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1 Counts relative to the proportion of Jews in various activities must always take into account, at least implicitly, the size of baptised Jewish groups. Though Jewish conversion was less frequent in Hungary (as compared to Vienna or Germany, for example), because of the secularisation of the state, the early introduction of civil marriage and the equal status of the Israelites among religious groups (1895), the baptised were mostly recruited among candidates to the elites, hence there were relatively large clusters of converts among intellectuals and other members of the middle classes.

2 Cf. relevant data in standard statistical publications related to the 1910 census, e.g., in: *Magyar statisztikai közlemények* 56, pp.713-781 for the regional and denominational distribution of professional brackets of the educated middle classes or *Ibid.*, pp.436-601, for other independent or employee middle class categories in the private economy. The development of the Jewish share in the various relevant elite clusters was opportunely overviewed by the eminent right radical statistician Alajos Kovács in his still very useful *A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon* [The *Raumbesetzung* of Jews in Hungary]. Budapest 1922.

Dualist Hungary was certainly a unique societal formation on several scores among European nation states established during the long 19th century.

It was the only country where the Catholic Counter-Reformation – however successful it may have been – could not achieve a clear denominational majority for the state religion apparent, since the demographic weight of Roman Catholics remained short of half of the population, while neither Protestants nor those of Greek ritual could gain majority positions, unlike elsewhere in the continent. It was also unique for its extraordinary ethnic diversity. No other nation building titular elite represented a minority of less than 45% only when it took on the political leadership of the would-be nation. To boot, the country never reached within its inherited, historic, »millennial« borders the stage of fully independent sovereignty. The »common affairs« continued constitutionally to bind its governments to the Cisleithenian part of the Monarchy, a development unknown in any other European nation state.

It is thus not very surprising that elites in Dualist Hungary were also radically divided along a multiplicity of denominational and ethnic lines as well as – additionally – in their relationship to the imperial center. The history of modern and modernising elites here cannot be accounted for without coming to terms with at least two processes: the highly controversial and indeed conflict-ridden and very unequal cultural assimilation and social integration of ethnic »minorities« in the politically hegemonic Magyar gentlemanly strata, on the one hand, and the internal division of labor among various denominational and ethnic sectors of the elite.

One of the aspects that was certainly most often commented on of all these developments had to do with the conspicuous presence of Jews in post-1867 elites. It is not far-fetched to advance that the impact of Jews on the modernization of the country during the long 19th century was so overwhelming that it can be regarded as an additionally unique feature of modern Hungary. Jews, demographically a mere 5% of the country's population, won hardly less than majority or *quasi*-majority positions¹ by the final phase of the Dualist period among industrial, trading or financial entrepreneurs, in the free professions (lawyers, doctors, civil engineers, journalists, etc.) and in many innovating sub-sectors of the creative intelligentsia committed to the production of high culture (psychoanalysis, publishing, architecture, music performance, etc.), thus sharing in Hungary to a much larger proportion than anywhere else in Europe the burdens and the benefits of modernization.²

One reason for such spectacular Jewish advancement in the competitive sector of the elites was, to be sure, linked to their continued exclusion from or at least negative discrimination in the state-controlled sector, including some of the rapidly growing new »public industries« like water, electricity, gas works, municipal public transportations and the railway network. Another reason may be found in the rarity of ethnically »indigenous« candidates (Magyars of Gentile background, among them members of the otherwise very large erstwhile nobility) to free market elite positions, who went on preferring the pursuance of traditional mobility paths as against modern professional, let alone entrepreneurial careers. The choice between free and state-sponsored career tracks divided largely (and statistically demonstrably) Jewish and Gentile graduates of such professional academies or faculties as those of Law or of Medicine, Jews concerned opting as a rule for free market positions and Gentiles getting engaged most often in the civil service.

Such heavy Jewish participation in the elites could not avoid eliciting a number of stereotyped images. They were connected mostly to the frailty of the process of cultural assimilation and language switch, to the power of »Jewish capitalism«, to Jewish over-urbanization (Jews dominating economic markets of cities) especially the »Judaisation of Budapest« (»Juda-pest«), the Jewish influence in the press and in liberal agencies of contemporary civil society (freemason lodges, bourgeois clubs or sports associations, etc.). In these stereotypical slogans, polemical stories (*Witze*) and public discourses, one can also identify references to the »smart Jew«. The representation of Jews as far too clever – with reference to intelligence but also shrewdness and cunning – especially when compared to the straightforward, honest but naive Magyars, belongs to the earliest stock of such stereotypical images. The leader of reform minded aristocracy, count István Széchenyi (»the greatest of Magyars« in the nationalist



3 Cited in Gyuryák, János: A zsidókérdés Magyarországon [The Jewish Question in Hungary]. Budapest: Osiris 2001, p. 267.

4 Ibid., p. 269.

5 For an overall presentation of the phenomenon cf. my studies: Juifs et Luthériens dans le système scolaire hongrois. In: Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales 69 (Sept. 1987), pp. 67-85; Jewish Over-Schooling in Hungary. Its Sociological Dimensions. In: Karady, V./Mitter, W. (Eds.): Sozialstruktur und Bildungswesen in Mitteleuropa/Social Structure and Education in Central Europe. Köln, Wien: Böhlau 1990, pp. 209-246; Social Mobility, Reproduction and Qualitative Schooling Differentials in Old Regime Hungary. In: History Department Yearbook 1994-1995. Budapest: Central European University 1995, pp. 134-156; Das Judentum als Bildungsmacht in der Moderne. Forschungsansätze zur relativen Überschulung in Mitteleuropa. In: ÖZG 1997, pp. 347-361.

6 Data in my Iskolarendszer és felekezeti egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon (1867-1945) [School system and denominational inequalities in Hungary (1867-1945)]. Budapest: Replika-könyvek 1997, p. 81.

7 With the upgrading of the Polytechnicum in Buda (1857) and the foundation of the University of Kolozsvár (1872) Hungary had three universities, to which must be added a number of vocational academies (of Law and Agriculture) as well as the Selmezbánya Academy of Mining and Forestry and the Ludovika Academy in Budapest for the training of officers – all equally upgraded during the Dualist period.

legendry) warned his peers in the Upper Chamber as early as 1844 against the premature emancipation of Jews by declaring that »those who support the nation are not in a position to grant an advantage at the expense of the nation to a cluster having more intelligence and industry [than those of our nation]«.3 Another protagonist of the liberal reform movement, Ágoston Trefort, future minister of education in the Dualist era, stated in a study of 1862 opposing German and Hungarian Jewry to the detriment of the latter in terms of the liability of assimilation, that Jewry in Hungary was otherwise endowed with characteristics like everywhere else in the world:

[...] sharp mind, special gift for trade and money business, industry and perseverance, energy to overcome obstacles, philanthropy, solidarity in family matters, but also a weak sense of honesty, superficiality, vanity, aversion to physical work, lack of cleanliness.4

The idea of the (far too) »smart Jew« functioned thus as part of the common representation of Jews well before the 1867 *Ausgleich* and the ensuing emancipation.

I am not interested here in the historical destiny of the stereotype, which continued to be consolidated in the Dualist era, but in its various strategic (voluntary) or spontaneous (unconscious) operationalizations implemented or objectivated in the conduct of large sectors of Jewry observable in the school market of the Cisleithenian part of the Dual Monarchy. The »smart Jew« here became soon, as demonstrated in the denomination specific indicators of schooling, the educated Jew, indeed the relatively but ostensibly »over-educated Jew«, especially in urban environments, where the Hungarian Jewish population tended to concentrate itself progressively. Jewish over-schooling was before and even after 1919 not only a matter of differential quantitative educational investments typical of various social and ethnic bracket of contemporary Hungarian society,5 but also a major factor of differentiation inside elites as to their educational performances, the often contrasting professional use of their degrees, their preferential options for institutions in a denominationally composite school market, etc. I will herewith briefly present major aspects of the highly selective and differential uses of the public educational provision by Jews and non-Jews in Dualist Hungary, coming close to a »dual structure« of sorts. This will clearly exemplify the range of intellectual dispositions, attitudes and drives proper to Jews exposed to assimilationist pressures as well as to the social challenges and professional chances of the post-emancipation period. The exposé will also help to understand how the transmutation of the stereotype of the »smart Jew« into the »over-educated Jew« was carried out in a society broadly receptive to the acculturation of Jews but not without reservations as to the completion of their integration in its »gentlemanly« elites.

First, one is well advised to take into account the quantitative growth of relevant denominational clusters acceding to elite education in the Dualist era. The evolution of the numbers of students in secondary schools (*Gymnasien* and *Realschulen*) as well as in universities provide the basic frame of reference for the interpretation of most educational inequalities under scrutiny. If we use indicators proportional to the size of the main denominational clusters concerned, disparities between Jewish and gentile educational efforts appear to be substantial – 1 to 2 or 1 to 3 – already in the years following the *Ausgleich*, but only to be gradually increased decisively during later decades – up to 1 to 5 or 1 to 8. In 1870 there were 71 Jewish university students for a population of 100,000, but only 20-25 among the Christians. Jewish representation went up to 205 twenty years later while that of Christians remained close to the earlier zone, between 27-36 for each 100,000. Among secondary school students the trend was fundamentally identical with a smaller scope of diversity: in 1870, some 719 Jews in 100,000, while 272-419 Christians in 100,000 visited secondary school, in 1890 some 1115 Jews but only 265-343 Christians.6 These numbers clearly show that in the first phase of post-emancipation modernization, Jews were the only net beneficiaries of the expanding educational opportunities in the nationalized market of elite schooling. Their share among students, strikingly high already initially, did not cease growing significantly in the next decades (trebling in universities) while that of their gentile counterparts actually tended to stagnate or display a modest extension only (in universities7) or even to decline (in classical secondary schools).

The above indications can in fact be extended, specified and generalized for the whole period if we resort to strictly age specific data of school attendance. Comparing the number of students in classical secondary schools to the 10-18 age groups concerned, from 1869 to 1910 the representation of Catholics and Calvinists in elite schooling hardly increased (from 3,4% to



8 Karady 1997, p. 181.

9 In the early 20th century, Jews made up more than a quarter of the pupils in the *Bürgerschulen*. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

10 Where Jews used to fill the majority or near the majority of banks at the turn of the century. In: *Ibid.*

11 The estimated proportions were more precisely 38% for Jews, 10% for Lutherans, 6% for Catholics, 7.5% for Calvinists but only 3% for Greek Orthodox. Cf. my *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek (1867-1945) [Jewry and social inequalities, 1867-1945]*. Budapest: Replika-könyvek 2000, p. 226.

12 For regional, religious and social divisions of Hungary in the Carpathian Basin cf. my study: *Religious Divisions, Socio-Economic Stratification and the Modernization of Hungarian Jewry after Emancipation*. In: Silber, Michael K. (Ed.): *Jews in the Hungarian Economy 1760-1945*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew Univ. 1992, pp. 161-184.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

14 On the whole problem of segregation see the relevant chapter in Karady 2000, pp.169-192 and the sub-chapter in Karady 1997, pp. 160-165.

4,1% for the former, from 4,5% to a mere 4,7% for the latter), while that of Lutherans went up from 5,3% to only 6,2%, to be contrasted with the extension of Jewish participation from (8,8% to 20,1%).⁸ In a nutshell, the statistical probability of Gentiles to enter into and complete a *Gymnasium* or a *Realschule* did not change demonstrably throughout the bulk of the Dualist époque. As for Jews, similar probabilities more than doubled. By the end of the period one out of five Jewish youth attended a classical secondary school – and, for that matter, even more often a non-classical *Bürgerschule*⁹ or a Higher Commercial school, the latter conducive to a *Matura* degree.¹⁰ With some two fifths of the Jewish youth educated in a secondary school (whether classical or other) by 1910, as opposed to only 3-10% of the gentile population,¹¹ Jewish participation in elite schooling proved to exceed so decisively the nation wide average, that Jews could, by then, be qualified as the only formally over-educated cluster of would-be Hungarian elites.

At closer scrutiny, even such measures of over-schooling may be reassessed upwardly for urbanized »neologue« or secular (let alone converted) Jewry, settled in their majority in the South-Central and Western regions of the country (especially in Budapest, where a quarter of the Hungarian Jewry lived), as opposed to traditionalist Orthodoxy, which remained established mostly in Northern and Eastern Hungary.¹² In the capital city over one fifth of all Jewish males had completed a *Matura* by 1910 as opposed to less than half of this proportion (8,6%) in Orthodox townships and 3% in Orthodox counties. In Máramaros county though, the stronghold of Hassidism and Galician type shtetl culture, the proportion of secondary school graduates fell short of 1%.¹³ Thus, over-education was the privilege of urban and Western type Jewry. The »smart Jew« in its modern configuration was regarded as »modernized«, both on the strength of its high level public schooling and a decisive extent of secularization as well as, hence, estrangement from traditional beliefs and ways.

If markedly over-educated, the »smart Jew« obtained his formal educational credentials not necessarily in the same institutions as his gentile contemporaries.

On university level, options remained limited up to the end of the Monarchy, since the market of higher education was heavily concentrated in the capital city, with some much smaller provincial institutions. The only difference here is imbedded in the preferential choices – whenever available – for precisely provincial institutions by many gentile students, especially the Kolozsvár Faculty of Law (which exceeded in size its Budapest counterpart by the early 20th century) and the legal academies in the provinces. Jews on the contrary opted preferentially for universities in the capital.

There was a much larger diversity in secondary education, provided by a remarkably decentralized network of institutions. During most of the 19th century, before the *Ausgleich*, Hungarian secondary schools operated under Church control, each Christian denomination having its own *Gymnasien* following more or less closely State regulations or placed (like the Catholic schools) under State control proper. From the 1860's onwards, municipal governments, counties and later the state itself started to build up its own network of schools for elite training, first more often *Realschulen*, then *Gymnasien*, and others (including *Bürgerschulen* and Commercial colleges). By the early 20th century the secondary school market became a virtual field of competition divided basically between Catholic, Protestant and Public institutions. As for Jews, the most committed clients of secondary education, they abstained from founding schools of their own before 1919 in a market that bore to a large extent the imprint of denominational (self-)segregation, if not that of discrimination. Preferential school choices were always directed, understandably, to institutions run by one's own church. This could not apply to Jews, hence their distinctive behavior in this respect.¹⁴ The pattern of Jewish options can be described as follows.

Broadly speaking, up to the outgoing 19th century, Jewish students remained more or less equally distributed, much like Gentiles, according to the size of various denominational sectors of secondary education. If there was a measure of segregation among institutions dominated at that time by the Churches, it concerned Protestants and Catholics, both tending to avoid (or be kept aloof from) institutions of the opposite denominational cluster. This game, part of the large-scale conflict situation between the Roman and the reformed churches, left Jews not much involved. When there was, locally, a choice, they tended to be sure to opt for a public school against a denominational one, but this happened rarely, since in most cities outside Budapest there was only one school. But from the early 20th century onwards two parallel developments occurred. Following the »church political« laws of secularisation promulga-



15 See Karady 1997, p.162.

16 On the financial overcharge that burdened Jewish inscriptions in the Protestant and (more rarely) the Catholic sector see Karady 2000, pp. 177, 179 and 180 [footnotes].

17 See Karady 1997, pp. 22, 96, 161.

18 Ibid., p. 21.

19 Ibid., p. 135.

20 Ibid., p. 23.

21 Ibid., p. 208.

22 Ibid., p. 135.

23 Ibid., p. 34.

24 Ibid., p. 127, 143 [note].

25 Ibid., pp. 117-125, 137f., 140, 192.

26 Ibid., p. 118f.

27 Ibid., p. 120.

28 Ibid., pp. 120, 125, 137-138.

29 Cf. my quite recent study: Testnevelés, iskolai értékrend, asszimiláció. Jegyzet a vidéki középiskolások felekezeti sajátos teljesítménykülönbségeiről a század elején [Physical education, school values and assimilation. Study of denominational specific performance differentials among provincial secondary school pupils in the early 20th century]. In: Iskolakultúra XII (Jan. 2003), pp. 25-36.



ted in the mid 1890's, the Catholic sector started to close its schools to all non-Catholics, meanwhile the public sector continued to develop, taking an ever larger share in the school market, especially in Budapest and the cities, where the majority of the Jewish educational demand was located. Hence there occurred a progressive shift, incomplete before 1919, of Jewish students from Catholic to Protestant and more and more to denominationally neutral state, municipal or even private *Gymnasien* and *Realschulen*. In 1893/4 only 22% of Jewish secondary students attended other than church institutions, while 12% of the Gentiles did so. The comparable proportions reached half of all Jewish students and only 32% of Gentiles some twenty years later.¹⁵ In 1908-1914 Jews represented 34% of the public in State secondary schools, 31% in municipal and 21% in private institutions, though by that time, the demographic decline of urban Jewry contributed significantly to rarify the general proportions of Jews in elite (and other) schooling.

Thus in the final phase of Dualism, Jews came to be associated more and more with the public elite educational sector – especially if the usually public *Realschulen* are considered with preferential Jewish attendance –, as well as, to some extent, with the Protestant, particularly with the Lutheran one. In Lutheran Gymnasiums, Jewish participation remained high, often quite decisive, like in the Budapest Lutheran Gymnasium, regularly displaying a Jewish majority (!) among its students before 1919, though it had to be paid for by tuition fees that were high above the average.¹⁶ It is thus not far-fetched to observe that the stereotypical image of public, private and Lutheran institutions came henceforth strongly marked by their Jewish clientele, while Catholic and, to some extent Calvinist schools succeeded in keeping their »purely Christian« or »essentially gentile« self-representation. One should not forget, though, that such marked Jewish presence in public, private and Lutheran institutions was the direct consequence of both the continued general Jewish over-education and the internal structure of the market of elite schooling.

However important these developments may have been, the most significant feature of the »smart Jew« of late Dualist Hungary lay in specific patterns of Jewish over-achievements in the educational process. Qualitative Jewish over-performances observable at that time can be assessed by a number of convergent indices. They include official statistics of denomination specific average marks at *Matura*,¹⁷ particularly low proportions of those obliged to repeat classes in primary education,¹⁸ the high proportion of those attaining exit class among school beginners,¹⁹ high proportions of those graduating within five years after having started university studies,²⁰ similarly high proportions graduating in universities before the age of 27 years,²¹ low rates of drop-outs during secondary studies,²² various distinctive cultural indicators pertaining to Jewish traders in Budapest,²³ the availability of »linguistic capital« (the knowledge of foreign tongues)²⁴ or, more specifically, distinctive excellence as measured by average marks in various subjects taught in *Gymnasien*.²⁵ It is worth looking at the latter in some details, since they yield information liable to be interpreted as differential orientational patterns, proper to denominational groups, as to intellectual interests invested in the educational process.

The main findings here concern qualitatively better Jewish but also, to some extent Lutheran performances as against all other groups in the main subjects taught in late Dualist secondary schools. But Lutherans represented only a small minority of globally less than one tenth of the pupils, heavily concentrated in their own or in public schools, thus not always liable to be distinguished in the samples used, even in big cities, unlike Jews – who were most often present in large numbers in all schools, even in the Catholic ones.

If one examines academic performances separately in various subjects, some recurrent discrepancies in Jewish achievements become apparent behind global indicators of their relative eminence. Jews indeed appeared to be – in large samples of the pre-World War I years and even later – to be the best in all the academically most demanding subjects, on average, but their outstanding performances were particularly striking in languages (German and Latin) as well as in the »national« subjects (Hungarian and History), while their advancement as compared to other pupils was less marked in Mathematics and Physics. To these general patterns there was but one exception, Sports, in which Jews systematically attained mediocre results, indeed the worst among all other denominational groups. Jews manifestly over-performed in the »intellectual« subjects and under-performed in physical education. It is important to note that these general results can be reached not only in every available sample (Budapest,²⁶ Szeged,²⁷ Jászberény,²⁸ large number of provincial *Gymnasien* and *Realschulen*²⁹), but they can



³⁰ See Karady 1997, p. 125.

³¹ Ibid., p. 118f.

³² I have tried this in unpublished experimental surveys for large samples of pupils in Suceava (German *Gymnasium* in Bukovina), in Czernowitz (2 German *Gymnasien*) and in Lemberg (2 Polish *Gymnasien*) for the years 1900-1914. The results confirm Jewish excellence in the »hard« intellectual subjects and weak performances in sports.

³³ Such interpretations were attempted in the studies cited, especially in Karady 1997, pp. 117-130, 141-143.

be attested in each case when comparing Jews with non-Jews in categories of various social class backgrounds.

Thus, Jews were not only much more likely to receive elite education than Gentiles were, but their achievements were also higher in the main subjects, except in sports. As to the latter one can go further and show that weak performance in sports depended to some extent on historical junctures as well. Jewish under-performance was even aggravated in sports later, under the rise of fascism³⁰, while surviving students tended to perform much better after the *Shoah* (according to as yet unpublished results for Budapest). There may have been a class-related connection, too, in this respect, since in the Dualist era the most »assimilated« social clusters of Jewish students (by their fathers' professional standing) were also inclined to higher achievements in sports as compared to other Jews in secondary education.³¹

Further research would certainly be welcome to confirm and specify these results, explore their geopolitical dimensions (and possibly their general applicability) elsewhere than in Hungary,³² contribute to details of their explanation which, for all practical purposes, must take into account Jewish assimilationist strategies and intellectual heritage together with the cultural *biases* attributable to (mostly gentile) teachers, having the high hand over the appreciation of school performances.³³

Whatever the complementary results provided by such studies, the »smart Jew« appears to be a big performer in classical educational tracks. Stereotypes were thus confirmed by statistical reality and the latter, most probably, was fed by Jewish dispositional factors gained from stereotypical self-images liable to be instrumentalised in support of further scholarly performances. But the »smart Jew« could and demonstrably did trigger hostile reactions as well. It could enrich anti-Semitic phantasmagoria about the *danger* of Jews since »smartness« could easily nourish inferiority complexes and representations of efficiency of Jews to harm gentiles on the strength of their intellectual (and presumably other) capacities. The »smart Jew« was, with the benefit of hindsight, obviously not an innocent stereotype, like most other stereotypical images. If, for Jews, it could contribute to the illusion of the full success of assimilation – since school results were won in a field of apparently »purely meritocratic« competition –, for their often primordially (or primitively) hostile environment it could objectivate the necessity to step up the fight against these manifestly powerful, over-performing antagonists.



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