

**Ethno-professional Dialogues from Bacău Interwar Period.
Aspects of the Evolution of Urban Economy**

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Abstract

The article focuses on the economic evolution of the city of Bacău, over a relatively large period of time – from the mid-19th century to the end of the interwar period. The demographic specificity of Bacău, an ethnic mosaic, dominated by the presence of the Romanian, Jewish and Armenian communities, allowed us to develop a unique segment of analysis of the urban economy in a research from an ethnic perspective.

As we will illustrate in the article, the city's economy used to have clear ethnic divisions, with surprising percentages of Jewish domination and a high degree of territorial “ghettoization” of the economic sectors. From the bibliographic point of view, the article is based on a consistent investigation of the demographic studies as well as the local archival sources, which have privileged the lists of voters, the lists with the economic operators highlighted by the Bacău City Hall, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc.

The article deals with a topic less addressed in the specialized literature – the modern and interwar economy of small and medium-sized urban centres in the central area of Moldova. Numerous archival sources cited within the paper are unique, which ensures a high degree of interest the article.

Keywords: *Bacău city, Jewish community, Urban economics, interwar period, ethnic map of Urban economics*

1. Introduction

Benefiting from a blissful geographical location, in the immediate vicinity of the Bistrita River, but also with a hinterland rich

in raw materials, unique in the Moldovan area¹ (Grigorovici 1933: 6-7), Bacău city will register, from the dawn of the Modern Age, alert rhythms of economic development. If, in the first half of the 19th century, the city experienced thriving commercial, merchandising and manufacturing activities, in the second half, the morphology of its economy will become increasingly complex, especially with the rise of the industrial sector.

The year 1829 brought radical structural changes in the economy of the Romanian Principalities. Thus, the act of signing of the Peace Treaty of Adrianopol (1829) - which abolished the monopoly of the Ottoman Empire over the Romanian trade - also represented the fact that the two Principalities had come under the influence of Western capitalism. This phenomenon generated an accelerated pace of the implementation of the new economic principles - free competition, market economy etc. Moreover, if we were to follow the positive effects of this economic "reorientation" over time, with major implications in the transformation and modernization of the Romanian society and political class - including the projection of the Romanian statehood - we could perceive the year 1829 as a temporal point with a revolutionary significance.

The connection of the Principalities to the circuit of the world economy meant, for the majority of the Romanian entrepreneurs, on the one hand, the abandonment of the old commercial practices and routes and, on the other hand, their relocation into the foundations of the competitive system, both national and European level. Obviously, these transformations - which have operated, over time, including at the level of mentalities - have surprised the Romanian society at an

¹ Among the counties in Moldova, Bacău County is the only one that has natural deposits of coal, crude oil and salt. These products provided the consumption needs of the inhabitants of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania, both in the modern period and in the inter-war period. During the interwar period, Bacău County had one of the most developed regional economies.

inappropriate stage of development, too little prepared to cope with the mechanisms of the market economy. Basically, the land on which the capitalist principles initially developed was a virginal one: the capital and the national bourgeoisie were missing, the regulations were missing and, last but not least, given the internal socio-political instability, which characterized the period 1821-1859 (revolutions, riots, military occupations), we can see that even the state was missing (Zeletin 1992: 24-27).

As for the psycho-social profile of the Romanians, the studies signed by D. Drăghicescu or those authored by C. Rădulescu-Motru reveal without any denial the complete state of resisting adaptation to the individualistic specificity pattern promoted by the Western capitalism:

the individualism of the Romanians does not imply the spirit of initiative within the economic life and far too little the spirit of independence within the political and social life – the two characteristics that best describe the individualism of the Western highly knowledgeable peoples; from the Romanian villages will never rise any enterprising individuals who would be ready to risk their ‘downtime’ and wealth to enrich themselves by untested means. On the contrary, the population of the Romanian villages is under the tradition of collective work. Every villager does what he thinks everyone will do; he does not have the courage to start a job, except at the deadlines set by him. To leave the world is, for the Romanian villager, not a simple risk, but a true sign of madness. (Rădulescu-Motru 1998: 16).

Under these circumstances, against the backdrop of a strong immigration current – originated from Galicia and Russia – those who took advantage of the new opportunities were the Jewish inhabitants. They became true “pioneers” of Romanian capitalism or, as the historian Hary Kuller states, “the first political heralds of the

modernization and democratization of economic relations and property rights" (Kuller 1997: 102). In shaping these socio-economic realities, all the advantages were on the side of the inhabitants of the Mosaic religion: the deep-rooted tradition of trade, the financial capital and the skill to manoeuvre it, a rigorous community organization, good relationships with the Jewish communities from all over the world, and so on.

The phenomenon has been manifesting in the urban environment of Moldova – the *terminus* point of Jewish immigration in the Romanian area, in the first half of the 19th century. In fact, during this period, the Jewish community made a significant contribution to the urban development of Moldova. On the one hand, as economist Avram Rosen states "from the end of the 18th century until the 1950s, the Jews founded 82 market towns, such as Târgu Frumos, Fălticeni, Podul Iloaiei, Pașcani, Moinești, Negrești, Ivești, Podul Turcului" (Rosen 2002: 15-16) and, on the other hand, the Jewish inhabitants had already populated the existing urban nuclei, energizing their economic capacities in all its important sectors – crafts, commerce, industry. In this sense, the case of Bacău is particularly relevant.

2. The ethnic map of the local economy – trades and crafts

As the literary sources and archival documents indicate, for the first half of the 19th century, Bacău had an extremely rudimentary economy, its "roughness" reminiscent of the practices specific to the Middle Ages. In this sense, the best proof is the income settlement for the *market town's box* (the local budget), established by Ioniță Sandu Sturdza on July 23, 1823. This law stipulated a series of taxes on services, such as the tax on the fair market porter (*măhălit*), tax on the income from measuring alcoholic beverages or weaves (*cotărit*): "10 *parale*² for the whole vessel with, *rachiu*³, *holercă*⁴ or wine." There were

² *Para/parale* (rom.), small Turkish silver coin, circulating in Romanian countries, whose value was equal to the forty part of 1 leu (Romanian currency).

stipulated taxes for slaughterhouses – 50 lei all year round, “10 *parale* for the whole *mierța*⁵, for those who will gather plums for *velniță*⁶ in order to sale the alcohol, 10 *parale* for each waggon, except for the residents who need to take firewood from the town’s estate forest” (Racoviță 1895: 95-96).

During the fifth decade of the 19th century, the local administration added to these revenues those from the taxation or leasing of other activities: tax for cutting pigs, renting bridges over Bistrița river (National Archives of Romania, Bacău County Branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 1/1845 -1847, f. 4-8), lease of the revenues from the city’s supply of fuel, meat, candles, bread, tobacco and so on.

This type of budgetary construction indicates that the local economy was dominated by the small craftsmen and merchants, who practiced their specific activities in the famous wares or workshops in which different products were produced and marketed. Within these workshops, the activities carried out were extremely diverse. The documents offer informations about merchands, alcohol (*rachiu*) producers and traders, producers and traders of furs, bread and pretzels, potters, candle makers, barbers, tailors, skimmers, shoemakers and so on.

An important document, which offers to the researchers some statistical landmarks regarding the socio-professional division of the inhabitants of Bacău from this period, is the 1845 Census⁷. Thus, the percentage of craftsmen was slightly over 30% and the-percentage of

³ *rachiu* = generic name given to alcoholic beverages obtained by distilling wine, fruits, cereals, etc. or synthetically, by mixing alcohol with water (and with essences), without the addition of sugar syrup.

⁴ *holercă* = *rachiu* of bad quality.

⁵ *mierța* = unit of measurement for cereals used in the past in Moldavia and Transylvania, which varied in time and by regions.

⁶ *velniță* – rudimentary mechanism for producing *rachiu*.

⁷ *Catagrafia*, 1845.

traders was slightly over 35% (Constantinescu 1968: 12). With a cumulative total of 65.5%, the share of traders and craftsmen, Bacău had the most developed market out of the 72 Moldovan cities and towns registered in 1845 (Platon 1999: 152). Second and third in place came the following cities: Iasi, with 62.4%, and respectively, Bârlad, with 61.97%.

Although, in total, the 1845 Census emphasizes the preponderance of the Jews in the Moldovan trade - 3,901 land merchants, 6,049 Jewish merchants and 1,066 foreign subjects (Platon, 1999: 152), according to the information provided by Costache Radu, between 1840-1860 the great trade of Bacău was dominated by the Orthodox traders, the Jews being only at the beginning of developing their own businesses. In the above-mentioned interval, the merchants from "the central/main alley", the richest innkeepers, the cod, the fur traders, the cattle traders, the butchers, etc., were mainly Romanians and Armenians, among them being numerous kinship relations. Generally, the Romanian traders brought their merchandise from Galati, and the Armenians from Brasov. The only store with luxury products was the one owned by Vasile Șandru (nickname Galantarul), who acquired his goods from Paris (Radu 2008: 48-49). Also, during this period, the Romanians, along with the Hungarians, held the majority in the field of trades, of which the most practiced were those of masonry, carpenters, shoemakers, skimmers and furriers and so on. The blacksmiths were mainly Gypsies.

With the progressive consolidation of the modern Romanian state, the Jewish inhabitants are increasingly making their presence felt in different sectors of the local economy, especially in the field of trades (tailors, capers, shoemakers, silverware traders, etc.) or small trade. In fact, the profession became a patronymic name of the Jewish craftsmen in many cases: Croitoru (Tailor), Ciubotariu (Shoemaker), Argintaru (Silversmith), Căciularu (hatter/milliner), and Covrigaru (Pretzel baker) (Rosen, 2002: 48). Statistics from 1880 show us the following professional stratification of the Jewish community from

Bacău: out of the total of 6,122 Jews (48% of the total) 350 practiced trades, 442 were traders, 120 were freelancers, and 409 were manual workers and people without profession (National Archives of Romania, Bacău County Branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 14/1880, f. 80-84).

Gradually, the number of Jewish merchants and craftsmen increased greatly, so that, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century the share of Romanians in the local economy was almost non-existent. In the field of trades, for example, the dynamics with which the Jews settled in this economic sector is impressive – in 1880, 350 Jewish trades (about 50% of the total), in 1903 - 654 Jewish trades, representing over 2/3 of the number total of the local craftsmen (Kara 1995: 37). The phenomenon is found at all levels of the local economy, the commercial field being equally relevant. Thus, while in 1880 about 442 Jewish merchants were active, at the end of the 19th century, according to a statistical document from 1897, their number increased to 569 merchants (National Archives of Romania, Bacău County Branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 68/1898, f. 1-8). Especially the last two decades of the 19th century meant a real process of volatilization of Romanian traders, the phenomenon reaching all commercial outlets. For example, if in 1879, there were 23 Romanian baccalaureate merchants in Bacău and only one Jew, in 1900 the number of Jewish merchants increased to 36, unlike that of Romanians, which decreased to 6 (Radu 2008: 58).

In 1903, the Jews from Bacău also reach the dominant position in the big trade – the grain trade (the large barns belonging to the Brill family, those owned by Șaie Cofler or those owned by Pinkas Edelstein, Berl Malai, Iacobsohn brothers, Isaac Avram, Avram Gutman, Iacob Bercovici, Moise Klein and, later, his son Buium Klein, etc.), the iron articles trade (the largest blacksmith wholesaler in Moldova was Faiviș Klein from Bacău), the timber trade, etc. Although it is incomplete, the list of stores owned by Jews is equally conclusive: 11 hairdressers, 3 footwear, 2 underwear, 5 bookstores, 57 with convenience stores, 1 draper, 6 with porcelain, 3 furniture, 7 leather

stores, 14 ironworks, 8 glassworks, 8 hotels, 128 inns (Kara 1995: 34). This accounts for the process of (self) marginalization close to total disappearance of the Romanian merchants from the central area of the town. In the first decade of the 20th century, the hard core of the Bacău economy – The Main Street (Strada Mare) – was over 85% populated by Jewish-owned stores. An explanation for this evolution of the ethnic map of the city's economy is attempted by Costache Radu. On the one hand, he puts the phenomenon on the account of the voluntary migration of Romanians from the economic to the administrative sphere. The Romanians businesses and trades were not left to future generations, parents preferring to direct their children to secure and relatively well-paid jobs in public institutions. On the other hand, as the columnist points out, this trend would have been stimulated by the expansion of unfair competition: “the number of foreigners multiplied, and pure and unclean competition had begun” (Radu 2008: 59).

It is interesting to observe that these economic realities were recorded in a period when the law for the organization of trades (1902) negatively influenced the business of small Jewish entrepreneurs, limiting their development possibilities. As it is known, the Romanian Law of crafts from 1902 imposed on the Jews numerous restrictions, by assimilating them with the inhabitants of foreign citizenship. According to article 4 of the law, “the subjects of a foreign state, in order to be admitted to work, had to prove, among others, that, in their country of origin, there is a similar right for Romanians” (Rosen 2002: 53). Obviously, the absence, at that time, of a political state of their own created numerous difficulties for the Jewish workers.

On the other hand, according to the legal regulations, the Jewish craftsmen were coerced to register and pay contributions to the corporations, without benefiting from the attribution of eligibility. Moreover, at least half of the number of members of a corporation had to be represented by Romanian citizens. These restrictions are also transparent from the way the Bacău City Hall drew up the lists of voters for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry No. 7, based in

Focsani. For example, for the financial year 1901-1902, the list of traders and industrialists from Bacău comprises, out of a total of 44 natural and legal entities, only five Jewish inhabitants (Venzel Singer – brick factory, V. Tenov – lumber factory, Arthur Ehrlich – usurer, H. Avram Focșaner – banker, Herșcu Heimberg – convenience store) (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 7/1901, f. 8). Also on the list, there are three banking institutions (the National Bank Branch, the Agricultural Bank and the Carpathians Insurance Company), while the majority of voters – 36 voters – were Romanians, Armenians and Greeks.

The law for the organization of trades was not the only one that established restrictive measures for the Jewish inhabitants. The “anti-foreigners” legislative measures set an extremely limited scope of activity for them. Among other things, foreigners were not allowed to own agricultural land in rural areas. In the Jewish environment, they could not keep tobacco shops, jobs like peddler or itinerant tinker were forbidden to them in towns, but they could be practiced in the rural area. Moreover, they could not participate in elections, they could not apply for public positions and they were forbidden to enroll in any state school or in any military structure. The bank managers, stockbrokers, commissioners could only be Romanian citizens.

Another discriminatory law was related to the way of conducting bids and tenders, procurement policy, purchase order for the public acquisitions. Thus, Jewish craftsmen and entrepreneurs, who did not have Romanian citizenship, were forbidden to participate in the tenders, as well as subsequent collaboration with the bids winners. Such rules were operative also in the case of private contractors called to provide the necessary supplies for the proper functioning of all the departments of the local administration – the communal wood (necessary for the bakers or administrators of the Central Bath), the printers of the City Hall (Publications and Ordinances), the petroleum products for street lighting, the vegetable supply necessary for the canteen of the poor students (town shelter), the feeding of the cattle from the communal service and so on.

Obviously, such a restrictive legislation fully explains the majority percentages with which the Romanian ethnic groups won the tenders organized by Bacău City Hall. However, the statistical data reflects a certain balance between the number of tenders won by the Romanian inhabitants and those won by Jews and other foreigners. We support this assertion with the data of a document of March 31, 1903, which presents, in detail, the number and value of supplies and services remunerated by Bacău City Hall during the period 1897-1902. Depending on the nationality of the contractors, the payments were made as follows (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 37/1903, f. 2):

Years	Nationality					
	Romanians		Jews		Foreigns	
	No. contracts	Amount -lei	No. contracts	Amount -lei	No. contracts	Amount -lei
1897-1898	13	59.820	8	39.953	8	50.842
1898-1899	10	41.369	12	17.939	5	14.304
1899-1900	16	62.261	7	14.237	2	11.278
1900-1901	18	41.024	6	15.521	5	11.511
1901-1902	14	55.073	6	13.241	6	15.301
Total	71	259.547	39	100.891	26	103.236
			65 – 204.127 lei			

Figure 1. *Tenders won by nationality*

The entrepreneurial contracts for supplies were awarded annually as a result of public sessions with sealed offers, which were held only in the Bacău City Hall premises. Apart from the citizenship criterion, the participants in these tenders had to meet two minimum conditions: to deposit a certain amount of cash as a guarantee (6-10% of the total value of the works) and to have a permanent residence and a workshop in Bacău. If the municipal councillors considered that the price with which the auction was adjudicated was too high, the mayor

was mandated to obtain “a better price, through an agreement with other inhabitants of the town” (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 37 / 1903, f. 9). For each deal closed, the City Hall issued a mandate to the contractor, specifying the amount due. The money was raised from the town cash registry/The Office of the Treasure. Not infrequently, the mandates were declared “lost”, in hope that the town administration would release others.

Due to the fact that they provided services to the town, in general, the entrepreneurs were exempted from paying the taxes for entering the city. Such an example is provided by the contractors Bercu Manase and I. Șuler, who benefited from the above-mentioned exemptions (document dated March, 1903), due to the fact that they provided the necessary material for the the boilers at the Electric Plant. Despite ethnocratic specific legislation and poor civic-political status, the first decade of the 20th century finds Jews from Bacău occupying dominant positions in all important sectors of the local economy. In this regard, the information contained in the list presented by the Bacău City Hall at the county stand organized in 1906 on the occasion of the National Exhibition in Bucharest is a testimony. The data on the commercial sector and of the trades are extremely valuable.

Regarding the trades practiced by the inhabitants of Bacău, the immensity of the information included in the list mentioned above obliges us to operate selectively in its presentation. Although it is less attractive, we have opted for the way of “developing” data exactly as they appear in the document for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the listing of the names of the craftsmen of Bacău exempts us from making any further appreciation regarding the ethnic division of the domain and, on the other hand, the novelty of the information. Here are just a few examples (1906): tailor (14) – Herman Swartz, Solomon Rosenfeld, S. Grimberg, Avram Iacobovici, Leyer Auslender, Lupu Șaler, Haler Hercovich, Avram H. Mark, Moses Craus, Zalman Kofler, R. Simon, St Craus, Aron Pascal, M. Leibovici; watchmaker (9) - L.

Mălinescu, I. Steimberg, Pincu Schwartz, I. Grimberg, Bernard Goldring, S. Hercovici, I. Gânte, I. Brand, M. Rosemberg; barber (6) - Vasile Horga, Buzătescu brothers, D. Nicolau, Ion Gheorghiu, Ion Umbrărescu, Dumitru Proţap; typographer (3) - David Rosemberg, H. Margulius, M. Haber; shoemaker (5) - Iţic Şmil, Mihai Ploescu, Gr. Alecu, Victor Holban, Iosif Schleizingher; confectioner (3) - Victor Voitonovici, Ion Abageru, Mihail Atanase; Bookshop Assistant (4) - Burah Rosemberg, H. Ibe, Constantin Gavrilesu, Mihai Vasiliu Kogălniceanu; hatter (2) - Ilie Iancu, Leibu Stupler; glass seller (2) - Zeilic Benglas, A. Benglas; leather belt manufacturer (3) - Haim Hausfater, Iancu Ehlingher, M. Bril; blacksmith (8) - Iţic Simon, David Goldenberg, Iulius Karniol, I. Berman, Leibu Galanter, I. Snapic, A. Rapaport, Vasile Stoica; furrier (2) - Hercules Finkelstein, Alter David; skinner (7) - Litman Goldenstein, Herman Abramovici, H. Hofman, M. Sasu, Iancu Rosemberg, F. Vaisman, B. Iacob; ironmonger (3) - Iancu Zilberstein, Solomon Zeilic, Moritz Zaida; manufacturing workshops (8) - M. Mascota, Grigoriu Ştefănescu, S. Bicman, Elias Laurer, M. Hersimbaier, Ancel Goldenstein, N. Kleper, Iacob Leventer; footwear workshops (4) - M. Sasu, Iancu Rosemberg, F. Vaisman, B. Iacob (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 58/1907, f. 17-23).

In the list presented at the Jubilee Exhibition of 1906, the statistical elements regarding the local commercial sector are scarce. The information is insufficient to offer an overview of the vitality of the field and irrelevant in the development of the main outlets. The only certainty is related to the poor presence of the Romanian ethnic groups, as shown by the data below: colonial goods shops (17) - Isac Herman, Baltar Iosef, Iţic Rendal, Natan Iaibibsohn, Herţel Marcovici, Ştrul Zalman, I. Gutman, D. Bercovici, Dumitru Vasiliu, Ştefan Olteţanu, Radu Porumbaru, Iancu Andriescu, V. Groşaru, N. Teodorescu, Constantin Palosan, Alecu Gheorghiu, Dumitru Nastase; cafes (3) - S. Iacob, St. Leibu Siegler, Lothar Loebel; furniture stores (6) - Moritz Bank, Itzic Nuham David, L. Levensohn, Wolf Mitelman, B.

Goldimberg, Zeilic Levensohn; wine warehouses (1) - Leon Glasman; "ready-made" clothes shops (2) - H. Schwartz, A. Solomovici; neckties and gloves shops (4) - Iacob Șnur, G. Hoeberg, I. Gutman, I. Bohman.

A characteristic note of the urban trade in those times – which was also preserved during the interwar period – was given by the existence of the practices related to the traveling trade. In Bacău, as in most Moldovan cities, trade was practiced especially by the inhabitants of the neighboring villages. Thus, from the early hours of the morning until noon, the streets of the city were flooded with the multitude of villagers bringing in their baskets or pots all kinds of products - from vegetables, fruits, fish, yogurt and chickens, to gas, vinegar, flower etc. In the second half of the 19th century, besides them, many Slovaks, Lipovans, but also Balkans – especially Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek, Serbian – could sell jewelry and various sweets or soft drinks, for the children's delight: traditional beverages such as *bragă*⁸, *salep* - a kind of hot *bragă* -, lemonade, ice cream, *alviță*⁹ and so on. The landscape was completed by the Gypsies, who traded a wide range of products – iron bars, flowers of all kinds, boiled corn, popcorn, wooden or bone objects, small and large cauldrons etc.

We must point out that these local economic realities, characterized, from an ethnic point of view, by an indisputable Jewish domination, were valid, at the beginning of the 20th century, for most of the urban centres in Moldova and beyond.

The explanation of the Jewish economic preponderance is as logical as possible: from 1859 until 1919, the disability of non-naturalization forced important segments of the Jewish community to perform in the only areas in which the domestic political class considered competition as "bearable" - the economic and the cultural domains. Moreover, if we were to take into account the important

⁸ *bragă* (Rom.) = refreshing beverage prepared from millet juice, boiled and fermented or from pieces of bread fermented in water.

⁹ *alviță* (Rom.) = sugar product, made from nuts, sugar or honey and starch or egg white.

percentage of annual budgets – national and local – from the taxes collected from the Jewish entrepreneurs, we can appreciate that the “business” was a profitable one for the Romanian state. After all, some of this money has financed, for example, both national education and the great wars of Romanian modernity, which have led to the independence and the creation of Great(er) Romania.

As we can plainly observe, the much discussed restrictive legislation for the Jews produced almost unnoticeable effects. Thus, we are faced with a paradoxical situation, masterfully synthesized by the historian Hary Kuller in the following quote:

Although, on the surface of the epidermis of the social body, the Jews are the object of marginalization and ostracization, in its structures and internal organs, not only that they are assimilated, but they appear even on the significant levels of the socio-occupational pyramid, being given appropriate statuses and roles; (...) finally, the Jewish ethnicity appears – under the ratio of many indicators – more developed than other ethnic or classical groups in the global Romanian society. (Kuller 1997: 93)

In other words, the hypothesis of “real emancipation, *de facto*” (Kuller 1997: 92), of the Jewish inhabitants of Romania, although contrary to a non-democratic legislation regarding the granting of Romanian citizenship, is supported and confirmed – at least in the economic field – from the statistical data “from the field”.

The beginning of the interwar period was the point when the Jewish preponderance in the local economy was made official. This happened as a result of the effects produced by the new legislation on granting land to “foreigners”: December 30, 1918 – Decree-law for obtaining Romanian citizenship; May 28, 1919 – Decree-law for granting citizenship rights to Jews born in the country (Scurtu, 1995: 123- 130). The lists of voters for the newly established Chamber of

Commerce and Industry No. 13 Bacău (September 3, 1919) attests this aspect. (*Official Monitor*, No. 111, of September 5, 1919, p. 23). Thus, the interpretation of the data from the definitive list published in December 1919 – when the legal procedures for granting citizenship were not finalized for all Jewish residents – indicates the following ethnic structure of Bacău city trade and industry: a total of 132 persons who payed taxes, of which 130 physical persons – 82 Jews and 48 Romanians, Armenians, Greeks, Italians – and legal entities – 2 companies (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 63/1919, f. 35). Corroborating these data with those from the provisional lists (October 1919) – in which other socio-professional categories are showed such as cabbies, vendors of *bragă*, painters, bakers and pretzel bakers, glass traders, vegetable seller etc. – we reach the following ethnic map of the Bacău economy from 1919: a total of 387 craftsmen, out of which 264 ethnic Jews (68.2%), 121 Romanians, Armenians, Greeks, Italians (31.3%) and 2 commercial enterprises (0.5%) (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 63/1919, f. 10-16). We draw on these statistical data in the graph below:

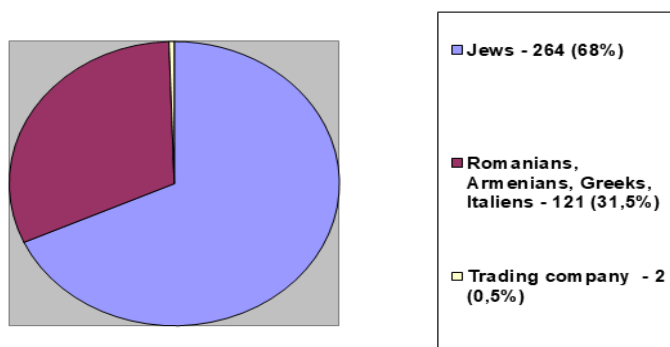


Figure 2. *The ethnic structure of the economy of Bacău - December 1919 (according to the data from the list of voters for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry No. 13 Bacău)*

The commercial life of the town, especially its food branch, has experienced a spectacular development during the interwar period. The grocery stores and colonial goods stores lured the customers all the way with different goods and delicacies, in a wide range – from the exotic fruits and spices to the varied assortment of local products - the archival documents record the existence of over 31 large grocery stores (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 5/1925, f. 11). The windows of stores were loaded with fish products (from sturgeon or Dutch herring to caviar) with all sorts of cheeses, beverage bottles, canned foods of all kinds (from sardines to compote and jams). The most prosperous business in those times were those specialized in selling fruit (Marcu Bercovici), of eggs (Simon Jaques) or of wines and spirit - Avram Adelstein, Iosif Balter, Bercu Bernstein, Gutman Avram, Ștrul Mendelovici, Naftalis Marcu, Nanu M. Isac, Leon Raisel (National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău City Hall Archival database, file 5/1925, f.8) – as well as the Armenian stores “Calustian brothers” or “Atamian brothers”, in which various kinds of coffee were sold – Moca, Seilon, Martinica, Santos and Mandarin teas.

One of the issues encountered by the Bacău Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1919) during the whole interwar period was related to the management of the frequent cases of nonobservance of the law of April 14, 1910 regarding the compulsory selling goods cessation during Sundays or national public holidays. It is almost useless to point out that, in fact, the law was never fully respected. Although, in the case of workers from large industrial units, the law was a real blessing, for the vast majority of people involved in small and medium trade, the law actually meant missing out on good business opportunities. Moreover, the most affected were the peasants from the surrounding area of the town. Even though the city provided them with the weekly fair on Thursdays, most villagers used to make purchases for household or agricultural needs only on Sundays, the Thursday fair being used exclusively for the sale or purchase of cattle

(National Archives of Romania, Bacău county branch, Bacău Chamber of Commerce and Industry Archival database, file 2/1923, f. 94).

The socio-economic implications of the law of compulsory Sunday rest had reached spheres of interest so different and complex that the proposals to modify its stipulations came from the lawmen themselves. For example, in the summer of 1923, the president of the Bacău Chamber of Commerce and Industry considered that "the most appropriate solution would be for the commercial establishments to be open on Sundays and holidays until 12:30, as done in the towns of Tecuci and Roman". In this way, the peasants could save a day's work, and the lack of commercial activity was reduced from two days (Saturday and Sunday) to a single day, the vast majority of the merchants being Jews.

The proposal received from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Bacău was accepted neither at the level of the Prefecture institution nor at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Under these conditions, the owners of the drugstores and pharmacies prospered, both being exempted from the restrictive obligations of the law. As stated in the document studied, on Sundays, in the absence of open stores, a significant part of the "villagers who come to town with birds, animals, milk or vegetable to sell, as well as the workers of the local factories, who received wages on Saturday are clogging the taverns, which have never been more flourishing".

The retail and wholesale businesses were conducted, almost entirely, by the Jewish merchants, followed, at a great distance, by the Romanians and Armenians. The data contained in the lists of voters displayed by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry No. 13 Bacău are relevant in this respect. The definitive list for the elections of 1925 indicates the following ethnic configuration of the economy of Bacău (the list presented below is incomplete, comprising only a part of the local trade categories): bakeries (17) – Anghel Ilie, I. Bercu Bercovici, Stoica Blejevici, Avram Dascălu, Nicu Filipiu, Bercu Grimberg, Beti Kemirling, Dumitru Mastrodina, Petru Mihăescu, Fani Schvartz,

Huma Schwartz, Avram Ștrul Segal, M. Teja Sterie, Ianni Vangheli, Gutman Marcu, B. Schild, "Sanitas" bakery – raised as an extension of the Filderman mill in 1920; Colonial goods stores (9) – Atamian Souren, Iosif and Finghel Ioina, brothers Hirschenbein, Nathan Iosefsohn, Isac Lupu, Aron Kraitier, I. N. Marian (besides these other colonial goods stores were enlisted, such as those owned by Ștefan Oltețianu, Ciobanu Ana Gropper); cereal trade (26) – Iacob Bercovici, Solomon Bercovici, Solomon Braunstein, Leon Calmanovici, Dikman Haim, D. Natan, Schuller Estera, Leib Gutman, Iosif Gutman, Haberman Avram, Ilie Segal, Sion Avram, Ițic Hercovich, Zeilic Hercovich, Elias Iacobsohn, Simon Altar, Herman Iacobsohn, Iancu Iancovici, Mark Leib Herșcu, Samy Litner, Maier Șmil, Haim Manase, Marcus Leib, Moise Raizel, Zisu Rozner, Șmil Meyer; timber trade (7) – Radu Barbu, Florea Tache, Solomon Ioinis, Mina Livezeanu, Mendelsohn Godel, Solomon Avram, N. D. Pătrășcanu; livestock trade (7) – Moise Klein, Avram and Moise Schapira, Haber Leizer, Avram Moscovici, Iosef and Marcu Schwartz; trade with vegetables (18) – V. Burghilea, Teodor Cojocar, Simon Gânt, Vasile Ghiță, Iliescu Dobrică, Ițic Katz, Iosif Leibovici, Simon Leibovici, Moses Leib, D. Șmil Leib, Leib Solomon, Clara Bercu, Manolescu Iordan, Beila Schwartz, St. Schwartz, Taber David, I. Todorită, Nicolae Tonea; butcher's (6) – Cristea Arnăutu, Șmil Goldștein, Herș Herșcu, Moise Meilich, Moses Moses Goldștein, Ilie Perlmenter; manufactures active in the field of clothing trade (32 - of which 28 on the Main Street) – Ilie Alaci, R. Davidsohn & D. Veinberg, Israel Eisenstein, Herman Golder, Ancel Goldstein, Aron Grimberg, Iosef Grimberg, M. Gutman, Haimsohn & L. Șaler, I. Leon & Abramovici, Lazăr Ițicsohn, K. Moise, Sofia Lăzărescu, Pascal Lazarovici, Leibovici & Reitman, Leventer Herman, Haim Löbel, Samuil Marcusohn, Mendelovici David, M. Mendelovici & Bercovici, Sachi Moscovici, Iosif Nahmansohn, Iancu Rabinovici, Avram Rappaport, Noe Schapira, I. Schnapic, I. Bernstein, F. Moscovici, Zalman Schwab, Debora Zilbernstein, Gh. Mihail, Iosef Moiescu; large blacksmithing workshops (5) – Blank L. D. – through

Andriescu brothers, Sigmund Galantar, David Goldenberg, I. Bernard, F. Klein; glassware workshops (3) – Isac Beinglas, Moise Beinglas, Moise Zilberstein.

The ethnic map of local trade remained unchanged until the dictatorial regime led by Ion Antonescu was introduced. At the end of the interwar period, according to the data from the report on the activity of the local administration in 1939, a number of 1,603 commercial companies (1939) were registered in Bacău. Their ethnic distribution was as follows: 1,110 Jewish companies (69.25%), 451 Romanian companies (28.13%), 14 Armenians, 5 with Italian employers, 3 German companies, 5 Serbs, 2 with Bulgarian employers, 12 Hungarian companies and 1 company run by a Greek. We consider that the examples presented are edifying regarding the domination that the Jews exercised over the Bacău commerce during the whole period studied by us. Moreover, these realities covered the entire area of the local economy, regardless of the branch that we would like to analyse – industry, crafts, trade. We have purposely omitted the field of financial operations or activities in cafes, taverns and pubs, knowing that these areas were almost *a priori* monopolized by Jewish inhabitants, which would only have reinforced the above conclusion.

Comparing the ethnic structure of the local demography – mostly Romanian – with the one in the economic field – mostly Jewish –, we felt compelled to find a relevant answer to the following question: in which areas, however, did the Romanian ethnicities activate? In a way, the answer has been anticipated since the beginning of this investigation: from the end of the 19th century until the outbreak of World War II, the only socio-professional fields in which the Romanian ethnic groups have benefited from consistent majorities were the jobs in the public sector – the military, teachers, civil servants etc., those from the field of liberal professions (except medicine) – engineers, architects etc. – and those related to the agricultural sector.

In the case of Bacău, in order to statistically validate this assertion, we chose the ethno-professional analysis method of the electoral lists for the 1926 communal elections with a total of 2,916

voters. The data below, presented “in the mirror”, by different fields of activity, are more than relevant:

- traders: a total of 342 persons: 270 Jews (79%), 61 Romanians (18%), 11 Armenians (3%); tailor - total - 30 people: 25 Jews (83%), 5 Romanians (17%); shoemaker - total - 59 persons: 31 Jews (53%), 28 Romanians (47%); butcher - total - 22 persons: 15 Jews (68%), 6 Romanians (27%), 1 Armenian; cabby - total - 29 people: 24 Jews (83%), 5 Romanians (17%); great industrialist - total - 49 persons: 39 Jews (79%), 10 Romanians, Armenians and Greeks (21%) and so on;
- civil servants: a total of 620 persons: 540 Romanians (87%), 62 Jews (10%), 18 Armenians (3%); teacher - total - 27 persons: 21 Romanians (78%), 4 Armenians (14%), 1 Jew and 1 Italian; teacher - total - 16 persons: 12 Romanians (75%), 3 Jews (19%) and 1 Armenian; farmer - total - 75 persons: 57 Romanians (76%), 10 Jews (13%), 8 Armenians, Greeks and so on. (11%); engineer - total - 16 people: 7 Romanians (44%), 4 Armenians and Greeks, 3 Jews, 2 naturalized Swiss; lawyer - total - 45 persons: 31 Romanians (69%), 10 Armenians and Greeks (22%), 4 Jews (9%); military officer - total - 18 persons: 10 Romanians (56%), 8 Armenians and Greeks; doctor - total - 22 people: 11 Jews (50%), 8 Romanians (36%), 3 Armenians, Greeks and so on.

Graphically, the socio-professional domains with Romanian ethnic predominance are illustrated in Fig. 3. below (1926; the relevant fields and the percentage for each ethnic group):

Ethno-professional Dialogues from Bacău Interwar Period...

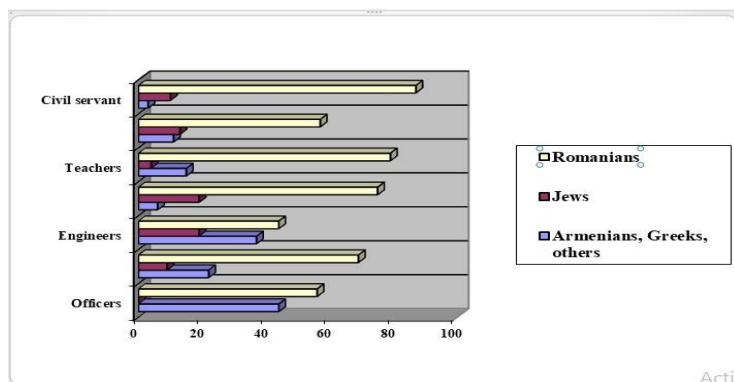


Figure 3. Socio-professional domains according to ethnicity

The information published in volume V of the census from December 1930 informs us that this local type of ethno-professional configuration was characteristic of the entire urban space in Moldova.

The statistics compiled according to the criterion of the occupational classes and that of the nationality, in 1930 illustrates that the population of Moldova was distributed as follows:

Industry	Total urban	Romanians	Hungarians	Germans	Russians	Jews
Agriculture	124.544	119.035	658	209	412	1.585
Mining	1.650	1.367	22	21	46	121
Metallurgy	17.844	11.663	284	454	247	4.215
Forestry	16.617	9.912	313	339	181	5.343
Textile	45.949	20.126	410	936	324	22.758
Food	19.836	11.212	199	272	212	6.899
Financial services	10.053	4.373	117	86	115	5.026
Commerce	74.656	21.344	614	270	677	49.419
Public Institutions	87.449	74.371	2.371	1.495	747	5.955
Total urban in Moldavia	592.127	419.081	6.711	5.808	5.209	136.643

Figure 4. Distribution of ethnic groups from Moldova according to occupational classes according in 1930

As observed from the table above, Romanian ethnic groups overwhelmingly dominate the spheres of activity in the agricultural sectors (95.57%) and public institutions (85.04%). Moreover, the degree of “absorption” that the two domains exerted on the Romanian population in the Moldavian city environment was about 50% of the total: out of 419,081 Romanian citizens, 29% were working in the agricultural sector and 18% were trained in the area of public institutions. In contrast, 53% of the total Jewish urban population was active in commerce and in the textile industry.

Conclusions

The statistical data on the ethnic map of the local economy highlight the total domination exercised by the members of the Jewish community. These realities of the local economy are all the more relevant since, in the great majority of the time period subjected to our analysis, the Jewish inhabitants were deprived of the citizens’ rights, forced, legally, to survive at the “outskirts” of the Romanian society. Even under these circumstances, being blessed with the skilfulness of the capital handling and acting united as a genuine community body, the Jews were able to gain important positions in local urban micro-corporations, following the road from the periphery to the centre. The phenomenon manifested itself predominantly in the urban environment of Moldova – the end point of the Jewish immigration in the Romanian space within the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, during this period, the Jewish community had a significant contribution to the development of the Moldavian urbanism.

Unlike them, despite the fact that they have benefited from the recognition of all rights, the Romanians leave the impression of a chronic lack of adaptation to the urban environment and, in general, to the phenomenon of modernity. A comparative study of the ethnic maps on occupations and settlement in the Moldavian urban habitat brings to light a striking coincidence: the map of the settlement of the different ethnic groups shows that the central area is occupied by Jews

and Armenians and the periphery area is inhabited by Romanians. On the other hand, the Romanian community was predominantly dependent on the state budget, while the Jewish community was economically independent (they were merchants, industrialists, bankers and businessmen).

Obviously, the explanation of this occupational imbalance – present as well in other urban environments of Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania – is not a political prohibition or discrimination, but a socio-psychological nature of the Romanian ethnic group characterized by caution, conservatism, lack of micro-community organization, and above all, the lack of tradition and the continuity of urban life, seen as a privileged space for the manifestation of community freedom/self-government. This ghastly reality, if it is to take into account the long absence of the exercise of freedom with Romanians, allowed excessive interference of the politics, with its metastatic effects propagated at the level of the entire society – central and local authoritarianism, corruption, nepotism, servitude etc.

The comparative reading of the statistical data offered us, therefore, the premises of the Romanian ethnic from Bacău portrait - a hybrid townsman, a mixture between the peasant and the first-generation town dweller, without great professional ambitions, preferring, among others, the comfort of the income provided by the state, rather than the hypothetical wealth of a risky business. Even if there was a parental model to follow, the ethnic Romanian would end up abandoning the *tradition*. The best example, in this regard, is given by Dimitrie I. Băcu - the son of Ion Băcu, "a merchant who traded colonial goods in Bacău" during the second half of the 19th century, who, after his father's death, "retired from trade flat broke, but with his honor intact, and who restarted his career getting a job in the financial sector".

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