

Socio-Economic Aspects of Anti-Semitism in Ireland, 1880-1905

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Précis: Sociological research in Ireland is committed to an unhealthy reliance on survey analysis techniques. The major defect of such an approach is that the insights of historical and comparative approaches are frequently absent. This paper has the primary aim of examining the nature of anti-Semitic prejudice in a particular period of Irish history, disabusing the notion that anti-Semitism did not exist in Ireland. A secondary aim is to demonstrate the importance of historical and comparative approaches in sociology and it is argued that the interpretation of survey data requires the insights of an interdisciplinary approach if it is to have serious validity.

I INTRODUCTION

The publication in 1977 of *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland* by Father Micheál MacGréil is a welcome contribution to an understanding of contemporary Irish society and it will doubtless serve as a valuable source of reference for years to come. It provides proof, if proof were needed, of the existence of prejudice against most groups at all levels of society in Ireland. It is unfortunate, however, that the book has had such an uncritical reception in Ireland, which, while rightly emphasising the strong points of the work, tends to overlook some of the more obvious methodological weaknesses in it. This is particularly true of the chapter on anti-Semitism which lacks explanatory power, mainly due to a failure to place it within a coherent theoretical and historical framework.

It is not proposed here to engage in an overall critique of the survey method of sociology although it is suggested that, in Lucy Dawidowicz's phrase, it provides little more than "periodic pulse taking" (Dawidowicz 1970, p.42). Rather, the MacGréil findings on economic anti-Semitism and the underlying assumptions will be examined and, as a counter-balance, the sociological sources of economic anti-Semitism will be treated in relation to the historical experience in Ireland at a formative period in Irish-Jewish relations.

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II THE MACGRÉIL SURVEY

Two questions were asked relating to Jews and money: 57.3 per cent of the 2,289 respondents believed "That Jewish power and control in money matters is far out of proportion to the number of Jews" and 49.2 per cent believed "That Jews are behind the money lending rackets in Dublin" (p. 333). It is evident that the perception of undue Jewish involvement in finance and commerce is one of the most enduring of anti-Semitic myths.

To explain the first item, it was argued that "There is no evidence of this over-representation of Jews in the control of money" and that "Certainly in the Republic of Ireland, Jews have not been particularly prominent in the Central Bank and other Irish Banks" (p. 334). It is not clear if this item was intended to relate solely to the activities of Jews in Ireland but it is possible to answer the question in terms of a belief in conspiracy theory where the image of the International Banker merges with that of the International Jew.

The second item is unfortunate in its emotive use of the word "racket" in relation to money lending. It is admitted that "while there may be a number of Irish Jews registered as money lenders, there is no evidence available to implicate Jews in illicit money lending, i.e., found guilty before the courts" (p. 334). This simplistic type of explanation ignores the low esteem in which money lending practices have traditionally been held. A registered money lender can still be considered to be operating a racket by those who are obliged to use his services.

MacGréil sees these beliefs as the result of negative stereotypes. He relies on the Bogardus definition of stereotypes as "the unscientific and hence unreliable generalisations that people make about other people either as persons or groups" and he argues that stereotypes "are usually fixed at the time of their origin, thus making their present relevance for the group obsolete" (p. 10). However, as Allport (1958, p. 185) points out "an image manifestly comes from somewhere" and although he says that "It is possible for a stereotype to grow in defiance of all evidence" he accepts that "Other stereotypes may, of course, have a kernel of truth". Vinacke (1949, p. 265) makes the point more strongly: "There is no reason to suppose that stereotypes are necessarily completely false. A given stereotype, although shaped and evaluated, in part by the cultural blindness of ethnocentrism, and strengthened by it, may also include outstanding and generally true traits of another group". The explicit assumptions of MacGréil of the fixed and inaccurate nature of stereotypes inevitably leads to a one-sided explanation of anti-Semitism. Reichmann (1950 p. 31) recognised this danger when she wrote, "to regard the anti-Semitic ideology as a mere invention without any objective foundation whatever, is to overlook the fact that co-existence of divergent groups may very well involve an objective social problem". What is being argued in this paper is that, although the stereotype of the Jew as moneylender originated in the middle ages, Jews have continued to fulfil this role and, therefore, the stereotype has its kernel of truth. A recognition that some Jews are engaged in a particular economic activity cannot be used as a justification for anti-Semitism, but it must be taken into account in any explanation that will

transcend the purely psychological. The criticism is not, therefore, with MacGréil's findings, but with the nature of the explanations and the failure to locate the anti-Semitic sentiments in the social structure. Before examining the economic activities of the Jews in Ireland it is necessary to consider briefly the origins of the stereotype.

III MIDDLEMAN MINORITIES

The negative economic stereotype of the Jews and the subsequent hostility which they have encountered have specific roots in the antagonistic relationship between Christians and Jews in the medieval period; however, the economic activities in which they have been engaged are not exclusively Jewish but characteristic of a wide range of ethnic and religious groups. Following in the tradition established by Weber in his designation of the Jews of the diaspora as a pariah people, the past twenty-five years have witnessed an increasing interest in the economic roles of these groups: the Jews of Europe, the Chinese of South East Asia, the Parsis of India, the Japanese and Greeks of the United States, the Armenians of Turkey, the Syrians of West Africa, and many more. That the Jews are a classic example of this form is emphasised by the parallels drawn between them and other groups, the Parsis being known as "the Jews of India" or the Chinese as "the Jews of the Orient."

Focusing on the nature of their economic roles, these groups have variously been identified as "pariah people" (Weber 1952), "middleman trading peoples" (Becker 1956), "marginal trading peoples" and "permanent minorities" (Stryker 1959). From Blalock (1967), Bonacich (1973) uses, with some reservations, the term "middleman minorities" and that term will be used here. It demonstrates that in their concentration in certain occupations particularly trade and commerce, these minorities act as middlemen between producer and consumer, employer and employee, owner and renter, elite and masses (*ibid.* p. 583). Minority group participation in middleman activities can partly be explained by reference to hostile reactions on the part of the host society which denies them access to more privileged occupations yet not all middleman minorities meet with hostility. It seems reasonable to suggest that "When a new ethnic or religious group immigrates into an already settled land it usually finds it difficult to penetrate into the established economic and social positions. It is therefore obliged to seek sources of income which are as yet untapped" (Weinryb 1946, p. 18).

Hostile treatment is a common but not invariant theme of minority group experiences and this draws attention to the political setting in which host-guest conflict can occur. A comparative study by Stryker (1959) shows that hostility directed against two middleman minority groups, Jews in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Armenians in Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was never directed against the Parsis of India.

The three groups shared common characteristics: participation in occupations which, while functionally important and financially remunerative, were

conspicuous and socially despicable; religion, community and family structures separated them from the host societies; they were in a dependent power relationship *vis à vis* the societies in which they lived. The distinguishing variable, Stryker argues, is that the groups which were subjected to hostility lived in societies where the dominant political motif was that of an emerging nationalism which postulated a cultural unity that set minority groups outside its boundaries. The Parsis, on the other hand, lived in a society where the fundamental principle was not unity but diversity. A generalised attitude toward minority groups cannot be explained solely in terms of psychological factors but must take account of the nature of the society concerned.

In the period under review there was a continued increase in religious and political activity in Ireland. The post-famine upsurge in Catholic religious devotion continued and the political and economic factors in Irish nationalism came to be dominated by a cultural nationalism which was increasingly Catholic in content. While Irish Catholicism never gave expression to the crude anti-Semitism of, say, France nor Irish nationalism to the overt racial ideology of German nationalism, economic anti-Semitism in Ireland was affected by religious and political factors. Jews were little known in Ireland for most of the nineteenth century except in terms of the medieval stereotype, the "Christ-killer" of the catechism and the "perfidious Jew" of the Good Friday liturgy. There was some awareness of anti-Semitism in Europe with the *Dublin Review* (October 1887 and January 1888) carrying two hostile articles, mainly based on the writings of Edouard Drumont, on the Jews in France. *The Irish Catholic*, a weekly newspaper whose lay editor was dedicated to the proposition that "the will and conscience of the Catholic people shall rule the country" (quoted in O'Farrell 1971, p. 201), was unsympathetic to the Jews of Europe when Catholic interests appeared to be threatened (e.g., 12 October 1889, 13 February 1892) yet it could be critical of Jewish persecution in Russia (e.g., 2 August 1890; 13 September 1890; 25 April 1891).

While the Irish Parliamentary Party did not, to the best of Professor F. S. L. Lyons knowledge, have a stated policy in respect of anti-Semitism (a personal communication from Professor F. S. L. Lyons, Trinity College, Dublin, dated 1 August 1978) reactions to anti-Semitism in Ireland show that the leadings figures – Parnell, Davitt, Redmond – were opposed to it. Davitt's rebuke of a Labour Federation colleague accused of expressing anti-Semitic sentiments was a swift and detailed exposition of the ruling classes use of anti-Semitism as a tactic to weaken trade union solidarity (*Freemans Journal*, 10 July 1893). In 1894 a violent attack on Cork Jews was condemned by Justin McCarthy and John Redmond (Hyman 1972, p. 222) but their attitudes were not shared by Cork Nationalists, one of whom, Dr Tanner, MP, suggested that they be expelled from the city (Cork Constitution, 16 July 1895). The anti-Parnellites also threatened the Jews in Cork in the event of their voting against them (Emmanuel 1910, p. 138). Although still outside the mainstream of Nationalist politics, Arthur Griffith was a leading anti-Semite of his day, using his *United Irishman* newspaper to propagate his version of the Jewish conspiracy myth. Religious and political sentiments,

then, were not entirely absent and served to reinforce the socio-economic basis of anti-Semitism in Ireland.

IV THE EAST EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION

The earliest Jewish community in Ireland was established in Dublin in the seventeenth century, probably by Sephardic Jews, but it virtually died out and was supplanted in the 1830s by a group of English-speaking Jews. The most significant impact on the size and structure of the Jewish population was caused by the arrival of thousands of poverty-stricken Jews escaping from the Russian pogroms of the 1880s. It is not immediately clear why so many Jews should have come to Ireland in view of the comparative lack of commercial and industrial opportunities, although a group of twenty-five young Jews had come from Lithuania in the late 1870s, prior to the pogroms (Hyman 1972, p. 155). The idea persists that the London Board of Guardians of British Jews was active in trying to prevent the build-up of large Jewish ghettos, especially in London, by dispersing as many as possible to the provinces, including Ireland (Gartner 1960, pp. 24-26, 148-149; Zlotover 1966, p. 25).

In 1881, the Jewish population of Ireland was 472 but by 1891 this had increased to 1,779 and in 1901 the figure was 3,769 (Census Reports 1881-1901) which was small in comparison with the estimated 120,000 Jewish immigrants who had settled in England (Gartner 1960 p. 274). The Jewish question did not command the same attention in Ireland as it did in England but the sudden influx of the European Jews had important internal and external consequences for the local Jewish community.

Prior to the East European immigration, the "native" Jewish community, centred mainly in Dublin, was a closely knit group of some forty to fifty families, constituted almost entirely of manufacturers and craftsmen (Quinn 1965/66, p. 587). One of the weaknesses in its internal structure was the lack of an organised system of social welfare. The native community was unable to provide an adequate level of financial aid to the newcomers. The ability of private philanthropy was strained to meet the needs of the growing community and there was an element of discrimination upon "native and deserving poor" (ibid., p. 588). This deficiency was partly overcome by the establishment in 1889 of the Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor of Dublin, followed by similar bodies in Belfast, Cork and Limerick.

The East European immigrants settled mainly in the larger urban centres, and in keeping with Jewish practice, congregated in geographically specific areas. Immigrants generally tend to establish common residential areas but this had a special significance for Jews. According to Cohen (1929, p. 34) "To a large extent the modern ghetto is necessitated by the precepts and practices of orthodox Judaism, by the need of dwelling within easy reach of the synagogue, the schoolrooms and the ritual bath, the kosher butcher shop and the kosher dairy". In addition, "Ignorance of the language of the new country, of its labour conditions, and of its general habits and ways of thought,

as well as the natural timidity of a fugitive from a land of persecution, compels the immigrant Jew to settle in the colony of his co-religionists" (ibid., p. 38). The ghetto can be seen, then, as a way of reconstructing as far as possible life in the country of origin. There are, of course, disadvantages in that even voluntary segregation leads to greater social distance between the host community and the guests. The sense of exclusiveness reduces contacts mainly to business transactions, thereby reinforcing the economic stereotype.

V JEWISH ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN IRELAND

In the period under review, the Irish economy suffered a series of setbacks from the succession of bad harvests from 1877 to 1879. Falling agricultural output coincided with falling prices and the effects continued throughout most of the next decade (Cullen, 1972, pp. 148-150). There was a growing feeling that Catholics were not getting a fair share in the economy and the Land League was, in part, a reflection of this, followed by the Dublin-based Catholic Association in 1902. In 1884 it was alleged that "The chief streets of the Irish capital are almost exclusively occupied by the shops of foreigners" (*United Ireland*, 26th January 1884). In all sectors of the economy, Catholic participation was not commensurate with their numbers in the country. Only in the licensed victualler trade did they tend to dominate. In farming they were economically subordinate to the mainly Protestant landowners. The number of people directly engaged in agriculture was the largest single group in the economy and with the irregularity and uncertainty of a cash income, this group had frequent recourse to shop credit and the services of money lenders.

The Jewish immigrants had to exploit whatever gaps could be found in the economic structure. With a history of involvement in trade and commerce this was an obvious choice especially, as Simmel points out, "Trade can always absorb more people than primary production" (Wolff, 1950, p. 403). The attention given to the arrival of the Russian Jews in the Census Reports affords some indication of the economic roles they filled.

Table 1: *Occupational distribution of Jews in Ireland 1891-1901*

<i>Occupational category</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1901</i>
Pedlars	227	223
Students	109	200
Drapers	125	261
Commercial Travellers	39	88
General Dealers	32	64
Tailors	—	72
Domestic Servants	—	66
Total	532	974
<i>Total Jewish Population</i>	1779	3771

Source: Census Reports 1891-1901.

Of the total Jewish population in Ireland in 1891, approximately 21.4 per cent were engaged in some form of retail trade. By 1901, this proportion had fallen to 18.77 per cent although there had been an increase in absolute terms. The data do not indicate a threat to merchants or peasantry but they do suggest the basis for economic anti-Semitism which was already complicated by other factors including religion and nationalism. More or less contemporary accounts which relate to the activities of Jewish pedlars are given in an exaggerated nationalistic fashion (Bulfin, 1907, pp. 307-309 and O'Donnell, 1908 pp. 182-183).

These activities coincided with changes in the Irish economy, notably in an increase in the number of retail outlets (Cullen 1972, pp. 140, 156) and the growth of the co-operative movement (Bolger 1977). The debate on the role of the shopkeeper has been recently revived (Gibbon and Higgins 1974, 1977; Kennedy 1977). Contemporary accounts differ as to the usefulness of his economic functions. The economic historian, George O'Brien, has written of the shopkeeper in the pre-famine period that "Where any goods were obtained on credit from shopkeepers in neighbouring towns, the cottiers were forced to pay unreasonable rates of interest" (O'Brien 1921, p. 547). This view was echoed by Horace Plunkett, a leading figure in the Irish co-operative movement, when he gave evidence to the Select Committee on Money Lending that the worst form of shop credit was "where very little money passes, where the shopkeeper allows (almost on principle) every new customer to get to a certain depth in his books and the account if it is reduced is generally reduced more by a system of barter (giving eggs, poultry, and so on, and even labour, to the shopkeeper), than by direct payment of money". This leads to "the double profit, the profit through getting goods at the lower rate than the market rate, and of course, the interest" (Select Committee on Money Lending 1898, Q. 1945). This does not, however, fully explain the role of the shopkeeper, particularly in rural areas, where they performed more than their obvious economic functions because they formed part of a network of social relationships that had been established over generations.

Arensberg (1937, Chapter 5) has noted that the shopkeeper's business was dependent on a kinship network linking town and country. In a peasant economy cash income was irregular, thus increasing credit requirements. The shopkeeper's dependence on regular customers meant that he must permit, even encourage, a certain level of indebtedness. (Benedict (1964, p. 342), suggests that this running debt can be seen as a kind of capital investment which the shopkeeper makes in his customers, in return for which he secures their custom.) The granting of credit was not determined solely by the canons of economic rationality but was tempered by demands of kinship and friendship. Arensberg viewed this relationship as reciprocal but he is explicitly aware that it was not perfectly symmetrical because the shopkeeper held the whip-hand (*ibid.* pp. 172-173). Yet if he pressed too hard for payment he risked the loss of both customer and friend. Thus, despite criticisms of an "unusually rigid functionalism" (Brody 1973, p.6), Arensberg recognised the tenuous nature of the relationship. This delicate balance, therefore, was jeopardised in some areas by the intrusion of Jewish pedlars.

Having located themselves in the main commercial centres, the Jews built up a network of trade in town and country, particularly in the south and west, collecting debts due and canvassing for new business. Economic rationalism was a characteristic of their business transactions and ties of kinship and friendship played no part. This applied equally to Jew and non-Jew (*Limerick Leader*, 14th June 1895; *All Ireland Review* 18th October 1902). Interestingly, the charge of dual morality which Weber (1952, pp. 343-355) ascribed to Jews was seldom referred to and on one occasion was readily withdrawn after a protest (*Irish Catholic*, 23rd September 1893; 7th October 1893). However, three traditional themes in the history of anti-Semitism were raised: the introduction of the weekly instalment system, a predilection for cheap goods, and an inherently superior intelligence.

Sombart, who considered that the Jews were a decisive factor in the development of modern capitalism, credited them with several innovatory business methods, including the system of payment by instalments (1962, p. 155). They were also credited with introducing this into Ireland (Zlotover 1966, p. 26). The resentment against this system was related to the charge of selling cheap goods or "shoddy". In Ireland "He carries bundles of cheap wares, or he is laden with pious pictures, or statues of the Christian Redeemer whose name and following he abhors" (*Lyceum* July 1893, p. 217). The Jewish pedlar can make a "respectable profit" but "the housewife who has purchased her piece of cloth or her pious picture and pays for it in threepences and sixpences does not realise the extent of her expenditure as she would do had she paid down five shillings in one sum" (*ibid.*, p. 217). Arthur Griffith's newspaper, *United Irishman*, also condemned the weekly instalment system which was "almost solely in the hands of foreign Jews" who dealt in "shoddy" which was "dear to the heart of the Jew and dearer to the pocket of his customers" (13th September 1902). Like *Lyceum* (August, 1893, p. 238), the *United Irishman* claimed that the criticism of Jews was not "because of his religion or nationality but solely on account of his business methods"

Despite the claim that the Jews were opposed on economic grounds alone, it was admitted that "We find in the Jewish habit of mind, in the Jewish character, as it exhibits itself in the social life of other people, sufficient to make their presence in Ireland on any large scale obnoxious" (*Lyceum*, September 1893, p. 251). One aspect of the Jewish character is manifested in his "intellectual superiority" which leads to "a certain contempt for the people he considers mentally his inferiors, and to inspire his rivals with a jealous envy which helps to prepare the way for feelings of hate and distrust with which the Jews are generally regarded" (*ibid.*). The Irish peasant was not believed to be the intellectual equal of the Jews, and wherever he went he would find himself cheated by the "Saxon" and the "Hebrew" because "the Irishman is as a child in the ways of Anglo-Saxon-Jewish civilization" (*United Irishman*, 16th June 1900).

These objections to the entry of "foreign Jews" into Irish economic life frequently resulted in physical violence and boycotting. An attack on Limerick Jews in 1884 had an apparent religious origin but the incident was used as a

means of debt evasion — medieval outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence were often instigated for this purpose. The attack which began on Easter Sunday was seen as a real medieval anti-Jewish riot animated by ignorance of Jewish customs and jealousy of Jewish exclusiveness (*American Hebrew*, vol. XVIII (5644), quoted in Glanz 1966, p. 23). As more attacks followed, the economic tensions became more evident. In a subsequent court case, the consensus of opinion was that the motive of the attackers was “to enable them to rob the Jews of their property” and that it was “merely a cloak to hide a bad state of things — to hide the robbery, by the people, from the Jews of the property they had given out to the people”, a way “to escape from paying debts they owed to the Jews” (*Limerick Chronicle*, 3rd May 1884). A threat of economic boycott caused many Jews to move to Cork but when the threat did not materialise some returned to Limerick.

This was the forerunner of a series of attacks on Jews in the Limerick area. (See, for example, *London Times* 30th May 1887; 3rd September 1892; *Jewish Chronicle*, 12th April 1889; *Limerick Leader*, 25th January 1897). There is no evidence to suggest that all of these attacks were economically motivated although Jewish pedlars were occasionally robbed of their goods (*Limerick Leader*, 3rd May 1889, 9th February 1900). Attacks took place in other areas such as Belfast (Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers (CSORP) File No. 16366, 1897; *Irish News*, 13th and 26th February 1904) and Killaloe (*Jewish Chronicle*, 22nd January 1904) and all conformed to the same general pattern with nothing to suggest premeditation. Occasionally, however, campaigns were mounted against the Jews, as in Dublin in 1886. A poster campaign organised by local merchants warned against the “Invasion of Ireland by German Jews, Organ Grinders and Street Musicians”. The posters alleged that the Jews “are hunted from Russia and other countries for being a scourge and a ruin to every business by every unprincipled means they can adopt . . . hawking all kinds of foreign-made rubbish . . . by weekly instalments” and therefore “We call upon every Irishman and woman to buy from their own countrymen only” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 29th October, 1886). Some Jews were assaulted but the campaign was short-lived and ineffective, suggesting that anti-Semitism was perhaps strongest in provincial areas.

The distinction between Irish Catholic and foreign Jew was even more pronounced at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council in 1888. In February of that year, two Polish Jews had established a cabinet making business, employing mainly Jewish workmen and obtaining credit in the city (CSORP, File No. 5507, 1888). Materials were obtained from outside Cork which appears to have angered members of the Trades Council. At a subsequent meeting, one of them condemned the local Jewish community, then numbering about 300 people, as “crucifying gypsies” who should be exterminated. Another saw them as “vampires” — sucking the economic life out of Cork (*London Times*, 9th March 1888). The Council President, Eugene Crean, wanted steps taken to rid the city of the Jews “who were ruining honest labour and would not eat with or shake the hands of a Christian”. The immediate consequences of the affair ended when the two Jews were charged in London with fraudulent activities unconnected with their Cork business. Parnell and

Davitt intervened on behalf of the Jews but failed to achieve a withdrawal of the sentiments. The members of the Council refused to retract and the President said that "no expression which he used towards the Jews was he sorry for" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 23rd March 1888).

The outbursts which occurred in Dublin and Cork were an extension of the day-to-day ostracism which the Jews encountered in Ireland and which guests encounter in any host community. The threats of extermination were unrealistic and it was not until the 1904 Limerick incidents that a prolonged boycott could lead to expulsion. The long-term effects on the Jews were minimal because even by the early twentieth century many Jews were improving their socio-economic status. Some made the transition from pedlar to wholesaler, while others extended the range of their retail operations by establishing shops and employing agents to canvass for business. This had the additional benefit of increasing the employment opportunities for later arrivals. Other Jews moved into the professions although here also there were complaints of anti-Jewish discrimination (*Jewish Chronicle*, 18th April 1902). However, the area which is crucial to this discussion and in which there was a continuing Jewish involvement, is that of money lending.

Jews had no monopoly on money lending activities in Ireland or elsewhere. Before the famine, it was claimed that lack of proper banking facilities had given rise to a large class of usurers in the country towns and that many Catholics had amassed large fortunes in this way (Repeal Reports 1842, Vol ii, p. 42). The Irish money lender became demonised as the "gombeenman", deriving from *gaimbín*, meaning interest or usury. Discussions of gombeenism are complicated by lack of an agreed definition. Modern writers tend to treat the gombeenman as a shopkeeper who combined retailing with money lending or integrated usurious practices into his retailing activities (Brody 1973, p. 14; Gibbon and Higgins 1974, p. 31; Bolger 1977, p. 158; but see Kennedy 1977). More contemporary observers tended to see the shopkeeper as a separate institution from the gombeenman (see the evidence of Plunkett and P. J. Hannon to the Select Committee on Money Lending 1898, Q. 1943, 1944, 2274, 2275. The Departmental Committee on Agricultural Credit 1914; p. 69, took a similar view). However, whether from the activities of the native gombeenman or the Jewish money lender, a serious social problem existed (Finlay 1894). In addition the involvement of Jews in money lending was a source of serious internal communal tension for the Jews.

As early as 1881, Dublin Jews had received adverse publicity in court cases relating to money lending. The free members of Mary's Abbey synagogue resolved "That this Board for the future will refuse to admit into Free Membership any person directly or indirectly engaged in the business of lending small sums on Bills of Sale to persons in the humbler ranks of society" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 27th November 1885). The wording of the resolution indicates the petty nature of those particular money lending activities. The resolution had little effect on those involved as it coincided with other internal disputes which led to the setting up of hebroths (voluntary associations) separate from the main synagogue. The opposition within the community to money lending highlights the tension between "native" and

“foreign” Jews in Ireland and England but it was correctly identified as a recurring source of anti-Semitism. For that reason, when the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herman Adler, made a pastoral tour of Ireland in 1892, he advised the Jews to be of “scrupulous honesty and integrity” and “to prove themselves worthy of this (Irish) hospitality by seeking to promote the welfare of the country in which you dwell, by rigidly abstaining from everything that could conduce to the hurt and harm of your fellow-citizens” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 9th September 1892). On a second pastoral visit in 1898, Dr. Adler was more specific when he warned that “certain statements had been made before the Parliamentary Commission on Money Lending that there were Jews in Ireland guilty of usurious practices” and called on the Jews to cease because “Only by such conduct could they hope to gain . . . the esteem of their fellow-men and keep off the hateful spectre of anti-Semitism . . .” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 20th May 1898).

Dr. Adler issued a circular condemning Jewish money lending and it became the source of a well-publicised dispute within the Jewish community in Limerick. Bonacich (1973, p. 586) suggests that these disputes are a common feature of sojourning communities. The dispute was also believed to have arisen over some obscure points of ritual (*Limerick Leader*, 19th March 1902) and involved several court cases (*ibid.*, 30th July, 31st August 1900). A rival synagogue was established by a section of the community to avoid association with money lenders in accordance with Dr. Adler’s wishes (*ibid.* 9th and 11th January 1901). The dispute dragged on for several years and the British Board of Deputies was forced to intervene (British Board of Deputies, *Annual Reports* 1902, p. 24).

The statements which Dr. Adler referred to had been made by W. H. Stanley Monck, Chief Registrar in Bankruptcy in Ireland, in his evidence to the Select Committee on Money Lending (Q. 3393-3395). Monck stated that there were serious abuses in the money lending system and that although the money-lenders were of all nationalities, he made specific reference to “a large number” of “Russian Jews”. In commenting on money lending in Ireland, the Jews were usually identified as Jewish money lenders. Their critics were frequently priests, one of whom condemned them as “moneylenders, usurers, hard-hearted in grasping, gaining and holding ill-gotten wealth” (*Irish Catholic*, 22nd July 1893), while another referred to “the Jew”, “the Jewman”, and “Mr. Jewman” (*Wexford People*, 6th June, 1894), and the appearance was noted of Dublin Jews in the southern counties engaged in their money lending business (Finlay 1894, p. 313).

The publicity created by internal disputes, criticism in the press, and court cases which occasionally revealed illegal practices (*Limerick Leader*, 13th January, 1897) all contributed to identify the Jews with money lending. There is an obvious core of truth in the image although the generally hostile attitudes suggest that it was the actual presence of the Jews in Ireland that was resented. However, more independent and factual evidence shows that the image was not merely a stereotype. A confidential police report (CSORP, File No. 5591, 1903) relates specifically to the economic activities of Jews throughout Ireland. In the Dublin Metropolitan Police area, which accounted

for about one-half of the Jewish population of Ireland, it was stated that "Money lending also is largely practised by them with all sorts of men at exorbitant rates and it is reported that in many cases the borrowers are farmers". The report detailed cases in 1902 in which Jews had obtained judgements against farmers for a total of £532 and lists 44 Jewish money lenders registered in the Dublin area. The Departmental Committee on Agricultural Credit 1914 provides an extract of the number of money lenders registered in Ireland under the Money Lending Act 1900.

Table 2: *Money lenders registered in Ireland 1900-1903*

<i>Date</i>	<i>No. of money lenders</i>
1st Nov. 1900 – 31st Dec. 1900	122
1901	47
1902	19
1903	69

Source: Departmental Committee on Agricultural Credit 1914, p. 55.

(The year 1903 shows a sharp increase in the number of registrations because, under the terms of the Act, a licence had to be renewed every three years.)

The figures indicate that a number of registrations had lapsed by the end of 1903 but the combined total of registrations up to 1902 is 188. On the basis of these figures, the 44 Jewish money lenders reported by the police represents 23.4 per cent of the total. This is not the same as the number of transactions or the sums of money involved. There is no available evidence on the rates of interest charged, but what is demonstrated is a significant level of Jewish involvement in money lending, particularly in Dublin. The general picture which emerges from the police reports on other areas is that the Jews were not considered to be a serious problem.

VI CONCLUSIONS

Jewish economic activity in Ireland from 1880 to 1905 was dominated by their entry into small-scale money lending and petty trading. Contemporary critics of their activities did not offer any specific evidence that Jewish business ethics were of a lower standard than those of their Catholic counterparts. Why would they have been singled out for such hostility? On the one hand, the Jewish money lenders were preceded by the Irish gombeenman and it is unlikely that their usury constituted a more serious problem. On the other hand, the Jewish pack pedlars could only offer mild competitive pressure to the Irish shopkeeper. It is suggested that economic conflict between the middleman and the host society involves three groups: their clientele, business, and labour (Bonacich, *op. cit.* p. 589). In Ireland, the fact that the middlemen were Jews was particularly relevant in view of the religious and cultural elements which were coming to the fore in the nationalist movement.

The attitude of the native Irish merchant bears some comparison with the medieval anti-Semitism which Weber (1952, p. 50) related to competitive hostility on the part of prospering resident merchants. The increase in the number of retail outlets was the basis for the continuing development of the Catholic merchant class whose increasing economic strength was accompanied by a new political strength under the 1898 Local Government Act. At the same time traditional peasant hostility against the gombeenman was extended to the Jewish money lenders and pedlars. When the tensions of a debtor-creditor relationship are complicated by ethnic differences, a higher level of antagonism will usually result (Cahnmann 1957, p. 26). Despite the different bases for their opposition to the Jews both clientele and competitors had a certain unity of interest. The third group, labour, does not appear to have been a significant factor in anti-Semitic attitudes or activity although various attempts by employers to introduce Jewish tailors from England as a strike-breaking tactic suggests an area for further research (see Daly 1978, pp. 34-38; *Limerick Leader* 5 September 1898; *Jewish Chronicle* 25 May 1900). If conflict is endemic in all societies and is an inherent feature of both the unequal distribution of scarce resources and unequal access to them, then racial and ethnic discrimination can be viewed simply as a tool for eliminating rivals (Andreski 1964, pp. 205-206). Economic animosity is not a necessary condition of ethnic and racial animosity, but it is a sufficient condition, and, while not a complete explanation of anti-Semitism, it is an important element.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a consideration of all the sources of anti-Semitism, economic or otherwise. In particular, the 1904 Limerick boycott is not entered into as it deserves a more extended treatment than space allows, although it would not affect the general conclusions. Clearly it would be useful to have a more detailed picture of the nature of the Jewish community, both economic and social, as well an understanding of the more positive aspects of their relationship with non-Jews. However, the main purpose of this paper has been to go beyond the explanations in the MacGréil study and to argue for a more broadly based approach in terms of methodology and source material. The evidence of this paper is that anti-Semitism was not absent from Ireland and while this does not provide an indisputable link with the MacGréil findings, it is suggested that further research will demonstrate that anti-Semitism has been a constant element in Irish Catholic thought for much of the twentieth century. It is clear from the MacGréil study that anti-Semitism is a complex phenomenon, persisting in a variety of forms in time and space, that attempts to explain it must draw upon the insights of other disciplines. The potential value of MacGréil's mammoth study will only be fulfilled when this is recognised.

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