The number of Jewish dwellers started to grow significantly only in the mid-1820s, producing a tenfold increase between 1825 and 1851. Their population ratio jumped from 1.6 percent to 23.9 percent as a result, and it stayed at about 20 percent until 1920. But with anti-Semitism growing and the financial situation deteriorating, especially in the aftermath of the Great Depression, the Jewish population of Miskolc started a steady decline during the interwar years.

TABLE 1. The growth of the Jewish population in Miskolc (1780–1941)

| Year | Number | Percent |
|------|--------|---------|
| 1780 | 70 | 0.5 |
| 1825 | 367 | 1.6 |
| 1840 | 1,096 | 4.1 |
| 1851 | 3,944 | 23.9 |
| 1857 | 3,412 | 19.5 |
| 1869 | 4,770 | 22.1 |
| 1880 | 5,117 | 21.0 |
| 1890 | 5,874 | 19.3 |
| 1900 | 8,551 | 19.8 |
| 1910 | 10,291 | 20.0 |
| 1920 | 11,300 | 19.8 |
| 1930 | 10,862 | 17.6 |
| 1941 | 10,428 | 13.5 |

SOURCE: Lajos Marjalaki Kiss, *Régi népszámlálások Miskolcon* (Miskolc: Miskolci Könyvnyomda, 1931), 13; János Szendrei, *Miskolc város története és egyetemes helyirata 2, Miskolc város története, 1000–1800* (Miskolc, 1904), 608; Marjalaki 1959, 30; Béla Halmay and Andor Leszih, eds., *Miskolc* (Budapest: Magyar Városok Monográfiája Kiadóhivatala, 1929), 175; Alajos Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele* (Budapest: Magyar Kir. Udvari Könyvnyomda, 1930), 9, 11; *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények Új Sorozat 83, Az 1930. évi népszámlálás part 1, Demográfiai adatok községek és külterületi lakóhelyek szerint* (Budapest: Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1932), 26–28; *Történeti Statisztikai Kötetek: Az 1941. évi népszámlálás, part 2, Demográfiai adatok községek szerint* (Budapest: Statisztikai Kiadó Vállalat, 1976), 207.

The number of Jews in Miskolc peaked in 1920. By this time Israelites had become an accepted and well-established segment of the local society. The general change in attitude towards Jews in Hungary beginning at the middle of the nineteenth century had facilitated this development: the ban on their freedom of movement was lifted in 1840, citizens of the Israelite faith were granted political emancipation in 1867, and the Law of Reception made Judaism one of the received religions of the country in 1895. These changes accelerated the speed of assimilation, providing Israelites with new opportunities to increase their influence in the economic as well as in the social, political, and intellectual life of Hungary. They did so also in Miskolc.⁵

The measure of language assimilation is one telling indicator of a group's integration into the host society. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1890, the ratio of Miskolc Israelites who claimed Hungarian as their mother tongue had stood high at 95 percent, and it rose even further reaching 98.3 percent in 1920. If all Hungarian speakers—even the ones with a different native language—are taken into account, the number rises to 11,278, which accounted for 99.8 percent of the community, confirming that by 1920 the Jews of Miskolc had undergone almost complete language assimilation.⁶ At this point in time, they comprised the third most populous religious group in the local society after Roman Catholics (25,230 persons = 44.3 percent) and Reformed Christians (15,278 persons = 26.8 percent). Their 19.8 percent share of the total population meant that every fifth resident in the city was an adherent of Judaism.

TABLE 2. Religious distribution in Miskolc (1920)

| Religious affiliation | Number | Percent |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|
| Roman Catholic | 25,230 | 44.3 |
| Greek Catholic | 2,175 | 3.8 |
| Reformed Christian | 15,278 | 26.8 |
| Evangelical | 2,784 | 4.9 |
| Israelite | 11,300 | 19.8 |

SOURCE: Tamás Csiki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet- és Kelet-Magyarországon: A miskolci, a kassai, a nagyváradai, a szatmárnémeti és a sátoraljaújhelyi zsidóság gazdaság- és társadalomtörténetének összehasonlító vizsgálata 1848–1944* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 313.

1920 statistics allow us to make a close analysis of the flowering Jewish community in Miskolc at the height of its socio-economic influence. Table 3 below reveals the occupational distribution of the city's population by religious affiliation.

Clearly Miskolc, a large city, was a commercial-industrial center where agriculture, the third basic branch of the economy, occupied an inferior position. According to table 3, in 1920, the majority of its inhabitants worked in industry: 22,232 persons out of a total of 56,982 persons, representing 39 percent of the entire population. Much lower was the share of those enlisted in commerce and credit, the area that provided a living for 6,645 inhabitants (11.7 percent), and agriculture fared even worse as it attracted only 2,897 persons (5.1 percent). Apparently, industry served as the backbone of Miskolc's economic structure.

A closer look at the data relating to Israelites reveals that it was nevertheless commerce and credit—not industry—where Jews occupied an outstanding, even dominant role. They comprised the leading religious group in this occupational category with their share of 67.1 percent, far above their ratio of 19.8 percent of the city's population. At the same time, Roman Catholics, while accounting for almost half (44.3 percent) of Miskolc's inhabitants, were rather underrepresented and ranked second with their share of only 18.3 percent. They were followed by Reformed Christians who made up 10.5 percent of those working in commerce and credit. The absolute numbers are equally compelling of Jewish dominance as they show that out of a total of 6,645 persons engaged in this field 4,458 were Jewish.

In no other occupational category did the Jews of Miskolc achieve dominance. As seen in table 3, although the second highest rate they possessed in industry, their share of 18.5 percent was a mere fraction of their share in commerce and credit. Both of the two more numerous religious groups, Roman Catholics and Reformed Christians, finished ahead of Israelites in the category of industry producing ratios of 44.8 percent and 27.4 percent respectively. The same applies to most other occupational categories such as agriculture, mining and metallurgy, transportation, civil service and liberal professions, retirees and financiers, and to the category of other and unknown occupations. Israelites were pushed even further down the scale among city dwellers who made a living in jobs related to the armed services and among the ones who worked as day laborers or domestic servants. In the first two instances Jews came in fourth place after Greek Catholics while in the third one also Evangelicals gained a larger share.

TABLE 3. Occupational distribution by religion (1920)

| Occupational category | Religious affiliation | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|----------|------|--------|-----------|
| | Number | | | | | Percent | | | | |
| | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite |
| <i>Total</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agriculture | 957 | 70 | 1,547 | 69 | 246 | 33.0 | 2.4 | 53.4 | 2.4 | 8.5 |
| Mining and metallurgy | 36 | 1 | 23 | 2 | 3 | 55.4 | 1.5 | 35.4 | 3.1 | 4.6 |
| Industry | 9,967 | 862 | 6,093 | 1,109 | 4,111 | 44.8 | 3.9 | 27.4 | 5.0 | 18.5 |
| Commerce and credit | 1,219 | 91 | 697 | 170 | 4,458 | 18.3 | 1.4 | 10.5 | 2.6 | 67.1 |
| Transportation | 3,215 | 255 | 1,895 | 379 | 550 | 51.0 | 4.0 | 30.0 | 6.0 | 8.7 |
| Civil service and liberal professions | 2,187 | 198 | 1,346 | 335 | 870 | 44.1 | 4.0 | 27.1 | 6.8 | 17.5 |
| Armed services | 2,830 | 249 | 1,138 | 224 | 236 | 60.3 | 5.3 | 24.2 | 4.8 | 5.0 |
| Day laborers | 486 | 75 | 344 | 16 | 26 | 50.7 | 7.8 | 35.9 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| Retirees, financiers, etc. | 1,910 | 152 | 1,103 | 311 | 510 | 47.7 | 3.8 | 27.5 | 7.8 | 12.7 |
| Other and unknown occupations | 1,199 | 81 | 532 | 66 | 225 | 56.9 | 3.9 | 25.3 | 3.1 | 10.7 |
| Domestic servants | 1,224 | 141 | 560 | 103 | 65 | 58.0 | 6.7 | 26.6 | 4.9 | 3.1 |
| <i>Total</i> | 25,230 | 2,175 | 15,278 | 2,784 | 11,300 | 44.3 | 3.8 | 26.8 | 4.9 | 19.8 |

SOURCE: Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele*, 24.

Based on the above, it is evident that while having the lead role in the area of commerce and credit, Jews occupied a largely subordinate position in the industrial life of Miskolc as well as in other fields of the city economy. This statement seems to question the validity of the generally accepted notion that the main concentration of Jews besides commerce was industry. The question then arises if Jewish dwellers of Miskolc were less perceptive than the average Jew to opportunities in the industrial field. A closer look at the inner occupational structure of the Jewish community will help to find the answer.

TABLE 4. Occupational distribution of Jews in Miskolc (1920)

| Occupational category | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Commerce and credit | 4,458 | 39.5 |
| Industry | 4,111 | 36.4 |
| Civil service and liberal professions | 870 | 7.7 |
| Transportation | 550 | 4.9 |
| Retirees, financiers, etc. | 510 | 4.5 |
| Agriculture | 246 | 2.2 |
| Armed services | 236 | 2.1 |
| Other and unknown occupations | 225 | 2.0 |
| Domestic servants | 65 | 0.6 |
| Day laborers | 26 | 0.2 |
| Mining and metallurgy | 3 | 0.0 |

Note: Based on data shown in table 3.

Although table 3, which made an interfaith comparison, suggested a rather low interest of Israelites in the industrial professions, table 4 proves the contrary by indicating that almost as many Jews (4,111 persons = 36.4 percent) made a living in industry as in commerce and credit (4,458 persons = 39.5 percent), making occupations in these fields the most preferred ones among community members. This fact is further revealed by a combination of the numbers in commerce and industry showing that the great majority, more than three-quarters of Israelites chose related professions. The validity of the original assumption that Jews were a commerce- and industry-oriented people is also accentuated by the figures referring to jobs in the civil service and the liberal professions. Despite being the third most preferred occupational area of Miskolc Jews, only a tiny fragment of the community falls in this category: 870 persons (7.7 percent) opposed to the 8,569 persons (75.9 percent) occupied in commerce and industry. The numbers in subsequent categories of the professional preference list are even lower: 4.9 percent of Miskolc Jews made a living in transportation, and 4.5 percent of them belonged in the category of retirees and financiers. Furthermore, approximately 2 percent of the community was engaged in each of the following areas: agriculture, the armed services, and other and unknown occupations, while the Jewish presence among domestic servants, day laborers, and in mining and metallurgy was hardly measurable.

But what factors, regardless the reasons in historical development, made the majority of Miskolc Jewry focus on commercial and industrial opportunities? The order dis-

TABLE 5. RELIGIOUS DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONAL SUBCATEGORIES IN INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND CREDIT, AND TRANSPORTATION (1920)

| Occupational subcategory | Wage earners | Religious affiliation | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|----------|-------|--------|-----------|------------|----------|----------|---------|--------|-----------|--|
| | | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite | Israelite* | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Reform. | Evang. | Israelite | |
| | | Number | | | | | Percent | | | Percent | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Industrial entrepreneurs | 2,326 | 880 | 60 | 524 | 123 | 724 | 6.4 | 37.8 | 2.6 | 22.5 | 5.3 | 31.1 | |
| Industrial administrators | 319 | 122 | 11 | 41 | 25 | 120 | 1.1 | 38.2 | 3.4 | 12.9 | 7.8 | 37.6 | |
| Subordinate staff in industry | 6,845 | 3,275 | 331 | 2,013 | 342 | 849 | 7.5 | 47.8 | 4.8 | 29.4 | 5.0 | 12.4 | |
| Entrepreneurs in commerce and credit | 1,263 | 183 | 17 | 160 | 27 | 873 | 7.7 | 14.5 | 1.4 | 12.7 | 2.1 | 69.1 | |
| Administrators in commerce and credit | 590 | 149 | 8 | 67 | 36 | 329 | 2.9 | 25.3 | 1.4 | 11.4 | 6.1 | 55.7 | |
| Subordinate staff in commerce and credit | 983 | 250 | 26 | 156 | 35 | 513 | 4.5 | 25.4 | 2.6 | 15.9 | 3.6 | 52.2 | |
| Transportation administrators | 579 | 274 | 20 | 141 | 60 | 81 | 0.7 | 47.3 | 3.5 | 24.3 | 10.4 | 14.0 | |
| Subordinate staff in transportation | 1,299 | 666 | 69 | 439 | 66 | 54 | 0.5 | 51.3 | 5.3 | 33.8 | 5.1 | 4.2 | |

SOURCE: Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele*, 25.

*11,300 persons = 100%

TABLE 6. Religious distribution of occupational subcategories in civil service and liberal professions (1920)

| Occupational subcategory | Religious affiliation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------|------|--------|-----------|------------|----------|----------|---------|--------|-----------|------|--|--|--|
| | Wage earners | | | | | Israelite | | | | | | | | | |
| | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite | Israelite* | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Reform. | Evang. | Israelite | | | | |
| | Number | | | | | Percent | | | | | Percent | | | | |
| Total | 2,326 | 880 | 60 | 524 | 123 | 724 | 6.4 | 37.8 | 2.6 | 22.5 | 5.3 | 31.1 | | | |
| Industrial entrepreneurs | 319 | 122 | 11 | 41 | 25 | 120 | 1.1 | 38.2 | 3.4 | 12.9 | 7.8 | 37.6 | | | |
| Industrial administrators | 6,845 | 3,275 | 331 | 2,013 | 342 | 849 | 7.5 | 47.8 | 4.8 | 29.4 | 5.0 | 12.4 | | | |
| Subordinate staff in industry | 1,263 | 183 | 17 | 160 | 27 | 873 | 7.7 | 14.5 | 1.4 | 12.7 | 2.1 | 69.1 | | | |
| Entrepreneurs in commerce and credit | 590 | 149 | 8 | 67 | 36 | 329 | 2.9 | 25.3 | 1.4 | 11.4 | 6.1 | 55.7 | | | |
| Administrators in commerce and credit | 983 | 250 | 26 | 156 | 35 | 513 | 4.5 | 25.4 | 2.6 | 15.9 | 3.6 | 52.2 | | | |
| Subordinate staff in commerce and credit | 579 | 274 | 20 | 141 | 60 | 81 | 0.7 | 47.3 | 3.5 | 24.3 | 10.4 | 14.0 | | | |
| Transportation administrators | 1,299 | 666 | 69 | 439 | 66 | 54 | 0.5 | 51.3 | 5.3 | 33.8 | 5.1 | 4.2 | | | |
| Subordinate staff in transportation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

SOURCE: Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele*, 26.

played by the above preference list helps to answer the question by allowing speculations about the values Jews cherished most in their career choices. It seems that economic independence and profit were their number-one priorities, which they hoped to attain mostly in the commercial, financial, and industrial spheres. This assumption is supported by Yehuda Dön who argues that independence was one of the most cherished ideals of Israelites who were bent on serving customers directly, wanted to appear as competitors on the market, and wished to realize all this by small investments.⁷ No surprise that their number in the armed forces or among domestic servants remained low since neither of these occupations promised independence or large profits.

György Ránki draws attention to another aspect of Jewish occupational patterns as he contends that Jews “strove for independence if private enterprise involved a higher income and greater social prestige. However, if it was possible to attain these goals as administrators, administrative positions attracted them at least as much, or even so.”⁸ The analysis of Jewish career preferences in Miskolc, showing that their third most preferred occupational category was that of the civil service and liberal professions, seems to reaffirm Ránki’s argument. While in the case of liberal professions both independence and prestige were realistic goals, the sphere of civil service—just as well as transportation, the fourth most preferred category—promised different advantages: even if independence was not among them, it guaranteed a secure income and old-age pension besides social prestige. Moreover, for workers with a lower income becoming an administrator was also a way to rise on the social ladder. A close examination of 1920 statistics regarding occupational subcategories in industry, commerce and credit, and transportation offers a further way to test if data on Miskolc Jews confirm an effort on their part to preserve economic independence.

The above interfaith comparison reveals that while in commerce and credit the ratio of entrepreneurs was greatest among Jews, it was administrators who acquired a higher rate in the industrial branch of the economy. On the other hand, a comparison of figures regarding administrators and subordinates reveals that the former attained higher numbers in every subcategory, seemingly justifying the assumption that in case Israelites were unable to realize their primary career objective to preserve economic independence, they tried to obtain at least an administrative position.

Yet data on the Jewish community once again modifies the picture. In 1920, in industry as well as in commerce and credit, the proportion of entrepreneurs and subordinates greatly surpassed that of administrators. Whereas in the latter occupational category entrepreneurs were most numerous, in industry it was the subordinate staff that had the lead. Wage earners in transportation were the exception as among them the ratio of administrators was slightly higher than that of subordinates. These figures suggest that for Miskolc Jews an administrative job was less attractive (or less attainable), and in case conditions for starting an own business venture were lacking, Israelites more probably than not were willing to take a lower position as employees of their brethren.⁹ The situation looked much different in the category of civil service and liberal professions where an administrative job was more difficult to acquire.

The data in table 6 showing distribution by religion in the area of civil service and the liberal professions attest to the fact that Jews were not welcome at state jobs. No Israelite

TABLE 7. Religious distribution of occupational subcategories in agriculture (1920)

| Occupational subcategory | Wage earners | Religious affiliation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|----------|------|--------|-----------|----------|----------|------|--------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| | | Number | | | | | Percent | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite | R. Cath. | G. Cath. | Ref. | Evang. | Israelite | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Total</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Estates over 1,000 holds | 5 | 1 | — | — | — | 4 | 20.0 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 80.0 |
| Estates between 100-1,000 holds | 31 | 3 | — | — | — | 15 | 9.7 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 48.4 |
| Leases over 100 holds | 36 | 6 | — | — | — | 25 | 16.7 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 69.4 |
| Estates (lease or property) between 50-100 holds | 16 | 2 | — | — | — | 5 | 12.5 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 31.2 |
| Estates (lease or property) between 10-50 holds | 136 | 18 | — | — | — | 8 | 13.2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 5.9 |
| Estates (lease or property) between 5-10 holds | 137 | 29 | 1 | — | — | — | 21.2 | 0.7 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Estates (lease or property) under 5 holds | 273 | 55 | 4 | — | — | 17 | 20.1 | 1.5 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 6.2 |
| Agricultural administrators | 18 | 8 | — | — | — | 3 | 44.4 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 16.7 |
| Agricultural servants | 159 | 74 | 15 | — | — | 4 | 46.5 | 9.4 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2.5 |
| Agricultural workers | 502 | 226 | 15 | — | — | 3 | 45.0 | 3.0 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0.6 |

SOURCE: Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele*, 25.

Note: 1 hold = 1.42 acres

served as county administrator in 1920, and the Jewish presence among high school teachers, state administrators, and judges and prosecutors was hardly visible. They occupied the lead role in only two occupations: physicians (71.2 percent) and barristers (59.4 percent), the chief categories that promised both social prestige and economic independence. In the case of physicians, Roman Catholics, although lagging behind with their share of merely 13.5 percent, followed Israelites, whereas in the case of barristers, Reformed Christians came in second place with 12.7 percent, making the difference highly perceptible in both cases. As opposed to other previously examined occupational categories, the inner distribution of the Jewish community in this particular area displayed tendencies similar to the interfaith comparison as only the number of Jewish physicians and barristers stood out significantly.

So far we have examined the extent Miskolc Jews were involved in the city's commercial and industrial life and depicted the community's occupational stratification as rooted in its mentality. One last question is left unanswered: if the notion of a minimal inclination of Jews towards agriculture proved true in Miskolc.

Based on data shown in table 3 above, the short answer is yes. Israelites had a rather low, 8.5 percent share in the local agriculture, which was greatly surpassed by the leading Reformed Christian population's 53.4 percent and the Roman Catholics' 33 percent ratio. Furthermore, according to table 4, agriculture-related activities only gained a sixth place out of eleven categories on the community's occupational preference list, and merely 2.2 percent of the Jewish inhabitants (246 people) made a living in agriculture. These numbers seem to confirm that local Jews indeed had an aversion to activities in this particular branch of the economy, but a close examination of the occupational category reveals some interesting features of the economic life of Miskolc.

As demonstrated by table 7, Jews occupied a significant position in the local agriculture despite their low numbers. In 1920, there were only five estates over 1,000 holds (1 hold = 1.42 acres) in Miskolc, and four of them belonged to Jewish landowners with the only remaining estate holder being Roman Catholic. Israelites kept their lead position before Roman Catholics and Reformed Christians also in the following two categories as they gained a share of 48.4 percent among owners of middle-sized estates over 100 holds and 69.4 percent among leasers over 100 holds. Although members of the Reformed Church pushed Israelites to second place among small estate holders or leasers between 50 and 100 holds—and Jews ranked even lower in the lesser categories—they were present in all but one: small landholders (owners or leasers) who held 5 to 10 holds of land. Besides, their ratio was the lowest among agricultural servants and agricultural workers.

These numbers suggest that two factors influenced Israelites who decided to engage in agriculture-related activities. While landholders dominating the upper categories must have found it a good investment to purchase or lease land, those in the lower brackets most surely took agricultural jobs only under the pressure of the circumstances. This idea is reinforced by the fact that no representative of the Jewish community is listed in the transitional category of owners or leasers of estates between 5 and 10 holds.

All of the above, therefore, demonstrates that even if only a tiny fragment of the Israelite population depended on agriculture for its living—which, regardless of religious

affiliation, is no surprise in a large city whose primary function was being an industrial-commercial center—Miskolc Jews indeed had a large stake in its local operation. The fact that this particular branch of the economy attracted the attention of a relatively small number of people in the city—only 2,897 persons out of a total population of 56,982 including Jews—makes the Jewish presence in the field even more accentuated. Still it was not a unique phenomenon. In the Central and East European region 70–75 percent of the leasers of large estates and 20 percent of the owners of estates over 1,000 holds tended to be Jewish.¹⁰ The peculiarity of the Miskolc community then lay in the fact that while there were no large estate leasers in the city in 1920 according to statistics, the 80 percent share of Jews among owners greatly surpassed the usual 20 percent.

We have examined the Jewish community of Miskolc in 1920 at the height of its social and economic power. We have seen that among the three basic branches of the economy they dominated the city's commercial and credit life but played a subordinate role in industry, which served as the backbone of the local economic structure. Yet an examination of their career preferences showed that Miskolc Israelites professed a basic inclination toward both commercial and industrial activities, most importantly because they wished to keep their economic independence, which they could most easily attain in these areas. However, in lack of opportunities to start an own business, they preferred taking a job as employees of more fortunate members of their community, partly because state administrative positions for them were less attractive or attainable. Finally, although Miskolc was a large city with agriculture occupying an inferior position in its economy, and although agriculture was not among the most preferred occupational categories of Jews, Israelites played an outstanding role in its local operation. Despite the changing political atmosphere and growing difficulties, these tendencies would remain largely unchanged in the next two decades until the devastation of the Holocaust. □

Notes

1. István Dobrossy and István Sipta, eds., *Miskolc története V/1: 1918-tól 1949-ig* (Miskolc: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Megyei Levéltár, Herman Ottó Múzeum, 2007), 176.
2. Yehuda Don, "Patterns of Jewish Economic Behaviour in Central Europe in the Twentieth Century," in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy, 1760–1945*, ed. Michael Silber (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 254, 269.
3. "Kő és korsó:" *Kepek Észak-Kelet-Magyarország zsidóságának történetéből* (Miskolc: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Megyei Múzeum Igazgatóság, 1992), 3, 7.
4. Béla Zsedényi, *Miskolc szellemi élete és kultúrája* (Miskolc: Magyar Jövő, 1929), 54; Lajos Marjalaki Kiss, *Miskolc népességének fejlődése* (Miskolc: Borsodmegyei Nyomda, 1959), 28.
5. Relevant parts of the six-volume monograph, *Miskolc története*, edited by István Dobrossy are highly useful in the study of Jewish history in Miskolc (Miskolc: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Megyei Levéltár, Herman Ottó Múzeum, 1996–).
6. Kovács, *Miskolc lakosságának összetétele* 14; *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények Új Sorozat* 73, *Az 1920. évi népszámlálás part 5, Részletes demográfia* (Budapest: Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1928), 181, 190, 200.

7. Don, "Patterns of Jewish Economic Behaviour in Central Europe in the Twentieth Century", 269.
8. György Ránki, "A magyarországi zsidóság foglalkozási szerkezete a két világháború között" *Történelmi Szemle* 3 (1987–88): 265.
9. The presence of Jews in administrative positions was becoming stronger in the 1920s. 1930 statistics show a definite growth in the number of Jewish administrators in commerce and credit, and a smaller growth occurred also in industry. See Csíki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet-és Kelet-Magyarországon*, 79, 84.
10. "In memoriam Ránki György: A magyarországi zsidóság gazdaságtörténetéről" *Történelmi Szemle* 3 (1987–88): 250.

Abstract

Aspects of the Occupational Patterns of Miskolc Jews: As Reflected in the Statistical Data for 1920

The present study reveals the main aspects of the occupational patterns of the Jewish population of Miskolc—a northeastern city in Hungary—at the height of the community's socio-economic power. Its main objective is to examine the role Israelites played in the local economy by focusing on the three basic branches of commerce (and credit), industry, and agriculture. It also strives to test the validity of some popular notions such as the Jewish concentration on commerce and industry in an effort to preserve economic independence and the allegedly minimal interest of Jews in agriculture. It concludes that while members of the Israelite community dominated the commercial and credit life of the city, they occupied an inferior position in industry. Their role in agriculture, however, was significant.

Keywords

Jews in Hungary, Miskolc, economy, religious groups, occupational patterns, statistics.