

# LABORATORY FOR WORLD DESTRUCTION

*Germans and Jews in Central Europe*

ROBERT S. WISTRICH

Laboratory for World Destruction  
Germans and Jews in Central Europe

## Studies in Antisemitism

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**Robert S. Wistrich**

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*This volume is lovingly dedicated to my mother,*

**Sabina**

*a true Woman of Valor*

All that has been done on earth against “the noble,” “the masters,” “the rulers,” fades into nothing compared with what the *Jews* have done against them.

*Friedrich Nietzsche* (1886)

They quietly moaned about antisemitism, to which I continuously steered the conversation.... They argued about whether it was good or bad that Lueger's election to Lord Mayor of Vienna had not been confirmed.... They do not suspect it, but they are ghetto creatures, quiet, well-behaved, fearful. Most of our people are so. Will they understand the call to freedom and human self-worth?

*Theodor Herzl* (1895)

...the emancipated Jew in Western Europe...has given up his specifically Jewish character, but the peoples let him feel that he has not acquired their special characteristics. He has lost the home of the ghetto, but the land of his birth is denied to him...necessarily he feels that the world hates him and he sees no place he can find warmth when he seeks for it. This is the moral Jewish misery which is more bitter than the physical....

*Max Nordau* (1897)

We in Vienna are antisemites, but are certainly not inclined to murder and violence. But if the Jews should threaten our fatherland, *then we will show no mercy.* *Karl Lueger* (1905)

I feel as with the overwhelming force of a revelation that I am entirely free of all those characteristics of the Jews which we may by consent identify...and I think that I may say of myself that I go along with the development of Jewry as far as Exodus, but quit at the point where the dance around the Golden Calf begins.

*Karl Kraus* (1913)

These gifted Jews are pioneers of atheism and materialism, revolutionaries and demagogues.... Jews—including even women—march at the end of the agitation against marriage and the family, participating as leaders and led in all the perversities of contemporary urban society.... It is the sad consequence of the fact that the Jews have lost their psychic balance....

*Hugo Bergmann* (1914)

Why do you come to me with your special Jewish sorrows? I feel just as sorry for the wretched Indian victims in Putamayo, the negroes in Africa.... I cannot find a special corner in my heart for the ghetto.

*Rosa Luxemburg* (1917)

To be a German means to undertake fully responsibility for one's people, not just to harmonize with Goethe, Schiller, and Kant, but also with the others and above all with the inferior and average...but with [Hermann] Cohen only the European exists, a genuine Germanism with which it could cross-fertilize is missing.

*Franz Rosenzweig* (1917)

What I was forced to learn during the past year, I have now at last understood and shall never forget it again. Namely, that I am no German, no European, maybe not even a human being (*ein Mensch*)—at any rate the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me—but that I am a Jew.

*Arnold Schoenberg* (1923)

In defending myself against the Jews I am acting for the Lord.

*Adolf Hitler* (1924)

Sometimes I am oppressed by the feeling that we who possess an encyclopedic knowledge, men who passionately work at extending their education (*Bildung*), are already a kind of fossil.

*Stefan Zweig* (1925)

My language is German. My culture, my attainments are German. I considered myself German until I noticed the growth of antisemitic prejudices in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew.

*Sigmund Freud* (1926)

Perhaps this [Jewish] brilliance was only the phosphorescent shimmer of a dying body: perhaps it was only the brief flickering of a European bonfire in which our nobility immolated itself.

*Theodor Lessing* (1930)

One cannot disown the 6000-year-old Jewish heritage, but equally one cannot deny the 2000-year-old non-Jewish inheritance. We stem from the "Emancipation," from humanism as much as from Egypt. Our ancestors are Goethe, Lessing, Herder, no less than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

*Joseph Roth* (1933)



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There are many individuals I would like to mention who have helped me along the long road to completing this book. I would like to thank my colleagues at the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism in Jerusalem (which I have directed since 2002), and in particular Alifa Saadya who patiently prepared this manuscript for publication. A special word of thanks goes to the Coordinator of the Centre for European Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ms. Alma Lessing, who typed an earlier version of this manuscript; equally to my friend and colleague, Professor Jacob Golomb of the Hebrew University, with whom I worked closely in my job as Academic Director for the Centre for Austrian Studies, which I helped to found at the Hebrew University in 2000-2001. In the course of my work at the Austrian Centre, I made a number of research visits to Vienna, some of which were facilitated by Dr. Peter Landesmann and by the municipality of Vienna.

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others mentioned, for having provided me with the occasion and incentive to develop further the themes that eventually came to make up this book.

Last, but not least, this study owes much to the multicultural, multilingual background I inherited as a child from my parents and grandparents, natives of Krakow and citizens of the late Habsburg Empire. Both of my parents were born in Galicia under Austrian rule, speaking Polish as their mother tongue, but also fluent in German and a number of other European languages. My maternal grandfather, Szymon Silbiger, was an open-minded Orthodox Jew who spoke excellent Polish and German, as well as Yiddish, combining business and piety, modern dress, conservative politics, and a traditional Torah education. My paternal grandfather, Salomon Wistreich, who came from a Hungarian-Polish Hassidic family, studied Talmud as a young man but after cutting off his *payes* (earlocks) became an *epikoros*—a freethinker and successful manager of a large estate belonging to the local Polish aristocrat, Count Potulicki. My father, Jacob Wistreich, practiced medicine in Krakow during the 1930s and briefly became a sympathizer with Communism, though the seven years he spent in the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1946 disillusioned him thoroughly about the real nature of the “socialist paradise.” In his adolescent years, part of them spent in Vienna during World War I, my father had been a member of the Zionist youth movement *Hashomer*. Even in his most left-wing period, he always felt a strong sense of identification with the Jewish nation. My mother, Sabina, who still lives in London (she is now 95 years old) received her first degree seventy years ago from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, despite the rampant antisemitism which then prevailed in the Polish universities. Both my parents survived the Holocaust mainly because in 1940 they were deported from Lvov to the Soviet Union, along with other Polish-Jewish refugees, one year before Hitler invaded the USSR. However, nearly half of our family was brutally murdered by the Germans on Polish soil during the Second World War.

This irrevocable fact and my complex family history undoubtedly played an important role in the direction of my own research relating to the Jewish fate in Central Europe. Though I grew up in Great Britain, I had begun to speak Polish and French before I ever knew a single word of English. Subsequently, I learned German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian, as well as other Slavic and Latin languages that proved indispensable for undertaking my research into Jewish history. Moreover, in the 1970s, I had the good fortune to work for seven years as Research Director and editor at the Wiener

Library in London (with Professor Walter Laqueur), which gave me a special vantage point from which to understand the history of German-speaking Jewry, that might otherwise have been difficult to acquire. This, too, proved to be an important long-term formative influence on my work, giving me access to a unique repository of source materials and personal testimonies that have guided my steps ever since. Living in Israel and in particular for the past 25 years in Jerusalem, has added its own indelible mark. Looking back at the tragic Jewish fate in Central Europe from the spiritual heart of the Jewish world in Jerusalem in the year 2005, is both a sobering and challenging experience. So much has been achieved, yet the sense of precariousness and vulnerability persists. This is one more important reason why the story of German-speaking Jewry in Central Europe retains its fascination.

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31 December 2005

# **Introduction**

## **Jews and Antisemitism**

### **in Central European Culture**

Albert Einstein once remarked that when the German Jews first began to flock into the universities of Central Europe at the end of the 19th century, it was as if they had spent an entire millennium preparing for the entrance examinations. During the sixty years between the founding of Bismarck's German Empire and Hitler's rise to power, German-speaking Jews would leave an indelible mark not only on Central Europe but on 20th-century culture as a whole. How would modernity look today without Einstein, Freud, or Marx; Mahler, Schoenberg, Wittgenstein, or Kafka; or a whole galaxy of other outstanding Jewish scientists, poets, playwrights, composers, critics, historians, sociologists, psychoanalysts, jurists, and philosophers?<sup>1</sup> Yet the most vibrant period in Central European cultural history—one which peaked first in fin-de-siècle Vienna and then in Weimar Germany (and which owed so much to the contributions of brilliant Jewish minds) ultimately collapsed into the horror and mass murder of the Nazi Holocaust. How was this possible? Was there not some connection between the dazzling achievement and the ferocity of the backlash? Did the Jews not take a tremendous risk in entering the mainstream of Central European life with the dizzying speed that they did? Was the German-Jewish "symbiosis" in Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and elsewhere, not a "tragic, one-sided love affair" (Gershom Scholem), based on delusion and ultimately doomed to failure? Was not the lure of ambition and intellectual prominence—which turned Jews into "masters" of Central European culture—a fateful mirage, a deadly trap?

German Jews first appeared on the cultural scene at the height of the late 18th century *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment)—a movement identified with such illustrious names as Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, Kant, Hegel, and Fichte. This decisive encounter took place under the civilizing aegis of *Bildung* (self-cultivation) which presumed to transcend all differences of nationality and religion through encouraging education, self-discipline, aesthetic harmony, and the full development of the individual personality. From Moses Mendelssohn to Leo Baeck and Sigmund Freud, German

humanist ideals became an essential part of the substance of Jewishness but they were predicated on the false assumption that most of the German middle class in Central Europe actually shared them. It was a beautiful dream. But by the eve of World War I there was ample evidence that Imperial Germany was a *Machtstaat* striving for global hegemony and no paradise for Jews. When Albert Einstein returned to Germany in 1914, he observed:

I saw worthy Jews basely caricatured, and the sight made my heart bleed. I saw how schools, comic papers and innumerable other forces of the Gentile majority undermined the confidence even of the best of my fellow Jews.<sup>2</sup>

An even more dramatic testimony of the breakdown of the assimilationist dream came in a letter of the Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg to the painter Wassily Kandinsky, following rumors of growing antisemitism at the Bauhaus Design School in Germany. In this letter, written in April 1923, Schoenberg observes:

I have at last learnt the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year, and I shall not ever forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but [that] I am a Jew.<sup>3</sup>

In a second letter of 4 May 1923, we can see more clearly still the depths of Schoenberg's religious and national identity crisis—which ten years later (in 1933) would provoke his official return to the Jewish faith and community. He tells Kandinsky:

But what is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence? Is it so difficult, to imagine that? You are perhaps satisfied with depriving Jews of their civil rights. Then certainly Einstein, Mahler, I and many others will have been got rid of. But one thing is certain: they will not be able to exterminate those much tougher elements, thanks to whose endurance Jewry has maintained itself for twenty centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Schoenberg emphasized to Kandinsky that the German nationalist antisemites advocated a view of the world “whose aim is St. Bartholomew's nights in the darkness of which no one will be able to read the little placard saying that I'm exempt....” In 1923, the same year that Schoenberg made his grim prediction, the Austrian novelist, Joseph Roth, born in Brody (eastern Galicia) but then living in Berlin, wrote: “For the East European Jews, Germany is still the land of Goethe and Schiller—the German poets whom every studious youth knows better than our Nazi grammar-school boys.”<sup>5</sup>

Roth had no illusions about the strength of literary antisemitism in Germany and Austria since the foundation of the Second German Reich in 1870. He believed that the best German writers, of Jewish or non-Jewish origins, had become strangers in the materialist and militarist Germany that Bismarck had created.

One of the sharpest critics of these siren voices of “*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*” and the illusions of late 19th-century German nationalism, was the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In his early years, Nietzsche had still been under the hypnotic spell of Richard Wagner’s musical genius, occasionally echoing his prejudices about the growing “Judaization” (*Verjudung*) of German culture. In his notorious pamphlet *Judaism in Music* (1850) and again, in his essay “Was ist Deutsch?” (1878) Wagner had drawn a lurid picture of Jewish “domination” and the German failure to achieve “emancipation” from it. The “Jewish spirit” (*Jüdische Geist*) had penetrated so deeply into the culture that Wagner feared the German *Geist* would completely disappear, even if the nation would somehow persist in its outward shell. “Judaism” (*Das Judentum*) was for Wagner and his racist followers a dangerous opiate—simultaneously a form of spiritual contagion and an agent of “materialist” contamination.

Nietzsche came to sharply reject this antisemitic view and deplored the degeneration of Wagnerism into a chauvinist celebration of “German virtues,” deeply infected by “the humbug of races” and antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> Henceforth, he repeatedly expressed his contempt for the racist antisemites of his own generation, such as the schoolteacher Bernhard Förster (his sister’s husband), Theodor Fritsch, Paul de Lagarde, and Eugen Dühring. In these antisemitic agitators, he detected the *ressentiment* felt by social failures and losers (*Schlechtweggekommenen*) towards those who surpassed them in wealth, wit, or natural endowment. A positivist philosopher like Dühring (who combined nationalism and socialism) was the modern embodiment in Nietzsche’s eyes of the vengeful spirit of “slave morality.” Reacting sharply against Theodor Fritsch’s efforts to recruit him to the German antisemitic camp, the philosopher responded in 1886:

They [the antisemites] are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten, a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and happy.<sup>7</sup>

Nietzsche despised the social psychology of envy which I examine in this book and which was increasingly rampant in Central Europe.<sup>8</sup> He saw it as a

lubricant of the new plebeian culture that threatened his own Dionysian vision of a post-Christian Europe. Nietzsche contrasted German racist “inferiority complexes” with the “mastery” of the Jews, who if they so desired “or if they were driven to it, as the antisemites seem to wish—could now have...literally the supremacy over Europe.”<sup>9</sup> The Jews were not “masters” in the sense of seeking domination. They wished above all to be absorbed, settled, accepted, and respected by Europeans. Their deepest aspiration was to end their exilic existence as “Wandering Jews” and become good Europeans. For this reason, he believed “it would perhaps be useful and fair to banish the antisemitic bawlers out of the country.”<sup>10</sup>

It would however be simplistic to regard Nietzsche as a “philosemite.” His assault on ancient “priestly” Judaism was as fierce and uncompromising as his attack on German antisemitism. In the Second Temple and its priests, in the theology of St. Paul and the New Testament, he diagnosed the Jewish origins of the “slave morality,” responsible for the “denaturation” and reversal of values that had led to the disaster of Christianity.<sup>11</sup> In *The Antichrist* (1888) Nietzsche even blamed the Jews for having radically falsified nature and all “naturalness” by their invention of Christianity. Through the crucified Jewish Redeemer (Jesus of Nazareth) Israel had attained “the ultimate goal of its sublime vengefulness”—its decisive historic triumph over noble Roman values.<sup>12</sup> In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) he was equally extreme, inveighing against the world-historic mission of the Jews in disposing of the “masters” in the name of the common man and democratic mob morality. This was a victory which Nietzsche characterized as “a blood poisoning” (mixing of the races)—the kind of reckless phraseology which would later be seized upon by the Nazis. In this same text, Nietzsche wrote that “the ‘redemption’ of the human race (from the ‘masters,’ that is) is going forward; everything is becoming Judaized, Christianized, mob-ized (what do the words matter!).” The words did, of course, matter a great deal. Two decades after his death, a crude plebeian version of Nietzscheanism would be appropriated by Hitler and his Nazi thugs—despite Nietzsche’s disgust for mass politics and unequivocal opposition to political antisemitism.<sup>13</sup>

Yet Nietzsche himself exercised an astonishing hold over the “marginal Jews” (*Grenzjuden*) of Central Europe, with whom we are concerned in this book. They included such distinguished men of letters as Jacob Wassermann, Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Werfel, Karl Kraus, Sigmund Freud, Stefan Zweig, Martin Buber, Theodor Lessing, and Walter Benjamin.<sup>14</sup> He had been one of

the first European thinkers to diagnose many of the agonies they would experience, their crises of identity, their search for self and personal authenticity in a “godless” world. For some, like Stefan Zweig, he was the ultimate “free spirit” and “good European” offering an exalted new path to self-overcoming and a life of creative fulfillment.<sup>15</sup> For those secular Jews who were already cut off from their own tradition, Nietzsche provided a complex but fascinating roadmap to individual liberation without the easy consolations of dogmatic belief. Nietzsche’s high regard for Jewish intellectual mastery laid out the hope that contemporary Jews could once again become the “founders and creators of values.”

Early Zionism in Central and Eastern Europe with its strong emphasis on restoring natural powers lost in exile and recharging Jewish physical as well as spiritual energies, also showed unmistakable Nietzschean traces.<sup>16</sup> These regenerative and vitalistic echoes can be found in the writings of Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, and Martin Buber.<sup>17</sup> There were also others, like the vehemently “anti-Zionist” German novelist Jacob Wassermann, who eagerly embraced Nietzsche’s psychology of antisemitism, as a peculiarly *German* pathology.<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche’s savage critique of Germans did much to encourage such conclusions. Did he not proclaim that only Germans who “*de-Germanized*” themselves, could ever understand him? Did he not say that “Jews among Germans are always the higher race—more refined, spiritual, kind—*l’adorable* Heine, they say in Paris.”<sup>19</sup>

Jacob Golomb has shrewdly observed that a remarkable number of marginal Jews attempted to overcome their own loss of tradition, their ultra-Germanism, and self-hatred under Nietzsche’s guidance.<sup>20</sup> However, by the late 1920s, the primary emphasis in German and Austrian culture was moving from *Geist* (spirit) to *Volk* (race). The cosmopolitan notion of *Bildung* itself became nationalized. By 1933, Central European Jews like Arnold Zweig, Stefan Zweig, Ernst Cassirer, and Sigmund Freud seemed like increasingly isolated upholders of the 18th-century Enlightenment faith in Reason and the civilizing effects of education. No Central European author expressed this more poignantly than Stefan Zweig, whose whole life was devoted to the primacy of culture and the concept of *Bildung*. In 1925 he wrote to Emil Ludwig: “Sometimes I am oppressed by the feeling that we who possess an encyclopedic knowledge, men who passionately work at extending their *Bildung*, are already a kind of fossil.”<sup>21</sup> In his biography of Erasmus nine years later, Zweig acknowledged that “the great humanistic dream of the solution of disagreements in a spirit of justice, the longed-for

unification of the nations under the aegis of a common culture, has remained a Utopia....”<sup>22</sup> His close friendship with Sigmund Freud confirmed him in his growing realization that “the barbaric, the elemental destructive instinct in the human soul was ineradicable.”<sup>23</sup> Above all, it was Hitler’s persecution of the German Jews and the terror unleashed by the *Anschluss* in Austria with its orgy of lawlessness, brutality, and violent antisemitism, that brought Stefan Zweig to the realization that the age of humanistic culture was crumbling before his eyes.

Antisemitism acquired renewed intensity once Jews moved into the center of German social, economic, and cultural life during the Weimar Republic. But the Judeophobic obsession had much deeper roots in Central Europe, going back at least sixty years when the Conservative historian Heinrich von Treitschke solemnly declared that “the Jews are our misfortune.” In the same fateful year of 1879, the Protestant court preacher, Adolf Stoecker, launched his Christian-social antisemitic movement in Berlin, attacking the subversive effects of Jewish capital, the liberal press (owned mainly by Jews), and Social Democracy—invented and inspired by two German Jews—Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle. It was also in 1879 that the radical atheist Wilhelm Marr first employed the highly confusing term “antisemitism,” to suggest that the new doctrine was “racial,” cultural, and socio-economic in inspiration rather than purely religious. More importantly, within less than a decade of Jewish emancipation in Germany and Austria, Jews were being held responsible for secular liberalism, the degeneration of Christian-German morality, capitalism, socialism, and most of the negative effects of industrial modernity. This was an ominous sign. By 1880, virtually the whole arsenal of modern antisemitism—Christian and anti-Christian, conservative and radical, patrician and plebeian—was already in place in Central European states like Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

Political antisemitism had acquired a special resonance in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—the cradle of intense nationality struggles that favored a Social Darwinist view of history as a “battle of races.” It was in Vienna that expatriate Englishman Houston S. Chamberlain wrote and published his best-selling *Die Grundlagen des XIX Jahrhunderts* (Foundations of the 19th century) in 1899. Chamberlain was a Teutomaniac dilettante who regarded the “apocalyptic struggle” between Germans and Jews as the key to the future destiny of civilization—a viewpoint which profoundly influenced both the Emperor Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler. Nor was it a coincidence that Hitler himself was an Austrian from the provinces,

whose outlook was decisively shaped by his formative years in Vienna. When the 18-year-old Hitler settled in the Imperial capital in 1907, the city was still ruled by an avowed antisemite, the Christian-Social party leader, Dr. Karl Lueger. The Mayor of Vienna would become one of his first role-models. Hitler's admiration for the Catholic Mayor's political virtuosity is repeatedly expressed in *Mein Kampf*, along with his ideological debt to the fanatically racist world-view of the Austrian Pan-Germans.

In this book I show how Lueger conquered Vienna in 1897 by appealing to the Christian *Volk* of Austria to "liberate" itself from its "Semitic" and Jewish masters—the personification of liberal capitalism, Social Democracy, and secularizing atheism. Lueger's political success was an important factor in convincing the young Hitler of the electoral advantages in using antisemitism as a weapon of mass mobilization. However, the founder of Nazism sharply disapproved of Lueger's conciliatory attitude to "the struggle of nationalities in old Austria." Unlike the Viennese Mayor, he rejected the supranational Habsburg dynasty for having "betrayed the needs of the German people." In *Mein Kampf* (1924) Hitler identified strongly with the Pan-German atmosphere at his school in Linz: "Heil was our greeting, and instead of the imperial anthem we sang *Deutschland über alles*, despite warnings and punishments."<sup>24</sup> He deplored the pious hypocrisy of Lueger's "Christian" Jew-baiting which he despised as opportunist rather than principled. Hitler much preferred the Pan-German appeal to blood and soil.

The seeds of Hitler's violently racist nationalism were—as I argue in this book—planted in the ethnic cauldron of the multicultural Austrian Empire. His *völkisch* paranoia reflected the identity crisis of those German Austrians who felt increasingly on the defensive in the wake of Slav encroachment and Jewish emancipation. In that very specific sense, Habsburg Austria was indeed a laboratory for world destruction, even though this became apparent only twenty years after its demise. Hitler himself, it is worth noting, was of obscure and uncertain ancestry, which aggravated his sense of insecurity. An unemployed bohemian artist from the provinces, leading an unhappy and rootless life in multiethnic Vienna, his embrace of racist antisemitism was a reflection both of ethnic angst and his sharp fall in social status.<sup>25</sup> He displayed precisely those feelings of envy, fear, *ressentiment*, and desire for revenge—projected against Jewish *Geist* (spirit) and *Geld* (money)—which Nietzsche had diagnosed twenty years earlier as being absolutely typical of petty-bourgeois German antisemites. Hitler's response to his definitive rejection by the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts in 1908 (which he

characteristically blamed on the Jews) was a perfect illustration of this social psychology. His racism exuded the endemic fears of the “little man” (*kleine Mann*) threatened with sinking into the proletariat by the dual specter of capitalist competition and socialist class-struggle. Not belonging to any definite social stratum and thoroughly alienated from the big city melting-pot, the young Hitler felt existentially threatened by what he found in Vienna—especially the cosmopolitan mixture of races, the powerful Marxist labor movement, and the modernist culture in which Jews played so prominent a role.

By the eve of the First World War, Hitler had already transformed himself into a *Vaterlandsloser* (a person without a fatherland), rejecting his Austrian identity to the point of shirking military service in the Habsburg Imperial Army. Already consumed by half-baked conspiracy theories, he had convinced himself that he, too, was a victim of “Jewish rule” (*Judenherrschaft*) in Austria. Like many other Austrian Germans, he found it easy to define the Jews as the “masters” of Vienna—those who were pulling the strings and controlled the press, the economy, culture, and radical politics. All the multiple and “unacceptable” faces of modernity—liberalism, capitalism, parliamentary democracy, moral permissiveness, pornography, or avant-garde art, merged into a monolithic “Jewish conspiracy” to undermine the “Aryan-Germanic” race. These were “lessons” that the young Hitler learned from the Linz Pan-Germans, from the artistic legacy of his alter ego, Richard Wagner, the writings of Theodor Fritsch, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and mystical Austrian racists like Lanz von Liebenfels—even before he arrived in Germany.<sup>26</sup> In this twisted “world-view” (which first crystallized in the lower depths of Vienna), the Jew was definitively stereotyped as coldly cerebral, uncreative, imitative, egotistical, destructive, and parasitic. However, it was only in postwar Munich, under the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and social chaos, that Hitler fully elaborated his anti-Communist credo which fused biological antisemitism, anti-liberalism, and a cleverly disguised hatred of Christianity.

Fin-de-siècle antisemitism liked to present itself as a “defensive” backlash against Jewish success, prominence, and “domination” in key areas of modern life. Though this picture was greatly distorted it was not wholly false. Not only did Jews rapidly master the German language, they had clearly become primary movers and shakers of modern Central European culture by the 1890s—whether as physicists, chemists, biologists, psychoanalysts, sociologists, journalists, composers, novelists, playwrights, and literary

critics. In cities like Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, or Prague, secular assimilated liberal Jews increasingly set the cultural tone and became arbiters of taste in the first decades after their full political emancipation between 1867 and 1871.<sup>27</sup> This Jewish rise in social status, economic weight, and cultural influence was typically seen as undermining long-established traditions, Christian values, and ethnic-national solidarity.<sup>28</sup> It aroused the snobbish disdain of the nobility, the morbid anxiety of professors, students, and middle-class professionals, the pious wrath of the clergy, as well as the anti-capitalist rancor of impoverished artisans and craftsmen. In Austria and Hungary, in particular, Jews were seen not only as master-entrepreneurs and modernizers in the economic field (with a central role in banking, commerce, and industry) but as allies of so-called “master races” (Germans, Hungarians, and Poles) against the smaller Slav peoples and Romanians. This perception contained a grain of truth even though it ignored the ingratitude, suspicion, and hostility shown by the dominant nationalities towards their “Jewish allies.” After all, the antisemitism of Austro-Germans proved to be politically far more potent than that of the more backward Slavic peoples in the Danubian Monarchy. Czech, Slovak, and Polish national movements, while undoubtedly tainted by Judeophobic sentiment, were noticeably less prone to biological racism than their counterparts in Germany and Austria.

There was also another ominous strand in modern antisemitism which surfaced well before the traumas of the First World War and the revolutionary upheavals of 1917-1920. This was the belief that Jews consciously masterminded all the subversive forces of radicalism and revolt. Individual Jews like Adolf Fischof, Gabriel Riesser, or Johann Jacoby had indeed been prominent as leaders of German and Austrian democratic radicalism during the 1848 Revolution. Karl Marx had invented the “scientific” doctrine of Communism a year earlier. Ferdinand Lassalle was the founder of German Social Democracy in the early 1860s. Jews would be even more active in the emerging Socialist party of German Austria (created by a converted Jew, Victor Adler) just as they stood out in Russian or East European Marxist politics.<sup>29</sup> This pattern continued and intensified with the central roles played by radicals like Kurt Eisner, Rosa Luxemburg, and Béla Kun during the revolutions of 1918-1919 in Germany and Hungary. Above all, the prominent role of Jews like Leon Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sverdlov, and Karl Radek in the victorious Bolshevik Revolution in Russia created a flood of conspiracy theories nourished by antisemitism. The visibility of Jewish radicals led in turn to the demonization of all Jews as

Communists and subversive internationalists seeking to overthrow the entire established order in Central Europe.<sup>30</sup> Again, this radicalism was no invention of antisemites, but it did not represent Jewry as a whole, the Jewish communities, or Judaism as a faith. The radicals were culturally *de-Judaized*—having cut themselves off from their own religious heritage while often repudiating the national traditions of their adopted societies. This syndrome was embodied by Communist internationalists such as Rosa Luxemburg, who straddled the highly diverse traditions of the Polish, Russian, and German labor movements.

Messianic revolutionary fervor was only one of many symptoms of a striking loss of psychic balance, whose seeds can be traced to the acute identity problems exhibited by prominent Central European Jewish intellectuals and artists well before the First World War. Franz Kafka, the Prague-born Jewish novelist, was incontestably an expert on this convoluted syndrome. He wrote of a whole generation of Jewish writers in Central Europe who drew their inspiration from the despair of having “their hind legs bogged down in their father’s Judaism” while their front legs could find no new ground on which to stand. Kafka’s sense of anguish extended to the German language in which he himself wrote as a member of the German-speaking minority in Prague. Though he felt attached to this deeply-loved symbolic fatherland of so many German-speaking Jews, he could never rid himself of the schizoid feeling that German-Jewish writing (including his own), involved a “secondhand acquisition of someone else’s property.”<sup>31</sup> This was, of course, a claim constantly made by the Central European antisemites! Kafka’s self-hatred was paralleled by that of other Jewish intellectuals like Walther Rathenau, Theodor Lessing, Otto Weininger, and Karl Kraus. They repeatedly attacked the vulgarity and “materialism” of Jewish nouveaux riches as well as their less assimilated co-religionists. Lessing, himself the author of a well-known volume on Jewish self-hatred, prophetically wrote in 1930 (three years before his murder by the Nazis) that the brilliance of Jewish creativity in Central Europe reminded him of “the phosphorescent shimmer of a dying body.” Perhaps, he suggested, “it was only the brief flickering of a European bonfire in which our nobility has immolated itself.”<sup>32</sup>

Few, if any, contemporaries were as aware of the imminent dissolution of the culture which they simultaneously cherished and attacked, as Vienna’s foremost satirist, Karl Kraus. It was he who first described his Austrian homeland as an “experimental station for the end of the world”—the

haunting image which provides a leitmotif for this book. The case of Karl Kraus was especially revealing, since few could match his mastery of the German language or the sarcastic wit of his polemics. Nor could his rivals and critics compete with the prophetic aura of authority that Kraus assumed as the self-appointed guardian of moral values in German culture. In lambasting the duplicity and corruption of Austrian society, Kraus often sounded like a modern-day Jeremiah reprimanding his people for their backsliding ways. His targets were legion, including the liberal press, the literary establishment, psychoanalysis, feminism, Zionism, sexual hypocrisy, and the criminal justice system. But as I show, Kraus was particularly stinging about Jews. Having renounced the Jewish faith for the Catholic Church at the age of twenty-four, his hostility towards Jewry displayed the vitriolic edge of the neophyte. A decade later he abandoned Catholicism as well.

Kraus, no less than Herzl or Freud, was perfectly aware that racist antisemitism in Central Europe ignored the mystical properties of baptismal water. Yet, more than once the satirist confessed that as far as “race” was concerned, he was at a loss. He felt just as angry at the “stupidity of Germanomaniac editors and politicians” as he did about the “kosher intellect” for claiming him as one of the “chosen people.” But this even-handedness was at best a show. Kraus singled out Jews because he genuinely regarded them as the “masters” of the Viennese press and culture. In his eyes, they were an unmistakably dominant clique who abused their excessive monetary power. Not only did they brazenly worship the “Golden Calf” but they had corrupted the German language and commercialized Central European high culture beyond repair. Kraus took special delight in charging Zionists like Theodor Herzl with being “Jewish antisemites”—an accusation repeated down to the present day by some of his heirs among contemporary anti-Zionists of Jewish origin.<sup>33</sup> It would be more accurate to say that both Kraus and Herzl internalized hostile stereotypes about Jews, reproducing them in different ways. For the former, only total assimilation could eradicate the stain of “Jewishness”; for Herzl, Zionism was assigned a similar task.

Kraus himself perfectly fitted the antisemitic image of the *zersetzende* (“disintegrating”) Jew, whose acerbic critique undermines all social conventions and institutional hierarchies. However, in his own self-understanding, Karl Kraus believed himself to be the *insider* speaking in the name of classical German literature against the (“Jewish”—liberal) forces of financial corruption and cultural nihilism. Was he not the quintessential Viennese satirist? Did he not command the enviable role of *Censor*

*Germaniae?* But though he remained a relentless gadfly and critic, Kraus felt strongly attached to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Habsburg metropolis and its humanist traditions. Like Sigmund Freud, he was radical in his critique of the dominant culture but conservative in social and political terms.

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, the founding text of modern psychoanalysis, was published in 1900—the same year that Nietzsche died. Though formed in the intensely antisemitic milieu of fin-de-siècle Vienna, Freud was by no means immune to the seductions of assimilation. Nonetheless, despite his ambivalence, he managed to retain a powerful sense of ethnic identification with the Jewish people. In this respect, he was very different from Karl Kraus. Despite his alienation from Judaism, Freud was proud of the fact that “a completely godless Jew” had founded psychoanalysis.<sup>34</sup> Since his childhood, he had been drawn to those military figures like Napoleon and Oliver Cromwell whose actions could be construed as favorable to the Jews. Significantly, his boyhood hero, Hannibal, appears in Freud's dreams as a “Semitic” general who strove nobly for vengeance against Rome—the historic symbol of anti-Jewish persecution since Antiquity. Not surprisingly, then, he approved when one of his sons joined the Jewish nationalist student fraternity, Kadimah.

There was a powerfully defiant streak in Freud's reaction to the persistent bigotry which he experienced in his Austrian homeland. In contrast to Otto Weininger or Karl Kraus, his response was relatively free of that neurotic *Selbsthass* that characterized Jews in Germany and Austria who tried to escape the burden of Jewishness by roundly denouncing their own origins. Freud had always believed—despite the penalties attached by the German-speaking world to his ethnic origins—that his Jewish legacy was a major source of “vital energy,” creativity, and independence of mind. Hence, the disdain he always felt for those colleagues (like Alfred Adler) who converted to Christianity for career reasons. Freud's intense sense of ethnic solidarity did not, however, lead him to personally embrace Zionism. As he told members of his B'nai B'rith Lodge on his seventieth birthday, it was precisely as a Jew that he had always sought to suppress feelings of national exaltation as “disastrous and unfair.”

Freud's researches into group psychology and the darker instincts that drive social behavior convinced him—especially after the First World War—of the murderous potential locked in human nature. His short essay, *Why War?* (1932), presented a mercilessly Hobbesian view of the human condition. History was seen as an endless series of conflicts between

communities, races, nations, and empires—"which have always been settled by force of arms." In that respect, at least, Freud learned some lessons from the bitter legacy of the prewar Austrian nationality struggles. Indeed, there was no better experimental laboratory for researching the bestial instincts behind genocidal politics than the ethnic hothouse of the late Habsburg Empire. Unlike Herzl, however, Freud could offer no convincing *political* solution for the human drive to aggression, war, violence, and injustice. In this respect he was closer to Stefan Zweig. Indeed, Freud saw little hope of releasing the masses from their subordination to the forces of darkness and irrationality, so assiduously fostered in the past by the power of absolutist States and the Catholic Church. The only prospect of a slow improvement lay in the long-term ability of psychoanalysis to free reason from its enslavement to blind passions and neurotic fixations. This hope, too, was fundamentally called into question by the rise of Nazi and Communist tyranny.

Freud's contempt for mob behavior and his low opinion of humanity en masse (which he shared with Nietzsche, Kraus, and Zweig) was the logical outcome of years spent in observing the public life of Central Europe. He himself narrowly escaped Hitler's retribution in 1938, but four of his sisters were subsequently murdered in German death camps. Yet Freud remained remarkably reticent in his analysis of antisemitism. Unlike Herzl, he never involved himself in any public debate on the subject. Nor did he apply his general psychoanalytic insights in any systematic way to the study of Jew-hatred.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, I suggest that his last book, *Moses and Monotheism* (published just before his death in 1939), is best read as a belated response to the unprecedented crisis threatening European Jewry on the eve of the Holocaust. The monotheism of Moses becomes the key to Freud's understanding of antisemitism as a massive repudiation of Jewish *Geistigkeit* (intellectuality) and of Christian morality by the poorly-baptized Gentile nations.

Another point which I emphasize in this book is that Freud frequently invoked a mysterious element (impenetrable to scientific analysis) when speaking of his own Jewishness. At times he wrote of this mystery as an "inner identity," a "psychological structure," a product of "dark emotional powers"; and sometimes as a form of "racial kinship" or ancestral heritage which could provoke "strange secret yearnings," including those for the ancient Jewish homeland. Corresponding with the German Jewish writer Arnold Zweig (then living in Palestine) he wrote on 8 May 1932 that he was decidedly skeptical about the "Holy Land." It was, so Freud suggested, a

tragically mad place that “has never produced anything but religious, sacred frenzies, presumptuous attempts to overcome the outer world of appearance by means of the inner world of wishful thinking.”<sup>36</sup> He wondered aloud about “what heritage we have taken over into our blood and nerves” from the ancestral legacies; and typically, he acknowledged the part which “belated infantile wishes” which were “unfulfillable,” played in his own feelings about such primordial Judaic attachments.

It was above all Freud’s deep suspicion of politics—which he shared with Stefan Zweig—that precluded him from pursuing Herzl’s choice of becoming a “new Moses” and leading the Jews out of their European “house of bondage” towards the Promised Land. Moses remained however a central figure in Freud’s imagination—more of an educator and moral legislator than a visionary prophet or charismatic political leader. Freud’s Moses reflected his stoic commitment to scientific truth and the “soft voice of the intellect” when confronted with the terrifying mass politics of the 20th century. He seems to have avoided any direct contact with Herzl, apart from sending him a copy of his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1902. Their brief encounters occurred solely in dream episodes which suggests that Herzl may well have represented a troubling if repressed presence in Freud’s subconscious. Towards Zionism, the founder of psychoanalysis also continued to display an equivocal and often uncertain attitude, a curious blend of sympathy, doubt, anxiety, lively concern, and periodic flashes of ethnic pride. In this ambivalence, Freud was indeed representative of the attitudes adopted by many Central European liberal Jews before 1933.

Herzl’s dream of a restored Jewish state must have seemed like pure science fiction to many Jews in 1900. Not for nothing did a fellow journalist at the *Neue Freie Presse* describe him as the Jewish Jules Verne. Even his prescient warnings about European antisemitism as an intractable phenomenon were seen at the time as a “doctrine of despair” by many Jewish contemporaries in the West. This was another reason why Herzl had to contend with such fierce opposition to his Zionist program from Jewish financial magnates, communal leaders, Bundists, liberal assimilationists, as well as Reform and Orthodox “Protest Rabbis” in Central and Eastern Europe. Established middle-class Jews from his own milieu refused to understand how or why such a thoroughly acculturated German-Austrian *littérateur* could seriously propose a Jewish exodus from the fleshpots of Central Europe. Herzl challenged all their cherished assumptions about the transient nature of the nationalist crisis. Like his Austrian Zionist predeces-

sor, Nathan Birnbaum, he did not share liberal-bourgeois illusions about the prospects of “self-defense” (*Abwehr*) against antisemitism. By late 1895 he had already concluded that only political independence, sovereignty, and the territorial concentration of Jews outside Europe—in their ancient homeland of Zion—could resolve the “Jewish Question.” “Modern Zionism was born in Austria, in Vienna,” remarked the Galician-born Austrian novelist Joseph Roth, himself an opponent of the movement. “It was created by an Austrian journalist. It could not have been established by anyone else.”<sup>37</sup>

This verdict is especially striking since in Roth’s epic novel *Radetzkymarsch* (1932)—an ode to the Habsburg myth—Jews are depicted as passionate supporters of the supranational Empire and the “Austrian idea.” They were *the* ultimate Austrian patriots, perhaps the only true Central Europeans. At the same time, Roth understood that the logic of Zionism reflected the evolution of national movements in East-Central Europe which certainly shaped Herzl’s political concepts. In 1867, when the founder of political Zionism was still a seven-year-old schoolboy in Budapest, nationalist Hungarians had already achieved the status of virtual co-regents in the Habsburg Empire. By the time he was ten years old, the “struggle for liberation” of Germans and Italians had been completed by their national unification. The battles of Czechs, Poles, and other Slav peoples for national independence would continue to be part of everyday politics in the world in which Herzl grew up. Soon after his arrival in Vienna from Budapest in 1878, he had personally embraced a liberal Prussophile form of pan-Germanism. It was above all the rise of racial antisemitism in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin which tore him away from his earlier assimilationist conceptions and in the direction of Zion.

By 1897, the year of the first Zionist Congress in Basle, nationalist strife between Germans and Czechs had reached new heights in the Empire with constant filibusters and inkpots being thrown at each other by deputies in the Austrian *Reichsrat*. In Prague, anti-German demonstrations rapidly turned into anti-Jewish riots in December 1897. Czech Jews as well as Germans were harassed and attacked. 1897 was also the year that Karl Lueger officially became the Mayor of Vienna. Lueger, as we have seen, proved to be a genuine pioneer in using antisemitism as the populist key with which to unlock the anti-capitalist *ressentiment* of the “little men” and women of Vienna’s *Kleinbürgertum*. Jew-baiting enabled him to overwhelm the liberal patriciate of the Imperial capital in the 1890s. Herzl had the prescience to

foresee the implications and significance of this historical development, though he was not the first to make the discovery.

It was East European Jewish students at the University of Vienna who in 1882 founded the first Jewish nationalist *Burschenschaft* in Europe, known as “Kadimah.” Subsequently, dueling fraternities would be established across the Empire, from Prague to Czernowitz, along with Jewish sporting and gymnastic clubs (on the German model)—all of them spreading a message of Jewish pride and militant self-defense. In 1890, one of the founders of Kadimah, Nathan Birnbaum, had been the first publicist to coin the word “*Zionismus*” in its current meaning.<sup>38</sup> Ten years before Theodor Herzl’s conversion to Zionism in Paris, Birnbaum’s journal, *Selbstemanzipation*, had proclaimed the idea that only the return to the soil in Palestine and the creation there of a Jewish national home, would solve the “Jewish question.” Birnbaum looked to the sizeable Jewish communities in Galicia and the Bukovina as the best recruiting ground for Austrian Zionism.

By 1900, however, he was already disillusioned with diplomatic Zionism. Birnbaum became a cultural autonomist, focusing his hopes on the Yiddish language as the most fitting national vehicle for the despised *Ostjuden*. He passionately advocated a new synthesis of autonomism, Yiddishism and defense of the “organic” culture of East European Jewry against both the assimilationists and Zionists.<sup>39</sup> Birnbaum maintained that the *Ostjuden* in East Central Europe, with their own Yiddish language, literature, theater, and folk consciousness were a separate, living nation that must fight for cultural-national autonomy.<sup>40</sup> The theoretical basis for this slogan had (ironically enough) been put forward by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, two leading Austro-Marxists, who themselves repudiated the idea of a distinct Jewish nationality.<sup>41</sup> This “utopian, petty-bourgeois idea” was even more vehemently negated by the militant internationalist Rosa Luxemburg, the most prominent female socialist of the pre-1914 era. She denounced all forms of nationalism as a bourgeois deviation from socialism, attacking the notion of Polish independence with special fervor. Luxemburg also rejected the demands for Jewish cultural-national autonomy made by Bundists and was contemptuously dismissive of Zionism. Like the Austro-Marxists, she felt that only rapid assimilation could solve the “Jewish Question.” Rosa Luxemburg, though originating from Russian Poland, became a leading Social Democrat in Germany, later co-founding the German Communist Party (KPD) with Karl Liebknecht. She was brutally murdered in Berlin by the Freikorps (on orders from the Social Democrat Minister of the Interior)

during the Spartacist rising in January 1919. This assassination would help to permanently split the German Left and open a Pandora's box of hatreds and political violence that totally undermined the Weimar Republic.

During the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, nationalism and ethnic self-determination as well as revolutionary Marxism had become increasingly powerful forces in East-Central Europe. The chaos, the uncertainty, and a series of social upheavals had led to a significant shift in the balance of forces throughout Central Europe which also affected Jewish politics. One significant symptom of this change was the renaissance of a Jewish nationalism emphasizing ethnic pride and manly dignity. The first prophet of this strand of integral Zionism was Max Nordau, a Budapest-born dramatist and journalist, no less assimilated into German culture than his contemporary, Theodor Herzl, despite his Orthodox family background. After the death of his father (an ordained rabbi) he had changed his name from Simha Südfeld ("southern field") to the more "Aryan"-sounding Max Nordau ("northern meadow")—a mark of his strong identification with Germanic Europe. Already during his adolescent years in Hungary, the young Nordau enthusiastically embraced Enlightenment rationalism. In the early 1880s he settled in Paris, while continuing to write mainly for German and Austrian liberal newspapers. His best-selling work *Degeneration* (1892) was an unprecedented assault on the "decadence" of fin-de-siècle European modernist culture which he reviled as egomaniacal, hysterical, irrational, and thoroughly diseased in form as well as content.<sup>42</sup> Among the avant-garde thinkers and artists whom Nordau singled out for abuse was Friedrich Nietzsche, despite the remarkable similarities in their respective diagnoses of the cultural situation in Europe at the end of the 19th century.<sup>43</sup> Nordau was equally harsh on Richard Wagner as a "decadent" whose furious antisemitism was a symptom of "German hysteria" and "persecution-mania."

Nordau's conversion to Zionism in 1895 revealed his shock both at the resurgence of European antisemitism and his disappointment with the Enlightenment values he had earlier embraced. At the First Zionist Congress in Basle (1897) Nordau repudiated the philosophy of Jewish emancipation for relying on pure rationalist logic while ignoring living sentiments. He offered an incisive critique of the "new Marranos" who (like himself) had abandoned the ghetto, only to experience the torments of self-hatred, "falsification of self," social marginality, and self-denial.<sup>44</sup> Formal or legal emancipation could not resolve the profound existential conflicts which plagued the Jewish intellectuals of Central Europe. Zionism, he argued, offered the best prospect



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Vienna  
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of individual and national rejuvenation—a harmonious synthesis that could overcome the precariously split identity of “enlightened” Western Jews.

It was Nordau who invented the idea of “muscular Jewry” (*Muskeljudentum*)—the new fighting Jew who (so he hoped) would overcome the neuroses resulting from excessive “spirituality” through a healthy cultivation of the body. This vision of “muscle Jews” grew in part out of Nordau’s revulsion at the proliferation of “parasitic” *Luftmenschen*—physically stunted East European Jews whose ghetto life-style and religious fanaticism he deplored. However, Nordau was no less alienated by the “fraudulent,” “duplicitous,” and inert passivity of the Jewish coffee-house literati in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin.<sup>45</sup> Like Herzl, he firmly believed that Zionism was the only effective national remedy against the pathologies of Jewish marginality and self-hatred from which he himself was by no means immune. Fifteen years earlier, in 1882, the young Nathan Birnbaum had come to similar conclusions, condemning assimilation as an act of Jewish self-surrender and “national suicide” that could only exacerbate antisemitism in Central Europe.

In 1912, exactly thirty years after Birnbaum’s warning, another German-speaking Zionist, Moritz Goldstein, had reminded his co-religionists of the dangerous and untenable position in which they now found themselves. With their “domination” of the press, the theatres, musical life, and other cultural activity, German Jews were administering “the spiritual property of a nation which denies our right and ability to do so.”<sup>46</sup> The theme of “Jewish domination” was also evoked by the German-Jewish writer, Jakob Wassermann, after arriving in Vienna from Munich in 1898. He observed

Walther Rathenau (1867-1922) was Germany's first and only Jewish Foreign Minister. He was murdered by right-wing fanatics. Here, c. 1890, he was a lance corporal in the German Army.

Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem



with some distaste that “the banks, the press, theatre, literature, social events – everything was in the hands of the Jews.”<sup>47</sup> According to Wasserman, fin-de-siècle Austria was the “new Jerusalem,” a simplistic cliché which perfectly matched the rhetoric which Lueger’s followers were actively promulgating in the streets of Vienna. Converted Jews like Otto Weininger and Karl Kraus, as well as some leading Austrian socialists of Jewish origin like Victor Adler and Friedrich Austerlitz, also branded the Jews as “masters” of capitalist corruption in Vienna. Such remarks were echoed in Berlin by Walther Rathenau and other highly cultivated Jews embarrassed by the vulgarity of the nouveaux riches and the foreignness of the *Ostjuden*.<sup>48</sup>

The renowned German sociologist, Werner Sombart, writing in 1912 about *Die Zukunft der Juden* (The future of the Jews) reflected this *Zeitgeist* in a more ambivalent way.<sup>49</sup> He pointed to the material and intellectual pre-eminence of Jews in modern capitalist culture with a mixture of admiration and alarm.<sup>50</sup> Opposing Zionism and the prospect of Jewish emigration from Imperial Germany, Sombart wrote:

In the domain of national economy alone there would be a collapse such as we have never experienced even in the greatest crisis, a collapse [*einem Zusammenbruch*] from which our economies would probably never recover, for we would lose our richest and most active citizens.<sup>51</sup>

In 1922, an Austrian writer, Hugo Bettauer, would base his novel *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (The city without Jews) on equally exaggerated assumptions.<sup>52</sup> He imagined that economic life would totally collapse if all Jews were

expelled from the Austrian Republic. In his novel, only the speedy return of the Jews ensures the revival of commerce, trade, fashion, and the entertainment industry. In March 1925, Bettauer—a Jewish convert to Protestantism—was murdered by a pro-Nazi dental student angered at his journalistic crusade for more sexual freedom.

Though Sombart believed the Jews to be indispensable to the German economy, he still expressed the wish that the *Verjudung* (“Judaization”) of “broad areas of our public and intellectual life would come to an end.”<sup>53</sup> Racial mixing, he bluntly asserted, was damaging the German “national soul” (*Volksseele*). In his view, the Jews represented a corrosive modernity which was dissolving traditional social and economic structures. Jewish “over-representation” in areas oriented to the future—like commerce, industry, modern communications, science, and journalism—was especially *zersetzend* (destructive).<sup>54</sup> Thus although Sombart admired Jewish entrepreneurial initiative, his cultural pessimism and anti-modernism was fully consonant with the dominant strand of Central European antisemitism in the early 20th century.<sup>55</sup>

By the eve of the First World War it was increasingly clear that Central European Jews were caught in a fateful trap. If they sought to retain or revive Jewish group identity, they were liable to be targeted as a “state within a state,” an alien, unassimilable element clinging to an outmoded particularism. But if they assimilated, then Jews became even more threatening, especially when they penetrated into the heart of Central European culture—remaking its ethos in their own image. Assimilation meant that they became identified as *the symbol* of those “disintegrative” forces of *modernity* which conservatives and antisemites wished to uproot. Precisely because Jews became so integrated through their intense cultural participation, *embourgeoisement* and intermarriage into the surrounding society, Central European antisemitism came to assume an increasingly ultra-racialist character. *Völkisch* racism was a doctrine intended to unravel any possibility of “symbiosis.” It strove for a clean and total break between Germans and Jews. The implacable choice “German *or* Jew” now replaced the older assimilationist slogan “German *and* Jew.” Baptism was no longer relevant. Marriage between Jews and Germans was officially declared in September 1935 by the ruling Nazi Party’s Nuremberg Congress to be *Rassenschande*, racial defilement.<sup>56</sup>

In pointing to this dialectical interaction between the scale of Jewish assimilation and the fierce racism continued in the Central European

backlash, I do not seek to judge or blame Austrian or German Jews. The ideological war waged against them came to assume such apocalyptic dimensions in Germany and Austria because of the willed Nazi perception of Jewry as the absolute “other,” not as a result of Jewish behavior. Conspiracy theories deliberately and grossly inflated the rise in social and economic status of Central European Jewry. They exaggerated Jewish wealth and ignored Jewish poverty. In their racist form they deliberately sought to provoke panic and wildly irrational fears about a non-existent Jewish bid for “world domination.” The First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, economic upheavals and the general crisis of European civilization encouraged such extremism and the emergence of a paranoid German nationalism. Central European Jews had little if any control over this aberration. It was the totalitarian logic of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* (itself drawing on an age-old Christian tradition) which posited the “otherness” of the Jews in openly genocidal language. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the depth of Jewish assimilation did act as a catalyst for antisemites, increasingly obsessed with the need to completely eradicate any Jewish presence in German society and culture. The sweeping use of biological metaphors reflected deep fears generated by what growing numbers of Germans and Austrians perceived as “Jewish penetration” of the “völkisch essence.” The “exterminationist” fantasy fused sexual as well as cultural and political anxieties that had been latent in the era before emancipation and assimilation, when Jews were still marginal and therefore not perceived as an existential threat. By 1930, however, “the Jew” had mutated into the “enemy within” who could no longer be uprooted except by a total revolution of the kind envisaged by the National Socialists.

For most German and Austrian racists, what appeared ominous and even sinister about Jews was no longer their difference but rather their *sameness*. Jewish “otherness” became even more frightening to antisemites the more it became diluted, adaptable, mobile, and able to efface boundaries.<sup>57</sup> Modern secular Jews cut such an alarming figure precisely because they were becoming indefinable, amorphous, infinitely fluid. Their legendary mimetic ability lent itself to new permutations and combinations, to the construction of conspiracy theories fabricated by an ever more fertile antisemitic paranoia in Central Europe. Perceived to be the protean carrier of a metaphysically and empirically evil essence, “the Jew” finally became transformed in the Nazi imagination into the ultimate incarnation of the powers of darkness.

Jewish social mobility, scientific virtuosity, cultural ubiquity, economic success, and political radicalism greatly reinforced the urgency with which antisemites began to fix the absolute “otherness” of the Jews in ethnic terms. This “racial” essence was defined as something “eternal” and “unchanging.” Judaism and Jewry mutated into a superhuman and subhuman peril, a “universal plague” threatening the complete extinction of German culture, of the “Aryan soul” and Western civilization. By the 1930s, the brilliant flowering of Jewish intellect and creativity on the soil of Central Europe had been transformed by antisemitic mythology into its exact opposite—a diabolical plot by the Jews as a collectivity—to appropriate, seize, and destroy the cultural assets of the “host peoples” in Europe. The tangible success of the Jews became the decisive proof of this truly satanic conspiracy. The “masters” of modern culture were set to become victims of the most deadly vengefulness ever wreaked on any human group in history.

It is a melancholy fact that the Jews of Europe were murdered en masse despite having passionately identified themselves with their adopted fatherlands. The intensity of Jewish acculturation seemed to exacerbate rather than diminish existing social, economic, and cultural tensions, with no obvious defense strategy capable of reversing the trend. But this does not mean that what began in Germany in 1933 and rapidly spread to the rest of the European continent was the decree of an inscrutable Deity or a fatality ordained by the laws of history and nature. There were acute observers who understood what was at stake from the first day that Hitler came to power. One of those who grasped the terrible reality almost immediately was Joseph Roth. Following the Third Reich’s burning of books and expulsion of Jewish writers, he wrote a prophetic essay entitled “The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind,” decrying the capitulation of the European intellectuals, out of the sloth, apathy, weakness, and lack of imagination. The Jews, he noted, “who stood in the front row of the defenders of Europe,” were also “the first to be defeated.” Precisely because of their pariah status, Jewish writers were however, “safe from any temptation to take the side of the barbarians in any way.” As “Asiatics” and “Orientals,” they were not permitted to “desert from the noble ranks of the European army,” to betray Europe, Christendom, and Judaism. With his characteristically mordant Central European wit, Roth observed:

At a time when His Holiness, the infallible Pope of Christendom, is concluding a peace agreement, a Concordat, with the enemies of Christ, when the Protestants are establishing a “German Church” and

Joseph Roth (1894-1939) died of alcoholism and despair in Parisian exile.

Austrian National Library



censoring the Bible, we descendants of the old Jews, the forefathers of European culture, are the only legitimate German representatives of that culture. Thanks to inscrutable divine wisdom, we are physically incapable of betraying it to the heathen civilization of poison gases, to the ammonia-breathing Germanic war god.”<sup>58</sup>

Roth was not blind to Jewish faults. He had little time for the *Kaiserjuden* (Kaiser Wilhelm's Jews), the “Jewish Prussians,” or the Reform Jews “with a Protestant bearing and in Protestant costume”; he had little patience with those who came to synagogue on Yom Kippur in luxurious carriages, “dressed in the uniforms of Prussian lieutenants of the reserve.”<sup>59</sup> Nor did he care for those Jewish arbiters of taste who, driven by liberalism, free-thinking, and indiscriminate love of the modern, admired “every version of corruption in literature, in the visual arts. in the theatre, because they had forgotten Jehovah....”<sup>60</sup> But like Stefan Zweig in Vienna, he recognized that *only* the German Jews (doctors, lawyers, tradesmen, department store owners, artisans, or manufacturers) “*were interested in books, theatre, museums, music*” (emphasis in the original). The magazines and newspapers “were edited by Jews, managed by Jews, read by Jews!” But it was these same critics and reviewers who discovered and promoted numerous “pure Aryan” poets, writers, and actors. After drawing up a long list of distinguished writers—Jews, half-Jews, and quarter-Jews—who had made an immense contribution to modern German literature, Roth added: It is only the feeblest dilettantes who flourish in the Swastika’s shadows, in the bloody glow cast by the ash heaps in which we are consumed....”<sup>61</sup>

The Nazi book burners were not only persecuting Jews but mocking Christianity, Western culture, and the foundations of morality established by Mosaic law.

If the books of Jewish or supposed Jewish authors are burned, what is really set fire to is the Book of Books: the Bible. If Jewish judges and attorneys are expelled or locked up, it represents a symbolic assault on law and justice.<sup>62</sup>

Roth's lament, written from Paris in September-November 1933, climaxed in a poignant, though tragic confession, which echoes through much of this book:

We have written for Germany, we have died for Germany. We have spilled our blood for Germany in two ways: the blood that runs in our veins, and the blood with which we write. We have sung Germany, the real Germany! And that is why today we are being burned by Germany!<sup>63</sup>

#### NOTES

1. See Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All. A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743-1933* (New York 2002).
2. Quoted in Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets without Honor: A Background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and Their World* (New York, 1979), 161.
3. See Jelena Hahl-Koch, ed., *Arnold Schönberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Briefe, Bilder und Dokumente einer aussergewöhnlichen Bewegung* (Salzburg and Vienna 1980), 91.
4. Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schönberg Briefe* (Mainz 1958), 89-93; see also the important article by Moshe Lazar, "Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles: A Psychodramatic Journey to His Roots," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17, nos. 1-2 (June/Nov. 1994): 8-145.
5. Joseph Roth, "Ostjuden im Westen," in *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Cologne 1985), 11.
6. Robert S. Wistrich, "Between the Cross and the Swastika: A Nietzschean Perspective," in *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism?* ed. by Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (Princeton, N.J. 2002), 147-53.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals in Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York 1966), 3, 14: 559-60.
8. See the Introduction by Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich in *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism?*, 11.

9. See Josef Simon, "Nietzsche on Judaism and Europe," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. by Jacob Golomb (London 1997), 108-109.
10. Ibid. The original quote comes from Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* ("Völker und Vaterländer"), first published in 1886.
11. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1, 10: 472-74.
12. Robert S. Wistrich, "Between the Cross and the Swastika," in *Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism*, 144-69; see also Daniel Conway, "Ecce Caesar: Nietzsche's Imperial Ambitions," in *ibid.*, 173-95.
13. See Steven E. Aschheim, "Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 3-20.
14. J. Golomb, "Nietzsche and the Marginal Jews," in *ibid.*, 158-92.
15. See Stefan Zweig, "Friedrich Nietzsche," in *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (Leipzig 1925), 231-322.
16. Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca, N.Y. 2004) convincingly demonstrates Nietzsche's influence on political, cultural, and religious Zionists.
17. *Ibid.*, 23-64, 159-88.
18. Jacob Wassermann, *My Life as German and Jew* (New York 1933). The German original appeared in 1921. See also Solomon Liptzin, *Germany's Stepchildren* (Philadelphia 1961), 178-83.
19. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York 1967), 262, n. 1.
20. J. Golomb, "Nietzsche and the Marginal Jews," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 168-75.
21. Stefan Zweig, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. Richard Friedenthal (Frankfurt a.M. 1978), 153.
22. Stefan Zweig, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York 1956), 243.
23. Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (London 1943), 318.
24. See Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien, Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich 1996). This is the most detailed account of Hitler's early years.
25. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London 1999), 30-87.
26. On Lanz von Liebenfels, see Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab*, 2nd ed. (Vienna 1985).
27. William O. McCagg, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918* (Bloomington, Ind. 1989); Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989); Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938* (New York 1989).
28. See Jacques Le Rider, "Antisémitisme et Antisémites, Réactions Juives à l'Antisémitisme à Vienne et à Berlin autour de 1900," *Cahiers d'Etudes Germaniques* no. 24 (1993): 267-84.

29. Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London 1982), 175-261.
30. See Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, “*Jüdischer Bolschewismus*,” *Mythos und Realität* (Dresden 2002), 115-92.
31. Letter of June 1921 in Max Brod, *Franz Kafka, Briefe, 1902-1924* (Frankfurt a.M. 1955), 336ff.; see also Margarete Kohlenbach, “Kafka and the German-Jewish Double Bind,” in *The German-Jewish Dilemma. From the Enlightenment to the Shoah*, ed. by Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel (Lampeter 1999), 183-86.
32. See Walther Rathenau, “Höre Israel!,” *Die Zukunft*, no. 23 (1897): 454-62; Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Vienna 1903); Theodor Lessing, *Der Jüdische Selbsthass* (Berlin 1930); Liptzin, *Germany's Stepchildren*, 172-93.
33. For Kraus's view of Zionism, see Gerald Kriehofer, “The Case of Kraus versus Herzl,” in *Austrian Studies* (Edinburgh) 8 (1997): 107-21; Robert S. Wistrich, “Propheten des Untergangs: Karl Kraus und Otto Weininger,” *Das Jüdische Echo* 48 (Oct. 1999): 93-113; Allan S. Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited* (New Brunswick, N.J. 2001) on the cultural background.
34. Sigmund Freud to Oskar Pfister, 9 Oct. 1918, in *Briefe 1909-1939*, ed. by Ernst L. Freud and Heinrich Meng (Frankfurt a.M. 1963), 64.
35. See my remarks in the opening chapter “The Devil, the Jews, and Hatred of the ‘Other,’” in *Demonizing the Other. Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich (Amsterdam 1999), 2-15.
36. Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by Ernst L. Freud (Frankfurt a.M. 1968), 51 ff.
37. Joseph Roth, *Das journalistische Werk*, ed. by Klaus Westermann, 3 vols. (Cologne 1990), 2: 834.
38. For a collection of his early Zionist writings, see Nathan Birnbaum, *Die jüdische Moderne* (Augsburg 1989), with a foreword by Henryk M. Broder; also Joachim Doron, *Haguto ha-Tsionit shel Nathan Birnbaum* (The Zionist thinking of Nathan Birnbaum) (Jerusalem 1988).
39. Doron, ibid., 171-200; and Birnbaum, *Die jüdische Moderne*, 19-174 for a selection of texts.
40. See Birnbaum's articles “Ostjüdische Aufgaben” (1905) and “Etwas über Ost- und Westjuden,” in *Die jüdische Moderne*, 134-56.
41. Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (Toronto 1982), 299-348.
42. George L. Mosse, “Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992): 561-81; and idem, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover, Mass. 1993), 161-75.

43. Jacob Golomb deals with Nordau and Nietzsche in *Nietzsche and Zion*, 46-64.
44. Ibid., 57-59.
45. Robert S. Wistrich, “Max Nordau, Degeneration and the *Fin-de-Siècle*,” in *Krisenwahrnehmungen im Fin-de-Siècle*, ed. Michael Graetz and Aram Mattioli (Zurich 1997), 83-100.
46. Moritz Goldstein, “German Jewry’s Dilemma. The Story of a Provocative Essay,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 2 (1957): 237ff.
47. Jakob Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (Berlin 1921), 107ff.
48. Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* (Oxford 1979), 181-88. Also in the same collection of essays, one can find Gay’s striking portrait of Hermann Levi, the most accomplished conductor in Imperial Germany, close friend and great admirer of Wagner, as well as being a classic case-study of the “self-hating” German Jew.
49. Werner Sombart, *Die Zukunft der Juden* (Leipzig 1912); see also his earlier work, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig 1910), which was praised by some German Jews and especially by Zionists.
50. Paul Mendès-Flohr, “Werner Sombart’s *The Jews and Modern Capitalism. An Analysis of Its Ideological Premises*,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 21 (1976): 87-107.
51. Sombart, *Die Zukunft der Juden*, 67.
52. Hugo Bettauer, *Die Stadt ohne Juden: Ein Roman von Übermorgen* (Vienna 1922). The Austrian journalist was a socialist ally of Karl Kraus. His novel was intended as a satire on antisemitism.
53. Sombart, *Die Zukunft der Juden*, 33ff., 58.
54. See Shulamit Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1990), 146-65; Werner E. Mosse, *Jews in the German Economy: The German-Jewish Economic Elite 1820-1935* (Oxford 1987).
55. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge 1984), 130ff.
56. Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust* (New York 2001).
57. See my introduction to *Demonizing the Other*, 10-11; and the illuminating articles by Philippe Burrin and Saul Friedländer in the same volume, *ibid.*, pp. 210-35.
58. Joseph Roth, *What I Saw. Reports from Berlin, 1920-33*, trans. and introduced by Michael Hofmann (London 2004), 207-209.
59. *Ibid.*, 211.
60. *Ibid.* Roth’s distaste for cultural modernism showed some similarities with that of Karl Kraus.
61. *Ibid.*, 212.
62. *Ibid.*, 212-13. Roth ironically noted that for the first time, “the Jews are not murdered for crucifying Christ, but for having produced him from their midst.”
63. *Ibid.*, 217.



PART I

## **Into the Crossfire**



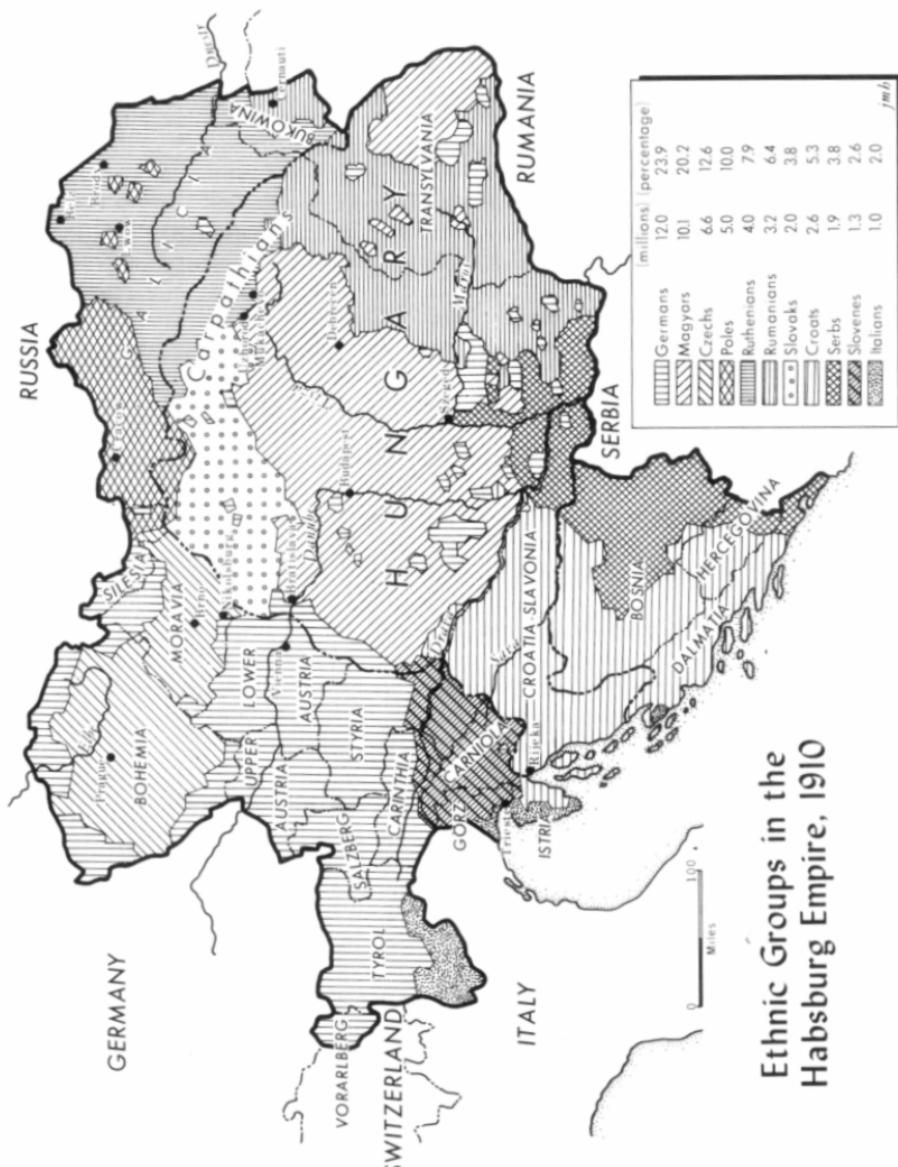
## CHAPTER 1

# The Ethnic Cauldron of the Habsburg Empire

Few areas of the world during the past 150 years have been so shaped by Jewish influences as the former Habsburg lands of East Central Europe. The prominent Czech writer Milan Kundera once observed that in the pre-Hitler era, Jews were the “intellectual cement,” the essentially cosmopolitan and integrative element that forged the spiritual unity of this region.<sup>1</sup> It was this small nation par excellence which provided a quintessentially European color, tone, and vitality to great cities like Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, not to mention Krakow, Lemberg, and Czernowitz to the east. The Nazi mass murder of the Jews, to which Stalin added his own macabre postscript after World War II, brought about the virtual disappearance of this fructifying Jewish leaven and for forty years crushed the independence of the smaller East European nations sandwiched between Russia and Germany. Since the European revolutions of 1989 these nations, reemerging from a semi-totalitarian deep freeze, have been recovering their collective memories and historic identities long repressed under Communist rule.<sup>2</sup>

One of the uglier side-effects of the new freedom and openness that developed in the 1990s has been a revival of crude Judeophobia in Central and Eastern Europe—an antisemitism whose roots as a political movement go back to the end of the 19th century.<sup>3</sup> This was the crucial formative period in which Jews first became entangled in the crossfire of intractable nationalist conflicts that threatened to tear apart the political fabric of the former Habsburg Monarchy. Reexamining this period in a comparative perspective can provide us with new insights into modern nationalism, ethnic conflict, assimilation, the “Jewish Question,” and the origins of Zionism.

Habsburg Jewry in 1910 was the largest Jewish community on the European continent outside of Tsarist Russia. In the western, Austrian half of the Monarchy there were nearly 1.3. million Jews, never officially recognized as constituting a “nationality” though they represented 4.7% of the population—more numerous than the Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, and Italians who did enjoy this designation.



In Greater Hungary in 1910 there were over 900,000 Jews—5% of the population—by then the largest single component of Habsburg Jewry, surpassing even the Jews of Galicia.<sup>4</sup> In Austria, Jews mainly identified with the 10 million Germans (just over a third of the Cisleithanian population) to whom they owed their emancipation. But by 1900, a majority of Jews in the Czech lands and in Galicia, felt obliged to declare political allegiance to the Czechs and Poles whose fervent nationalism was on the rise. In Hungary, on the other hand, Jews ever since the middle of the 19th century had linked their fate to the ethnic Magyars. Like the Austro-Germans, the Magyars numbered about 10 million and by 1910 they represented just over half of the total population in Greater Hungary. The Jews held the demographic balance in Greater Hungary which enabled the Magyars to preserve a slight majority over all the other nationalities who included 3.2 million Romanians, 2.2 million Germans, 2 million Slovaks, 2 million Croats, and 1.9 million Serbs.

Jews gravitated into the Austro-German and Hungarian orbits primarily because these were the two dominant nationalities in the Habsburg Empire. Germans and Magyars had simultaneously emancipated the Jews during the heyday of the Liberal era in 1867. Though the Poles in Galicia were also part of a “historic” nation who exercised a certain attraction for Jews, their attitude to Jewish emancipation had been more lukewarm.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the Czechs, assimilation in the 19th century also remained superficial. Nevertheless the growing power of the Czech national movement commanded respect and obliged Jews to adapt their public position accordingly.<sup>6</sup> There was, however, little prospect of Jewish assimilation to the Romanians or the more backward Slav peasant nationalities of whom the most numerous were the 3.5 million Ukrainians in Galicia. These less developed and oppressed nationalities had little to offer the Jews and resented their role as “agents” of Germanization, Magyarization, or Polonization in economic, political, cultural, and linguistic spheres. Habsburg Jews thus found themselves caught in a problematic intermediary role between the warring nationalities—one which dated back to the 1848 Revolutions in Central Europe and would continue for the next ninety years until 1938.<sup>7</sup>

The assimilation of Central European Jewry was an extended process lasting several generations which presupposed major internal migrations that brought Jews to the great melting-pot cities of Vienna, Budapest, and Prague and into areas predominantly inhabited by ethnic Germans, Magyars, and Czechs. It was closely linked to the rapid *embourgeoisement* of Habsburg Jewry in the late 19th century and to the role assigned to them as economic

modernizers—one which was especially prominent in Hungary.<sup>8</sup> The Habsburg State—like the Hungarian political elite—recognized in Jewish entrepreneurial capitalism an indispensable lever of industrialization and a centripetal force in maintaining the economic unity of an Empire increasingly endangered by centrifugal nationalisms.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Jewish role in capitalism was viewed in far more hostile terms by those who directly suffered the effects of industrialization. Populist anti-capitalism was rampant among the urban lower middle classes (artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers) in Vienna who supported Karl Lueger's Christian-Social party, and it took on a clear anti-Jewish coloring.<sup>10</sup> Similar sentiments prevailed among peasants in Galicia, Slovak villagers in North Hungary, and Romanians in Transylvania. Economic grievances against the “exploitation” by Jewish middlemen (often scarcely better off themselves) often fused with traditional religious motifs and repressed national feelings.<sup>11</sup> Thus, economic modernization opened up unprecedented business opportunities and a new social mobility for Habsburg Jewry while also provoking an anti-Jewish backlash among the lower classes that were adversely affected by the rise of capitalism.

The fact that Austro-Germans were among the leading standard bearers of trade, industry, and commerce in the Empire was an important reason why Jews sought to assimilate to the Germans in the Monarchy. Jews remembered that it was an enlightened “Germanizing” Emperor of Austria, Joseph II, who in 1781 had begun the process that would culminate in full legal emancipation in 1867. Since the 1848 Revolution in Vienna it was even more clear that the Austro-Germans (like the Magyars) stood in the forefront of the struggle for liberty as well as national unity.<sup>12</sup> For Jews in Vienna, Bohemia, Moravia, or Bukovina, it was equally apparent that German *Kultur* stood on a higher rung than the cultures of other peoples in the Monarchy.<sup>13</sup> Names like Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Kant, and Humboldt symbolized for most educated Austrian Jews (including those of Galicia) the enlightened, cosmopolitan ideals of *Deutschtum*. In 1848 this translated into a close identification with Austro-Germans in the nationality struggles that were already threatening the survival of the Empire.<sup>14</sup> In that year, Adolf Jellinek (a future leader of Viennese Jewry) could write:

The Jews who are German by language, disposition, and outlook must remain so and prove themselves to be the bearers and guardians of German *Volksthum*.... [T]o fraternize with the fanatics of Czechdom,

Slavdom and Magyardom means to secede from *Kultur* and *Bildung*.<sup>15</sup>

Such statements reflected a sense of cultural superiority (widespread among German liberals) towards “*Halb-Asien*”—the semi-Asiatic underdeveloped and impoverished eastern hinterlands of the Monarchy—with their Slavic populations and traditionalist Jewish communities.<sup>16</sup> These were also the assumptions of most communal leaders in Vienna and leading German-Austrian liberal politicians of Jewish origin like Ignaz Kuranda.<sup>17</sup>

A strong sense of the German cultural mission to the East also appears in the *Neue Freie Presse*, the most influential newspaper in the Empire, whose editors, Moritz Benedikt and Eduard Bacher (both Jews) were later blamed by the satirist Karl Kraus for intoxicating public opinion with a hysterical chauvinism that prepared the ground for the First World War. The ease with which Austro-liberalism could slide over into “imperialist” attitudes towards Slavs was also illustrated by the case of Heinrich Friedjung, the leading ideologist of Austrian Pan-Germanism and initially a close collaborator of its founder Georg von Schoenerer. The Moravian-born Friedjung pioneered the *Anschluss* idea—favoring union with the powerful new German Reich created by Otto von Bismarck.<sup>18</sup> No one was more forceful and eloquent in calling for a more centralized and German-dominated commonwealth in Austria, which would cut loose from Hungary and reduce the number of Slavs in its borders. Within a few years he was unceremoniously ostracized from the radical Pan-German camp because of the “Semitic” origins which he spent much of his adult life so passionately denying.

The aggressively illiberal *Volksdeutschum* which emerged in Austria in the early 1880s was imported from Berlin, from the capital of German *Wissenschaft* and cradle of the *Aufklärung*. Its prophets—all of them antisemites—were illustrious figures like the Prussian nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke, the famous composer Richard Wagner, the Berlin philosopher and ex-socialist Eugen Dühring, and the Protestant *Hofprediger* Adolf Stoecker.<sup>19</sup> Suddenly *Deutschum* appeared in a new guise—not as a liberating banner of enlightened reason and Jewish emancipation but as its very antithesis—demanding the exclusion of Jews from German student fraternities, literary clubs and societies, school associations, and all forms of political activity.

It was this traumatic experience which prompted a character in Arthur Schnitzler’s turn of the century novel, *Der Weg ins Freie*, to bitterly remark:

Who created the Liberal movement in Austria? The Jews! By whom were the Jews betrayed and abandoned? By the Liberals. Who created the German nationalist movement in Austria? The Jews. Who left the Jews in the lurch—worse yet, who spat on them like dogs? The German nationalists.<sup>20</sup>

The pan-German nationalists sought to dismember the Austrian State (a goal that would be achieved by their most faithful disciple, Adolf Hitler, in 1938) and targeted the Jews as one of its most important pillars—strongly supportive of the Emperor, the Monarchy, and the liberal economic system.

The “imperial-royal patriotism” of the Jews with its cult of Kaiser and fatherland was a reality which would be confirmed on the battlefields of the First World War. Before 1914, communal spokesmen repeatedly asserted their unconditional loyalty to the double-headed eagle and the person of the Emperor.<sup>21</sup> Hence it is no surprise to find that the Pan-German nationalists and antisemites increasingly loathed the Emperor Franz Joseph whom they branded as a *Judenkaiser*. With equal vehemence they attacked his son Prince Rudolf accusing him of being in the pay of the “Golden International.” The philosemitism of the Crown Prince, as well as his Francophile liberalism, made him a special target of Pan-German hatred.

Dynastic patriotism could not always paper over tensions between loyalty to Habsburg Austria as against allegiance to German, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, or Italian nationalisms.<sup>22</sup> One can find echoes of this even in the open and pluralist atmosphere of the Empire’s only major port, Trieste, where Jews became locked into cultural antagonisms that were becoming impossible to ignore. From the 1850s, Trieste Jewry had increasingly adapted themselves to the ethos of *italianatà*; by the end of the century they felt the pull of the liberal Italian State to the west. Indeed, some Trieste Jews joined the radical wing of the Italian irredentist movement after 1900. They shared the nationalism of the Italian middle classes which was further exacerbated by the Slovene challenge in Trieste and the neighboring hinterland. Other Jewish citizens of Trieste experienced tensions between their German and Italian loyalties. For not only was Trieste an Austrian port, but its prosperity and the financial interests of the local Jewish community were closely bound up with its special role in the Danubian Monarchy and with its German-Austrian connections. Dynastic sentiment reinforced by economic considerations clashed here with the cultural and political appeal of an Italian national sentiment that demanded union with Italy.<sup>23</sup>

Similar identity conflicts existed for Jews throughout the Empire, intensifying with the awakening of contending national movements in the course of the 19th century. These nationalisms began to challenge the supranational Habsburg State with growing frequency. There were some farsighted Austrian politicians like the liberal revolutionary hero of 1848, Adolf Fischof (born in Budapest), who prophetically anticipated the dangers of this development for Jews. As early as 1869, Fischof's seminal work *Österreich und die Bürgschaften seines Bestandes* (Austria and the guarantees for its existence) suggested that the Monarchy must abandon the fiction of being a "unitary State" (*Einheitsstaat*) and develop new constitutional forms to satisfy the neglected non-German nationalities.<sup>24</sup>

But Fischof failed in his attempt to establish a moderate German *Volkspartei* committed to electoral reform and constitutional guarantees for the Slav nationalities. His prescient warnings to his Jewish co-religionists in Vienna that the nationalities of Austria would either be reconciled or turn antisemitic, unfortunately fell on deaf ears.<sup>25</sup>

An exception to this rule was the Galician-born rabbi, Dr. Joseph Bloch, a militant fighter against the growing phalanx of antisemites in the Austrian Parliament and a member of the *Polenkub* in the Reichsrat from 1883 to 1895. Like Fischof, Bloch advised Jews to work for a policy of reconciling the nationalities and to distance themselves from German claims to hegemony over the Slavs. Defending the supranational cult of *Österreichertum*, he declared that "we are neither Germans or Slavs, but Austrian Jews or Jewish Austrians," citizens of the Empire who identified fully with the dynasty.<sup>26</sup> German or Slav nationalism in Austria could only disintegrate the structure of the Habsburg State, which would be a disaster for the Jews. Hence Austrian Jews should regard themselves as Austrians *tout court* (as many traditionalist Galician *Ostjuden* already did) owing allegiance to the interests of the dynasty and not to the egoistic concerns of the warring nationalities.<sup>27</sup> Rabbi Bloch believed that this outlook was consonant with the interests of his own Galician constituency in Kolomea and had the support of the Orthodox, *kaisertreue* Jewish masses in the eastern part of the Monarchy. It was equally congenial to Austrian Prime Minister Count Taafe, whose conservative administration was based on a Slav-clerical alliance that relegated German liberals to the opposition.<sup>28</sup> Bloch also enjoyed the crucial support (until the mid 1890s) of the pro-Habsburg Polish aristocracy in Galicia which appreciated his advocacy of a pro-Polish and anti-German line for Austrian Jews.

Not surprisingly, such a political concept was anathema to most of the Jewish notables who controlled the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* in Vienna. They could not easily digest Bloch's unapologetic defense of the Talmud and his attack on assimilated Jewish Germanism as a kind of "Semitic antisemitism" demoralizing Jewry from within. Bloch's vigorous assault on the Catholic and German nationalist antisemites, his ethno-religious emphasis on the common fate of the Jews as well as his creation of the Österreichisch-Israelitische Union in 1886 did, however, make a great impact on Jewish politics in Vienna.<sup>29</sup> In time, this *enfant terrible* of the community would himself become part of the establishment and Jewish liberal opposition to his candidacy in the Reichsrat mellowed in the 1890s.

Bloch's affirmation of a separate Jewish ethno-religious identity reflected the realities of the Galician Jewish milieu which he represented. In 1900 there were 811,371 Jews living in the densely populated Kronland of Galicia, who accounted for two-thirds of Austrian Jewry.<sup>30</sup> By virtue of their compactness and cohesion, their traditional way of life (dominated by Hassidic influence), their social structure, and Yiddish-speaking culture, the Galicians formed a distinct group within the mosaic of Habsburg Jewish communities. In both Krakow and Lemberg, Jews represented nearly 30% of the population at the turn of the century, while in smaller towns like Brody, Tranopol, Kolomea, Tarnow, Buczacz, Zolkiew, Stanislau, Rzeszow, and Drohobycz they constituted over half of the general population.<sup>31</sup> In Eastern Galicia, the 624,639 Jews who made up 12.8% of the population, lived among a Ukrainian peasant majority; while in the western part of the province there were 186,544 Jews in 1900, dwelling in the midst of a Polish Catholic majority.<sup>32</sup> While 85% of the Christian population lived directly from the land, most Galician Jews depended for their livelihoods on crafts, trade, commerce, and industry. In East Galicia they dominated entire branches of the local economy.<sup>33</sup>

Galician Jews would be adversely affected by the emergence of a native Polish bourgeoisie and a flourishing Polish national movement at the end of the 19th century. Equally, they felt the pressure of organizations among Polish and Ukrainian farmers which were squeezing them out of their middleman roles as petty traders, retailers, tavern-keepers, and moneylenders. An economic boycott of Jewish goods began in the 1890s and traditional peasant mistrust of the Jews was whipped up by the local Catholic clergy and a charismatic populist agitator, Father Stojalowski. Finally, during the summer of 1898, pogroms exploded in western Galicia which necessitated

Austrian central government intervention.<sup>34</sup> These events occurred against the background of chronic backwardness created by the scarcity of land, density of population, the anti-industrial policy of the Polish nobility, and the national rivalry between Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. The result was that increasing numbers of Galician Jews chose to migrate to the United States or to Vienna—where by 1900 they already made up about 25% of the Jewish population.<sup>35</sup>

Since 1869, the Polish landowning aristocracy virtually enjoyed a free hand in Galicia in return for their support of successive Austrian governments. Polish was the official language of the province, there was a purely Polish administration, Polish schools, and courts of law. In the local Diet, large strata of the population—especially the Ukrainian rural masses—were disenfranchised. Jews represented over 10% of the population and were counted as Polish-speaking, thereby strengthening the Roman Catholic Poles in their national conflict with the Orthodox or Uniate Ukrainians.<sup>36</sup> Not only that, but the Polish *Schlachta* still relied on Jewish “agents” as instruments in their economic exploitation of the peasantry and counted on their political loyalty in elections. Unlike the symbiosis with a modernizing Jewry in Hungary after the 1867 *Ausgleich*, Galicia remained hostile to social change, urbanization, and modernization under the Polish *Schlachta*. The ruling Poles failed to deal with social grievances or with the national aspirations of either Ukrainians or Jews in Galicia. Pressure was, however, exerted on wealthy Jews and Orthodox religious leaders to conform to Polish national expectations. In 1873, four out of five Galician Jews elected to the Austrian Reichsrat had belonged to the German Progressive Club (Vereinigte Linke). But by 1886 all the Jewish deputies were members of the Polenklub.<sup>37</sup> Orthodox and hassidic leaders eager to stem the influence of the *maskilim* encouraged this shift from a German to a Polish orientation, giving their electoral blessing to the Polish conservatives. The small but influential elite of assimilated “Poles of the Mosaic persuasion” were even closer to the ruling *Schlachta*.

Linguistic “assimilation” was especially encouraged, enabling over 800,000 Jews to be registered as Polish-speaking in the 1910 census, a testament to the Polish political monopoly rather than to a process of “genuine” Polonization.<sup>38</sup> Most Galician Jews were in fact Yiddish-speaking (in the 1931 census in independent Poland, an overwhelming majority of Jews in Lemberg gave Yiddish as their mother tongue) but the so-called “Jargon” was not officially recognized as an *Umgangssprache* in Habsburg

Austria.<sup>39</sup> This was part of the background to the awakening Jewish national movement in the Austrian Empire, whose strongholds lay in Galicia and multiethnic Bukovina.<sup>40</sup>

The Jewish national renaissance in Galicia coincided and was also in conflict with that of the Poles and Ukrainians. Yet it was at times influenced by Polish romanticism, heroic, vitalist Nietzschean myths, and the vibrant imagery of the host nation.<sup>41</sup> The exclusion which Jews encountered in Polish society did not preclude their imitation of Polish models. On the other hand, Ukrainian nationalism seemed more remote to Jews, as well as being weaker and less developed than its Polish rival. Ukrainian nationalists before 1900 were generally hostile to Jews, regarding them as allies of the Galician Poles and “exploiters” of the peasantry in Eastern Galicia. Though there was nothing comparable to the terrible 1905 pogroms in the Russian Ukraine, the potential for ethnic conflict between Ukrainians and Jews was considerable. Jewish nationalism offered a possible way out of the impasse. This was recognized by the Ukrainian leader Romanchuk, who in 1906 proposed recognition of the Jews as an independent nationality in a Reichsrat speech.<sup>42</sup> A year later in the first democratic elections held in Habsburg Austria, Zionist Jews and Ukrainians sealed an electoral alliance which led to the election of three Jewish National candidates in Galicia and the emergence of a Jewish Club in the Austrian Parliament for the first time.<sup>43</sup>

This tactical alliance was anathema to the ruling Poles, leading to draconian measures in the 1911 Austrian elections to prevent any recurrence. The Galician *Schlachta* reacted no less sharply to the growing Jewish involvement in Polish Social Democracy which threatened to further undermine their grip on the province. Although the Galician PPS (founded in 1892) was hostile to Zionism or to any other form of Jewish nationalism, it did seek to defend the interests of the impoverished Jewish masses while attacking the rule of the *Schlachta* and its wealthy Jewish allies.<sup>44</sup> The PPS attracted poorer Jews because of its defense of their interests and its political rejection of antisemitism. On the other hand, its leader, Ignacy Daszyński, had no sympathy for “narrow minded” slogans like “Yiddish for the Jewish street,” fiercely rejecting the demands for cultural-national autonomy made by “Jewish” separatists in his own party.<sup>45</sup> His right-hand man, Dr. Hermann Diamand, an assimilated Jew from Lvov (Lemberg), summed up the PPS position when he told delegates of Jewish workers’ associations:

There are no special Jewish traits worth conserving. All retention of Jewish uniqueness is deleterious. We have to assume new forms and

not flinch at the difficulties encountered in Polish society. We must bend every effort to eliminate all manifestations of uniqueness.<sup>46</sup>

In this unbending opposition to “Jewish uniqueness,” Diamand reflected the views of the Social Democratic leaders in Vienna. They were virtually all of Jewish origin and implacably opposed to any attempt to revive the Jewish nation.<sup>47</sup>

On the eve of World War I, antisemitism was also becoming a more potent force in Galicia. Not only did Jews have to face exclusionary economic measures and the age-old stereotypes that still flourished among the Polish peasants and the *Schlachta*; Not only was the traditional anti-Judaism of the Catholic Church still potent, but now the integral nationalism of a new movement—that of the National Democrats—began to poison Polish-Jewish relations. National Democrats denounced Jews as *the* most dangerous internal enemy of the Poles. Though their strongholds were in Russian and Prussian Poland, they had gained a significant foothold in Austrian Galicia by 1914.<sup>48</sup> Roman Dmowski, their ideological and political leader, was driven by his paranoid vision of a restored Greater Poland (purified of all ethnically alien elements and animated by a ruthless national egoism) and already thinking about the mass emigration of most of Poland’s Jewish population.<sup>49</sup>

In the Czech lands, too, a new integral nationalism nourished by the fierce struggle for supremacy between Germans and Czechs, had serious implications for the Jews. Josephinian legislation in the 1780s and the ensuing process of “Germanization” had left an even deeper mark on Jews in Bohemia and Moravia than in either Hungary or Galicia.<sup>50</sup> This was a smaller, more westernized community, numbering 85,826 Jews in Bohemia and 41,158 in Moravia in 1910. Czech Jews amounted to about 10% of Cisleithanian Jewry but just under 2% of the overall population in the Czech lands. In 1900 there were just under 20,000 Jews in Prague (9.4% of the general population)—a rate of growth much more static than the accelerating Jewish populations of Vienna and Budapest.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the situation in Galicia or Hungary, the Jews were insignificant in the demographic balance between Czechs (60%) and Germans (40%) in the Bohemian lands but in economic, political, and cultural terms they were trapped in the middle of an intractable conflict. Living in a bilingual, bicultural Gentile environment, Czech Jews found themselves forced to choose between competing cultures, national identities, and political aspirations.

In the 1840s, despite the efforts of some Bohemian Jewish intellectuals like Siegfried Kapper, it was obvious that most Jews preferred German over

Czech culture and looked to the dynasty in Vienna rather than sympathizing with the local nationalists in Prague.<sup>52</sup> The radical Czech publicist Karel Havlíček-Borovský, writing in 1846, responded by denying that the Israelites could belong to the Czech nation, since they were clearly of “Semitic origin.” Germans, French, Englishmen, or Spaniards, he suggested, had a greater affinity with the Czechs than did the Jews:

Therefore it cannot be asserted that the Jews living in Bohemia or Moravia are Czechs of the Mosaic persuasion, but we must regard them as a separate—Semitic—nation which lives only incidentally in our midst and sometimes understands or speaks our language....<sup>53</sup>

Havlíček’s barely disguised hostility to Jews, like that of most Czech nationalists at the time, derived from the view that they were “Germanizers” in the Czech lands. There was some plausibility to this view. Until 1918 most Bohemian and Moravian Jews did indeed regard German as the language of high culture, electing—especially in the cities—to send their children to German-language institutions of secondary or higher education. In Prague around 1900, 90% of the Jewish children who went through the municipal school system chose the German track. A similar percentage of Jewish university students preferred attendance at the German rather than the Czech University of Prague.<sup>54</sup> This was unsurprising, given the prospects for professional advancement or the greater prestige of German scholarly achievement and education. But in the eyes of Czech nationalists this was not merely an irritating anachronism; it was perceived as an insulting expression of Jewish infidelity towards the Czech cause, a demonstrative act against Czech culture as such. Accused of ignoring the new national basis of social, cultural, and political life in the Czech lands, Jews were indicted for acting in collusion with the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as being subservient to the authorities in Vienna.

The Czech national movement after 1880 began to demand the *de-Germanization* of Jewish communal institutions and the closing of all German-language Jewish schools in the Czech countryside as well as in Prague. This campaign backed by the Czech-Jewish National Union (*Narodní Jednota českožidovska*)—which had been founded in 1893 to promote a new Czech orientation in Jewish life—did achieve its main objectives at the elementary school level.<sup>55</sup> By 1910, only a few German-Jewish schools still remained in existence—a dramatic transformation achieved through intensive Czech nationalist pressure.<sup>56</sup> No less spectacular was the linguistic realignment recorded in the Austrian census of 1900. A majority of Czech

Jews (54%) for the first time declared Czech to be their language of common usage or *Umgangssprache*.<sup>57</sup> Only twenty years later, in 1880, two-thirds of Bohemians Jews and three-quarters of Prague Jewry had registered German as their language of everyday use. The census figures did not mean that Bohemian and Moravian Jewry had suddenly become fluent Czech speakers any more than cultural “Polonization” was a social reality in pre-1914 Galicia. But the statistics were a definite indicator of what Czech Jews believed to be politically correct and prudent in the light of growing Czech national militancy.

Czech antisemitism—like its Polish and German counterparts—had become a powerful factor during the turbulent decade of the 1890s. Not by accident this was also a period of deep social unrest, nationalist strife and political radicalization in Bohemia.<sup>58</sup> The turn for the worst began in 1893 when some leaders of the chauvinist Young Czech movement denounced Bohemian Jewry in vitriolic terms for supporting the German cause. Economic boycotts were organized against Jewish traders under the cover of nationalist slogans like “Each to his own” (*svuj k svemu*); there was violence against Jewish-owned factories; and windows of Jewish synagogues, homes and shops in many Czech towns were smashed.<sup>59</sup> Most ominously, the notorious blood libel was revived in Polna (1899) leading to the sentencing to death (commuted to life imprisonment) of a falsely accused Jewish apprentice, Leopold Hilsner. The Hilsner ritual murder case—a Dreyfus Affair in miniature—sparked a new wave of Czech and German antisemitism in Imperial Austria, whipped up by unscrupulous clerical and nationalist agitators.<sup>60</sup>

Shocked by these ugly manifestations of hatred, the future President of the Czech Republic, Professor Thomas Masaryk, wrote a lengthy study denouncing the blood libel which was published in 1900. Masaryk soon found himself ostracized by Czech nationalist and clerical circles as a traitor, condemned by his colleagues at the Czech University in Prague (where he was a Philosophy Professor) and boycotted by his own students.<sup>61</sup> Masaryk’s courageous opposition to antisemitism was rare for a leading Slav politician in East Central Europe at that time; it was an important prefiguration of the pragmatic, tolerant, and liberal policies he would later adopt towards the Jewish minority in the post-1918 Czech Republic.<sup>62</sup> In contrast to Poland, Hungary, and Romania, the Czechoslovak state over which he presided would remain a liberal democracy and an oasis for East Central European Jewry until the late 1930s.

However, in 1900, Masaryk was still an isolated figure and his pleas for resistance against the irrationality of “antisemitic superstition” fell on deaf ears among most of his Czech countrymen and in Vienna itself. Mocked by the antisemites but idealized by his admirers as the “Czech Zola,” Masaryk was himself not entirely free of prejudice against Jews. However he firmly believed that the Hilsner case was a stain on the good name of the Czech people—an indictment of the intellectual classes even more than it was of the masses.<sup>63</sup> Masaryk sharply reproached the radicals and nationalists among his compatriots for allying with such arch-enemies of the Czech nation as the clerical antisemites of Vienna or the racist pan-Germans. He was especially caustic about “clerical antisemitism” which had its stronghold in Vienna and had now infected Bohemia. Unless the Czechs freed themselves from the Viennese “antisemitic mania,” they could never become a free nation.

Czech Jews suffered doubly from this mounting antisemitic hysteria; they were targeted not only by Czech nationalists but by the brutal antisemitism of the Pan-German students at the German University of Prague. These *völkisch* followers of the Austro-German racist demagogue Georg von Schoenerer, believed in the eternal, biological necessity of fighting the Jews to the bitter end. The loathsome Czechs were seen at least as “Aryans” of an inferior kind who could be Germanized whereas Jews (notwithstanding their passionate “Germanism”) were totally alien and irredeemable. Antisemitism became a crucial yardstick for the Schoenererites to differentiate between their own German nationalism and the “Judaized liberalism” proposed by moderate German nationalists—traitors who were branded as slaves to “supra-national money powers.”<sup>64</sup>

The seeds of Hitler’s Nazi ideology were born out of this borderland radical German nationalism—antisemitic, anti-Slav, anti-Habsburg, anti-Catholic, anti-capitalist, and implacably racist in character.<sup>65</sup> Zionism would also emerge in Bohemia out of this same cul-de-sac as an alternative to the failed options of Czech and German-Jewish assimilation in Austria. In a poignant essay about Jewish pro-Germanism in the Czech lands entitled “Die Jagd nach Böhmen,” Theodor Herzl observed in 1897:

The Jews, whose culture in Bohemia is German and whose formative years coincided with the time when liberal ideals predominated, attached themselves to the German nation with all their hearts..., too closely, it would seem. Then all of a sudden they found themselves shaken off. All of a sudden, they were told that they were parasites.... One jerk only, and they were no longer Germans but Jews.<sup>66</sup>

Another author, writing in 1900 in Herzl's newspaper *Die Welt*, was harsher still towards these Jewish assimilationists who had become entangled in one or another of the competing national movements:

The German stone throwing in Eger and Salz ought to have been able to convince the German Jews that a crooked nose and the *Wacht am Rhein* stand in a contradictory relation; the Czech campaign...which occurred in Prague and in several nearby battlefields, such as Nachod and Pilzen, could for its part have made clear to the Czech Jews that the enthusiastic singing of *Kde domov moj* has a considerable ironic ring to it.<sup>67</sup>

In this morass of nationalist strife, Zionism seemed at least to offer a credible third road. It was not only a matter of renouncing German or Czech chauvinism or retreating into an artificial and implausible Olympian neutrality. What was necessary, according to the Zionist analysis, was to reconsider the whole concept of assimilation through enlightenment and secularization.<sup>68</sup>

Before 1918 the Zionist movement in Bohemia and Moravia remained modest in size when compared to Galicia or Bukovina. It nonetheless attracted such prominent Jewish intellectuals as Hugo Bergmann, Robert and Felix Weltsch, Hans Kohn, Max Brod, and Franz Kafka.<sup>69</sup> Moreover in the post-1918 Czech Republic, Zionism became a well-organized national Jewish party which exerted considerable influence—particularly in Slovakia—and enjoyed the warm sympathy of President Masaryk himself.<sup>70</sup> Slovakia was a much less developed region than Bohemia and it had been under Hungarian rule before the First World War. Since the 1860s, Slovaks had been subjected to a fierce Magyarization campaign. The Slovak Jews—more numerous than in Bohemia or Moravia—were seen as “aggressive Magyarizers” by local Slovak nationalists. Their pivotal economic role in local commerce as merchants, storekeepers, taverners, and traders sharpened the antagonism to them as “allies” of the hated Magyar “oppressors.” Antisemitism became endemic, inextricably linked to both separatist Slovak nationalism and the deeply entrenched influence of the Catholic Church.<sup>71</sup> The charge that Jews were “agents of Magyarization” found a strong echo not only in Slovak circles but also among the Romanians of Transylvania, the local Ukrainians in the sub-Carpathian Rus, and other peripheral areas of Greater Hungary where non-Magyars were concentrated.

For the Magyars the situation appeared quite different. They had excellent economic reasons for sealing their alliance with the Jews, not to mention

strategic and political considerations.<sup>72</sup> The founding generation of modern Hungarian statesmen—Kossuth, Deák, and Eötvös—were far-sighted enough to see the political advantages to their country in a liberal policy of tolerance and co-option towards such an enterprising and dynamic minority. They hoped to build up a powerful cohesive Magyar nation-state along western lines. This objective entailed not only economic modernization but also creating a counterweight against separatist national minorities. The integration of Hungarian Jews was indeed indispensable to the goal of preserving Magyar hegemony over the non-Magyar nationalities (at mid-century Magyars were only 45% of the population) and accelerating the material development of the country.<sup>73</sup> Since the Jews (like the German minority in Hungary) appeared ready to renounce their “nationality” and become unconditional Magyars, entry into the Hungarian nation was open to them. Unlike the Romanians or South Slavs they had no territorial claims against Hungary or irredentist ambitions of their own. Politically as well as economically they proved to be ideal allies for the Magyars in the Age of Dualism that lasted until the First World War. Between 1850 and 1910 approximately 1.7 million Jews, Germans, and Slovaks would be “Magyarized.” It would be fair to say that the contribution of the Jews was to be the weightiest of all the minority contributions to the Hungarian cause.<sup>74</sup>

Not only were Jews eager standard-bearers of Magyardom in border regions where the Hungarians were in a minority but after 1867 they helped to dramatically transform what was still a feudal backwater into a modern capitalistic economy. By the end of the 1880s their share in commerce and banking was ten times greater than their proportion of the population. Over half of the commercial firms in Budapest at the turn of the century were owned by Jews and about 90% of the stock-exchange brokers in the capital were Jewish. Upwardly mobile Budapest Jews proved to be even more preponderant in medicine, law, and journalism than their highly successful co-religionists in fin-de-siècle-Vienna.<sup>75</sup> By 1900, about half of all Hungarian doctors were Jews and a decade later there was a similar percentage of Jewish lawyers.<sup>76</sup> This is less surprising, given the remarkably high number of Jews who were graduates of secondary schools and universities.<sup>77</sup> Such statistics encouraged the antisemitic Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger (who hated Hungarians even more than Jews) to contemptuously refer to Budapest as “Judapest.” In Lueger’s fiery rhetoric the “Judeo-Magyars” were a perpetual thorn in the flesh of Habsburg Austria.<sup>78</sup> It is worth recalling that by 1910, there were no less than 203,687 Jews in Budapest (23.1% of the

population), outstripping even the 175,000 Jews concentrated in Vienna. The Hungarian capital was second only to Warsaw among all European cities in the size and ubiquity of its Jewish community.

Equally striking is the relatively muted role played by antisemitism in Hungary during the late Habsburg era, despite the extent of Jewish penetration into Magyar economic and cultural life. True, the Tisza-Eszlár blood libel of 1882 provoked anti-Jewish riots in parts of Hungary. In 1883, a new antisemitic movement led by the former Liberal deputy Gyözö von Istóczy, returned no less than 17 deputies to the Hungarian parliament.<sup>79</sup> Hungarian antisemites were also prominent alongside their German and Austrian counterparts at the First International Antisemitic Congress held in Dresden (1883), speaking beneath a portrait of Esther Solymossi, the alleged Christian victim of ritual murder at Tisza-Eszlár. But the Liberal government under Kálmán Tisza intervened decisively to quell the antisemitic disturbances in Hungary at the time. This firm action contrasted very favorably with the more temporizing attitudes of the Austrian administration under Count Taafe during the 1880s.<sup>80</sup> It was motivated by aristocratic distaste for mob antisemitism as a dangerous source of social unrest and anger that a patriotic Magyar element of first-rate economic importance should be so cavalierly treated. Tisza also recognized that any flirtation with the Judeophobes could make no useful contribution to Hungary's domestic or foreign policies.

In the 1890s a Hungarian version of the Catholic-Social party did, however, emerge which was primarily anti-Liberal while equally opposing Social Democracy and Jewish "materialism." But it enjoyed no political success among ethnic Magyars comparable to the sweeping victories of Karl Lueger's Christian-social antisemites in Vienna during the same decade.<sup>81</sup> The Hungarian party did find a more receptive audience among German burghers in Bratislava (who had carried out an anti-Jewish pogrom in 1848), as well as among rural Slovaks and nationally oppressed Romanians. Magyar antisemitism at the turn of the century, while politically ineffective, did not, however, disappear. It was still active in the ranks of the Catholic clergy and conservative intellectuals dismayed at the rise of a westernized, secularized, modernist culture in Hungary. They resented the massive Jewish presence in the avant-garde of the Budapest intelligentsia.<sup>82</sup> But such attitudes were still marginal. The dominant trend in the Hungarian ruling class (excluding a small minority of impoverished gentry envious at Jewish business success) remained moderately "philosemitic." Compared to neighboring East

European countries, the Hungarian Jews before 1914 were living in a kind of Golden Age, filling the role of a missing middle class with the active encouragement of the regime. Not surprisingly, Zionism was weaker here than anywhere else in East-Central Europe, despite the fact that both Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau were native sons of Budapest.<sup>83</sup>

It was the Hungarian defeat in the First World War, the revolutions of 1917-1918 and the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy which destroyed the uneasy equilibrium of East-Central Europe and unleashed forces that had catastrophic consequences for Jews and other nationalities in the region. Only in Czechoslovakia can one speak of an actual improvement in the position of the Jews which would last for twenty years. Elsewhere, in countries like Poland, Hungary, and Romania, liberalism and democracy were in decline. After 1918, the rise of a powerful right-wing integral nationalism, signaled the beginning of the end for the cause of Jewish emancipation. Even without the emergence of German Nazism, the prospects for peaceful coexistence between Jews and Gentiles scarcely seemed promising. The new Poland of 1918 was born to the music of pogroms and slogans like “Poland for the Poles.” The position of Jews was worsened by their being caught in the middle of the Polish war with the Soviet Union in 1920.<sup>84</sup> Significantly, two of the worst pogroms occurred in ethnically mixed areas—in Lvov where Polish aspirations were opposed by Ukrainians—and in Vilna where the conflict was with the Lithuanians.<sup>85</sup> Jews were victimized for their neutrality in the Polish-Ukrainian struggle, for their alleged Bolshevik sympathies, and for having cooperated with the German occupation forces during World War I.

The collapse of multi-national Hungary in 1918 had an especially devastating outcome. Defeat resulted in the loss of vast territories and millions of former Hungarian citizens. Hungarian nationalism became obsessed with reversing the catastrophic Treaty of Trianon, leading to a much more closed and exclusivist attitude towards Jews than had prevailed before the war.<sup>86</sup> The disproportionate involvement of Jews in the leadership of Bela Kun’s ill-fated and short-lived Communist Revolution of 1919 led to bloody pogroms directed against leftists and Jews, increasingly regarded by the traditional elites and the mass of ordinary Hungarians as being identical.<sup>87</sup> This “White Terror” provided a sobering example of how a country previously regarded as sympathetic to the Jews could rapidly degenerate under stressful economic and political circumstances into a frightening bout of antisemitic hysteria. Like Transylvanian, Galician, and Bukovinian Jews,

Jewish Magyars would soon be yearning for the “good old days” of the Emperor Franz Joseph.

The Habsburg Empire, for all its many imperfections, acted as a counterweight to the explosive nationalisms which would tear Europe apart in the twentieth century. For Jews, in particular, it had provided a kind of hothouse both for assimilation and cultural autonomy, as well as a favorable multi-national environment in which they achieved hitherto unprecedented levels of economic prosperity and cultural success. But their exposed position between the warring nationalities involved intractable dilemmas and potential dangers for the future that would become ever more visible after 1918. No other group would pay such a terrible price for being trapped in the ethnic conflicts of Central and Eastern Europe.

#### NOTES

1. Milan Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” *New York Review of Books*, 26 Apr. 1984.
2. For an eyewitness account of this historic process, Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity. Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (London 1991).
3. See Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Antisemitism 1700-1933* (Cambridge, Mass. 1980), and Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism. The Longest Hatred* (London 1991).
4. For the demography of Habsburg Jewry, see in particular Wolfdieter Bihl, “Die Juden” in *Die Habsburger Monarchie*, ed. by Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, vol 3/2 (Vienna 1980), 882-83.
5. Majer Balaban, *Dzieje żydów w Galicji i w Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej 1772-1868* (Lwow 1914), and especially Philip Friedman, *Die galizischen Juden im Kampf um ihre Gleichberechtigung, 1848-1868* (Frankfurt a.M. 1929), 197 ff.
6. See Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia 1870-1918* (New York 1987).
7. On 1848 as a seed-plot for future achievements and conflicts, see Salo W. Baron, “The Impact of the Revolution of 1848 on Jewish Emancipation,” *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (1949): 195-248; and Reinhard Rürup, “The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation” in *Revolution and Evolution. 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. by Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen 1981), 1-54.
8. William O. McCagg, Jr., *A History of Habsburg Jews 1670-1918* (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 125-29, Iván Berend and György Ránki, *Economic Development in East*

*Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York 1974), 164ff.; also the older study by Robert Kann, “Hungarian Jewry during Austria-Hungary’s Constitutional Period (1867-1918),” *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 4 (Oct. 1945): 357-86.

9. On the “alliance” between the Habsburg State and the Jewish middle classes (of which the disproportionate ennoblement of leading Jewish families was a prominent feature), see William O. McCagg, “Austria’s Jewish Nobles, 1740-1918,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 34 (1989): 163-83; also William A. Jenks, “The Jews in the Habsburg Empire, 1879-1918,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 26 (1971): 155-62 for useful information on the role of the Jewish financial bourgeoisie in modernizing the Empire. A more general study which is still valuable is Bernhard Michel, *Banques et banquiers en Autriche* (Paris 1976).

10. On Lueger’s movement, the best single study is still John Boyer. *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897* (Chicago 1981). There is also a good biography by Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger: Mayor of Fin de Siècle Vienna* (Detroit, Mich. 1990). For his attitude to Jews and the anti-capitalism of his class constituency, Robert S. Wistrich, “Karl Lueger and the Ambiguities of Viennese Antisemitism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (1983): 251-61.

11. R. Seton-Watson [Scotus Viator], *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London 1908); Henry Wickham Steed, *The Habsburg Monarchy* (London 1913); Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago 1971), 174-75. All these early accounts are sympathetic to the oppressed Slavic peasant nationalities and critical of the role in which Jews played in nationality conflict.

12. On the German-Jewish-Liberal alliance in Austria, see P. G. J. Pulzer, “The Austrian Liberals and the Jewish Question, 1867-1914,” *Journal of Central European Affairs* 23, no. 2 (July 1963): 131-42. Fervent expression was given to it by Adolf Jellinek, “Zur Wahlkampagne,” *Die Neuzeit* (Vienna), 6 June 1879, just at the moment it was about to unravel. See Robert S. Wistrich, “The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: the impact of German culture in a multi-ethnic State,” in *Toward Modernity. The European Jewish Model*, ed. by Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, N.J. 1986).

13. See Robert S. Wistrich, “Liberalism, *Deutschstum* and Assimilation,” *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 42 (Spring 1987): 100-18 and the broader discussion in idem, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989), 131-63.

14. For example, in the articles of Adolf Jellinek entitled “Die Juden in Österreich,” *Der Orient*, 17 June 1848, 193-94; 1 July 1948, 209-10; 8 July 1848, 217-18. For Hungary, compare Wolfgang Häusler, “Assimilation und Emanzipation des ungarischen Judentums um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Studia Judaica*

*Austriaca* 3 (1976): 33-79; and Michael Silber, “The Historical Experience of German Jewry and its Impact on the Haskalah and Reform in Hungary,” in *Toward Modernity*, 107-57.

15. Adolf Jellinek, “Die Juden in Österreich,” *Der Orient*, 22 Apr. 1848, 129 ff.
16. On the concept of *Halb-Asien* (half-Asian) used to describe the eastern hinterlands of the Monarchy, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 53-54, and Mark H. Gelber, “Ethnic Pluralism and Germanization in the Works of Karl-Emil Franzos (1848-1904),” *German Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (May 1983): 376-85.
17. On Kuranda’s role in Austro-German liberalism, see Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 140ff.
18. For a critique of Friedjung, see Dr. Joseph Bloch’s *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*, 16 Jan. 1885, 16 July 1885, 14 Nov. 1885.
19. Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (London 1977), 494-531 has a good discussion of the new German antisemitism. Some contemporaries like the Austrian social philosopher and engineer, Josef Popper-Lynkeus, held Bismarck directly responsible for its outbreak; see his pamphlet *Fürst Bismarck und der Antisemitismus* (Vienna/Leipzig 1886).
20. Arthur Schnitzler, *The Road to the Open* (New York 1923), 78; see my discussion of Schnitzler, *Jews of Vienna*, 583-620.
21. See, for example, Adolf Jellinek, “Jüdisch-Österreichisch,” *Die Neuzeit*, 15 June 1883 which helped set the tone.
22. For a valuable discussion of how these linguistic, cultural, and political tensions found articulation in the Jewish Press of the period, see Jacob Toury, *Die jüdische Presse im österreichischen Kaiserreich, 1802-1918* (Tübingen 1983).
23. On Trieste, see McCagg, *History of Habsburg Jewry*, 164-71.
24. Werner Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof and his Jewish Followers,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 4 (1959): 111-39 is still useful; also Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 149-60.
25. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 128.
26. Joseph S. Bloch, *Der Nationale Zwist und die Juden in Österreich* (Vienna 1886), 28, 40, 45-53.
27. Bloch argued that for the Jews to put on German or Czech national airs would be a “political caricature”—the only conclusion must be “to take up a position outside all national parties.” Joseph Samuel Bloch, *My Reminiscences* (Vienna 1923), 159.
28. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 127; Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 285; see also “The Emperor of Austria’s Jubilee,” *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 2 Dec. 1898 which pointed out that Count Taaffe had sought to drive a wedge between the Jews and the German Liberals by creating a pro-government Jewish party. “This request was refused, and thus there arose the antisemitic movement which was provoked by and

favored by the Government, and from which the entire body of Jews in Austria are still suffering. The Germans rewarded the Jews for their loyalty by becoming the principal representatives of antisemitism in Austria."

29. On the Austrian Israelite Union, see Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 310-43.
30. Jacob Thon, *Die Juden Österreichs* (Berlin 1908), 8, 12, 17.
31. Ibid.; also Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 309 ff.
32. K. Zamorski, *Informator statystyczny do dziejów społecznosci gospodarczych Galicji. Ludnosc Galicji w Latach 1857-1910* (Krakow 1989), 92. The statistics based on religion (more reliable than those by language/nationality) show that in 1910, Galicia was 46.5% Roman Catholic, 42.1% Greek-Catholic, and 10.9% Mosaic.
33. On the Jewish middleman role, see Max Rosenfeld, "Die jüdische Bevölkerung in den Städten Galiziens 1881-1913," *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* 9, no. 2 (Feb. 1913): 101.
34. "Die Judenverfolgung in Galizien," *Arbeiterzeitung* (Vienna) 18 June 1898, 1; Robert S. Wistrich, "Austrian Social Democracy and the Problem of Galician Jewry," *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 26 (1981): 89-124.
35. Abraham Korkis, "Zur Bewegung der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Galizien," *Jüdische Statistik* (Berlin 1903): 313; Raphael Mahler, "The Economic Background of Jewish Emigration from Galicia to the United States," *Yivo Annual* 7 (1952): 255-67; Marsha Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna: Assimilation and Identity, 1867-1914* (Albany, N.Y. 1983), 21ff on Galician migration to Vienna.
36. Saul R. Landau, *Der Polenklub und seine Hausjuden* (Vienna 1907); Max Rosenfeld, *Die Polnische Judenfrage* (Vienna 1918).
37. P. G. J. Pulzer, "The Austrian Liberals," 131ff.
38. At the same time some acculturation was undoubtedly taking place. In Lvóv in 1896, Jews comprised 18.3% of all gymnasium students and over 64% of the Jewish students attended Polish institutions. In 1901-1902, as many as 22% of all the students at the University of Lvóv were Jews. See Ezra Mendelsohn, "Jewish Assimilation in L'viv: The Case of Wilhelm Feldman," in *Nation-building and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia*, ed. by A. Markovits and F. Sysyn (Cambridge, Mass. 1982), 99.
39. For Jewish languages, identities, and economic profile in interwar Poland, see Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington, Ind. 1987), 11-83 (especially 26-31). On the non-recognition of Yiddish as a Jewish language in Habsburg Austria and its implications in Galicia, see Rosenfeld, *Die Polnische Judenfrage*, 136ff., 145.
40. On Bukovina, which became a stronghold of the Jewish national movement at the turn of the century, despite the fact that its Jews represented an enthusiastic

outpost of German culture in the East, see Salomon Kassner, *Die Juden in der Bukowina* (Vienna/Berlin 1917), 48ff.; Hugo Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv 1958, 1962); and Gerald Stourzh, “Galten die Juden als Nationalität Altösterreichs?,” *Studia Judaica Austriaca X: Prag-Czernowitz-Jerusalem* (Eisenstadt 1984): 73-98.

41. A good example would be Alfred Nossig; see Ezra Mendelsohn, “From Assimilation to Zionism in Lvov: The case of Alfred Nossig, *Slavic and East European Review* 44 (1971).

42. See Leila P. Everett, “The Rise of Jewish National Politics in Galicia, 1905-1907,” in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism*, 149-77.

43. Ibid.; see *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 21 June 1907, 405-406.

44. The Galician Social Democrats even created their own auxiliary Jewish organization. See H. Piasecki, *Zydowska Organizacja PPS 1893-1907* (Wroclaw 1978). For a more critical view of its activities, see Robert S. Wistrich “Austrian Social Democracy and the Problem of Galician Jewry,” 102 ff.

45. I. Daszynski, “Parteitag der Polnischen Sozialdemokratischen Partei in Lemberg, 10 Dezember 1911,” *Archiv für Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* 3 (Leipzig 1913): 397.

46. Quoted in Jacob S. Hertz, “The Bund’s Nationality Program,” 63.

47. On the attitude of the Austrian Social Democrats to the Jewish national question, see Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätsfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna 1907); and Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 299-348.

48. For the origins and development of Polish nationalist antisemitism in the late 19th century, see R. Wapinski, *Narodowa Demokracja 1893-1939* (Warsaw 1980). R. M. Fountain II, *Roman Dmowski: Party, Tactics, Ideology 1895-1907* (Columbia, Mo. 1980); William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews. The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago 1980); F. Golczewski, *Polnisch-jüdische Beziehungen 1881-1922: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden 1981) and Alina Cała, “Die Anfänge des Antisemitismus im Königreich Polen in der Zweiten Hälfte des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,” *International Review of Social History* 30, no. 3 (1985): 342-73.

49. Roman Dmowski, *Mysli nowoczesnego Polaka* (Warsaw 1933), 202. For the post-1918 implications, see Paweł Korzec, *Juifs en Pologne. La question juive pendant l'entre-deux guerres* (Paris 1980); Ezra Mendelsohn, “Inter-War Poland, Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews,” in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. by C. Abramsky et al. (Oxford 1986), 131-39.

50. Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, “Jews between Czechs and Germans,” *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, (Philadelphia 1968), 1: 21-71; Hillel J. Kieval, “The Lands Between:

The Jews of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia to 1918,” in *Where Cultures Meet. The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, ed. by Natalia Berger (Tel Aviv 1990), 23-51.

51. On the changing demographic balance in Prague, which had a population of only 442,000 in 1910 (Vienna had passed the two million mark), see Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton 1981), 92-93.

52. Oskar Donath, *Siegfried Kappers Leben und Wirken* (Berlin 1909), 434; Guido Kisch, *In Search of Freedom* (London 1949), 36-38; Hans Tramer, “Prague: City of Three Peoples,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 9 (1964): 305-39; E. Goldstücker, “Jews between Czechs and Germans around 1848,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 17 (1972): 61-71.

53. Quoted in Kisch, *In Search of Freedom*, 36-37.

54. Gary B. Cohen, *Politics of Ethnic Survival*, 224-25; idem, “Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860-1914,” *Central European History* 10 (1977): 38. In 1910, Jews comprised 20% of the student body at the German University of Prague, but only 2% of the Czech University (the university had been divided into separate branches in 1882); Jacob Thon, *Die Juden in Österreich*, 102.

55. On the pressures exerted by the Union to de-Germanize the Czech Jews, see Hillel J. Kieval, “Education and National Conflict in Bohemia: Germans, Czechs and Jews,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 3 (1987): 49-71 (especially 59-60).

56. Ibid., 64. The number of students at German-Jewish primary schools in Bohemia which had been 4,470 in 1884-1885 had declined to 154 in 1910. But, as we have seen, the situation was totally different in institutions of higher learning—a point which Kieval does not sufficiently emphasize.

57. On the linguistic realignment, see Cohen, “Jews in German Society,” 36-38.

58. On the 1890s as a decade of radicalization and political polarization in the Czech lands, see Hillel J. Kieval, “Jews, Czechs and Germans in Bohemia before 1914,” in *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century. From Franz Joseph to Waldheim*, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich (London 1992).

59. Michael Riff, “Czech Antisemitism and the Jewish Response before 1914,” in *European Antisemitism 1890-1945*, *Wiener Library Bulletin* 29, nos. 39/40, Special issue, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich (1976): 8-20. There are some graphic contemporary eye-witness accounts of the violence against Jews in Wilma Iggers, ed., *Die Juden in Böhmen und Mähren. Ein historisches Lesebuch* (Munich 1986); see also Christoph Stölzl, *Kafkas böses Böhmen: Zur Sozialgeschichte eines Prager Juden* (Munich 1975), 61-62.

60. Frantisek Cervinka, “The Hilsner Affair,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 13 (1968): 142-57. For its impact on Viennese and Austrian Jews outside Bohemia, see Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 339-40, 515-14.

61. T. G. Masaryk, *Die Notwendigkeit der Revision des Polnaer Prozesses* (Vienna 1899), also published in Czech. See also E. Rychnovsky, ed., *Masaryk und das Judentum* (Prague 1931), 240-71; English transl.: *Thomas G. Masaryk and the Jews. A Collection of Essays* (New York 1941), 148-234 covers the Hilsner Affair in detail. Masaryk's articles in *Die Zeit*, 4 Nov. 1899, 69 and 24 Mar. 1900, 7 are also worth consulting in conjunction with Steven Beller's article, "The Hilsner Affair: Nationalism, Antisemitism and the Individual in the Habsburg Monarchy at the Turn of the Century," in *T. G. Masaryk (1850-1937)*, vol. 2: *Thinker and Critic*, ed. by Robert B. Pynsent, (New York, 1989), 52-75.

62. Ezra Mendelssohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 143ff.

63. Masaryk many years later admitted that he never really overcame the antisemitism of his childhood at the level of his feelings—only in his reason. Karel Čapek, *President Masaryk Tells his Story* (London 1934), 29. Like Karel Havlíček, he tended to regard Jews as ethnically alien to the Czechs and in 1909 he had even declared assimilationism to be a laughable notion—a slap in the face to the Czech-Jewish movement. See Michael A. Riff, "The Ambiguity of Masaryk's Attitudes on the 'Jewish Question,'" in *T. G. Masaryk*, 77-87. On the early prejudice which he had imbibed from his mother and from school, see Paul Selver, *Masaryk* (London 1940, rpt. 1975), 40-41. Masaryk, as a young Slovak growing up in Moravia, was thoroughly imbued with the blood libel superstition. He was nonetheless a vigorous enemy of antisemitism in later life. See J. Herben, "Masaryk and Antisemitism," in *Thomas G. Masaryk and the Jews*, 3-24; and Beller, "Hilsner Affair," 57ff.

64. Before the advent of von Schoenerer, Jews had been regarded as valuable allies on the German-Slav frontier and Jewish schools in Bohemia, Moravia and Galicia as outposts of the German language. See Pulzer, "The Austrian Liberals and the Jewish Question," 133. In Moravia, where the Germans were particularly on the defensive, they remained anxious to keep the Jews as anti-Czech allies—a consideration which also influenced the German minority in Prague. On the inroads of Pan-German racism in Bohemia, see Andrew G. Whiteside, *Georg Ritter von Schoenerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley 1975). On his attitude to Jews, see Oskar Karbach, "The Founder of Political Antisemitism: Georg von Schoenerer," *Jewish Social Studies* 7 (1945): 3-31; Robert S. Wistrich, "Georg von Schoenerer and the genesis of modern Austrian antisemitism," *Wiener Library Bulletin* 29, nos. 39/40 (NS 1976): 21-29.

65. P. G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*, rev. ed. (London 1988); Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse* (London 1985), 12-26.

66. Theodor Herzl, *Zionist Writings: Essays and Addresses (1895-1899)*, enlarged Hebrew ed. (Jerusalem 1976). On the development of the movement in Bohemia and the other Czech lands, see N. M. Gelber, "Kavim le-kidmat toldoteha shel hatsiyonut

be-vohemiya u-moraviya,” in *Prag vi-yerushalayim*, ed. by Felix Weltsch (Jerusalem 1954), 48-49; Zigmund Katzenelson, “Be-maavak ha-leumim,” in *ibid.*, 57-63.

67. Karl Fischl, “Die Juden in Böhmen,” *Die Welt*, 9 Mar. 1900.

68. See Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 369-70 for the 1894 declaration of the Jewish student association Makkabea in Prague, which argued that the limits of humiliation had been reached when Germans and Slavs ejected Jews without compunction from student societies they had themselves founded. For a detailed discussion of Czech Zionism, see Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia 1870-1918* (New York 1987).

69. For Kafka’s complex attitudes and sympathy for Zionism, see Ritchie Robertson, *Kafka. Judaism, Politics and Literature* (Oxford 1987).

70. Bruno Blau, “Nationality Among Czechoslovak Jewry,” *Historia Judaica* 10 (1948): 147-54 shows the extent of Jewish national identification after 1918. In the Subcarpathian Rus (87%), Slovakia (54%) and Moravia-Silesia (48%), Jews declared themselves as Jews by nationality. Only in Bohemia did a majority call themselves Czechs (49.49%) as against 35% who were German and 15% Jewish by nationality. This trend was actually encouraged by Masaryk’s support both for Zionism and Jewish national rights in the multi-national Czechoslovak State.

71. On Slovak Jews, Livia Rothkirchen, “Slovakia: I, 1848-1918” in *Jews of Czechoslovakia*, 1: 72-84. For the background to Slovak nationalism, Peter Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe* (Toronto 1976).

72. Robert Kann, “Hungarian Jewry During Austria-Hungary’s Constitutional Period,” 357-86; William O. McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary* (New York 1972).

73. On the wider problems of cultural identity raised by assimilation, see George Barany, “Magyar Jew or Jewish Magyar?,” in *Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Bela Vago and George L. Mosse (Jerusalem 1974), 51-98; George Schöpflin, “Jewish Assimilation in Hungary: A Moot Point?,” in *ibid.*, 75-87.

74. For the precise figures and a wide-ranging discussion of the issues involved, see Peter Hanak, “Problems of Jewish Assimilation in Austria-Hungary,” in *The Power of the Past*, ed. by P. Thane et al. (Cambridge 1984), ch. 10.

75. Victor Karady and István Kemeny, “Les Juifs dans la structure des classes en Hongrie: essai sur les antécédents historiques des crises d’antisémitisme du XIXe siècle,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 22 (June 1978): 25-59.

76. According to Alajos Kovács, *A zsidóság terfoglalása Magyarországon* (Budapest 1922), 74, no less than 45.2% of all lawyers, 48.9% of all doctors, and 42.4% of all journalists in Hungary in 1910 were Jewish.

77. See the statistics in Karady and Kemeny, “Les Juifs,” 25 ff. On modernization, antisemitism, and the “Golden Age” of Hungarian Jewry, see now Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion. Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York 1999), 27-82.

78. Lueger skillfully fused Viennese resentments against Hungarians and Jews into a composite picture. See Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger: Mayor of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit, Mich. 1990).

79. Nathaniel Katzburg, *Ha-Antishemiut be-Hungaria, 1867-1914* (Tel Aviv 1969), 86-90.

80. Viennese Jewish publications of the 1880s pointed up this contrast between the vigor of the Hungarian State in repressing antisemitism and the tepid inaction of the Austrian government. See Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 253-58 for documentation.

81. Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, 230-44.

82. See Paul Ignotus, *Hungary* (New York 1972); McCagg, *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses*.

83. The attempt by Andrew Handler in his book *Dori: The Life and Times of Theodor Herzl in Budapest (1860-1878)* (University of Alabama 1983), to show strong Hungarian influences on Herzl’s Zionism seems to me ultimately unconvincing. What is more plausible is to see Zionism as the last link in a chain of national movements in 19th century Austria—German, Magyar, Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, Yugoslav, and Italian which aspired to some form of national independence.

84. L. Chasanovitsch, ed., *Les pogroms anti-juifs en Galicie et en Pologne en Novembre et Décembre 1918* (Stockholm 1919).

85. Ezra Mendelssohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 41, 51.

86. Nathaniel Katzburg, “Hungarian Antisemitism: Ideology and Reality (1920-1943),” in *Antisemitism Through the Ages*, ed. by Shmuel Almog (Oxford 1988), 339-48.

87. W. O. McCagg, “Jews in Revolutions: The Hungarian Experience,” *Journal of Social History* 6 (1972): 78-105; Mendelssohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, 94-97; Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews, 1920-1943* (Ramat Gan 1981), 32-59.

## CHAPTER 2

# Adolf Fischof and the Tragedy of Liberalism

Austrian Jewry first began to identify with German culture after the language decrees of the 1780s compelled Jews to establish German-language schools wherever they lived in the polyglot Habsburg Empire. Henceforth, Jews were obliged to conduct their internal affairs in German. Large numbers of Bohemian, Moravian, Bukovinan, and Hungarian as well as Viennese Jews became culturally German, which would have significant consequences for future relations with their predominantly Slavic neighbors. Even in Galicia, with its large Polish and Ukrainian populations, there were significant enclaves of educated German-speaking Jews, especially before “Polonization” took off in the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> Most Austrian Jews before 1914 continued to identify with an ideal vision of German *Bildung* which embodied liberal optimism and a general faith in humanistic culture. The German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) was widely seen as the key to Jewish emancipation in Central Europe and as the central myth sustaining Jewish existence once civic equality had been achieved in 1867. Indeed, as George Mosse has pointed out, the concept of *Bildung* became for many Jews “synonymous with their Jewishness.” It would be a fundamental instrument of cultural integration into German middle-class society in Austria.<sup>2</sup>

German language and culture also provided the gateway to economic advancement and rising social status in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This was a crucial factor that influenced Jews as far apart as Bohemia and Hungary, Bukovina and the Adriatic port of Trieste.<sup>3</sup> It also had political consequences. In Bohemia and Moravia, the far-reaching impact of Josephinian reform had led Jews to ignore or to resist the process of Czechization going on around them, especially in cities like Prague and Pilsen during the second half of the 19th century. Before 1914 the great majority of Prague Jews still preferred German to Czech primary and secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> For them, the predominance of German as the *Staatssprache* (language of the state) throughout the Monarchy and as the

prevailing idiom of business, public education and secular learning continued to be self-evident.

This trend applied even in Hungary despite its intense Magyar national consciousness and the readiness of its ruling gentry to encourage Jewish assimilation to the Hungarian nation. As late as 1870, Hungarian Jewry, because of its size, was still one of the largest German-speaking communities in Europe. German had been the language of great Hungarian thinkers and poets in the early 19th century before the flowering of the Magyar literary renaissance. Indeed German was spoken by every educated Hungarian. It was, for example, perfectly natural that the founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, and Max Nordau (both born in Budapest) wrote mainly in German, which offered far more openings to the wider European culture. Even in the 1890, after the Magyarization process had been firmly consolidated, German remained the mother tongue for nearly two-thirds of Jews in the western regions of Hungarian-ruled Slovakia. Such fidelity to the German language was all the more striking since it persisted despite the close link between the cause of Jewish emancipation and liberal Magyar nationalism since the 1830s and the large number of Yiddish-speaking Orthodox Hasidic Jews in Hungary.<sup>5</sup>

The modernizing Jewish elite in Galicia also looked to Vienna as its cultural capital, although after 1867 there was a significant shift towards a Polish orientation, especially among Jews in the eastern part of the province.<sup>6</sup> Assimilationist tendencies (whether German or Polish in character) were nonetheless restrained by the strength of Hasidic orthodoxy and the more cohesive structure of the Galician Jewish community.<sup>7</sup> However in the Bukovina—with its extraordinary multi-ethnic mosaic of Romanians, Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, and Jews—German did retain its centrality before 1914 as the language of administration, communication and public education. The Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum* in the province literally saw itself as the bearer of German culture. Jews in Czernowitz (known as “Klein-Wien”) which was the capital of this northeastern periphery of the Empire, made up no less than a third of the city’s total population. They made a decisive contribution to its German character and were heavily represented in its German-language state gymnasium and also at the Franz-Joseph University of Czernowitz founded in 1875.<sup>8</sup>

German culture throughout the Habsburg lands had long been the normative expression of Europeanism and enlightenment for Jewish *maskilim*. German *Bildung* and the Berlin *haskalah* widely accepted in the

field of Jewish learning as a cultural model to be imitated. Indeed the transition from traditional to modern society, from the ghetto to wealth, status, culture and social acceptance in the non-Jewish world, was primarily mediated through the gateway of a cosmopolitan *Deutschstum*.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Viennese Jewry, the reasons for such a pro-German orientation were self-evident. Although the capital was the hub of a multinational Empire, Vienna still remained a predominantly German city. It was the major center of German power and cultural influence radiating outwards to the most remote areas of the Habsburg lands. The Jews of Vienna became the natural source of emulation for their co-religionists in Budapest, Prague, Krakow, Lemberg, Czernowitz, Trieste, and the outlying areas of the Monarchy. At the same time, centrifugal forces of local nationalism slowly began to weaken this pattern of modernization in the course of the 19th century.<sup>10</sup>

The classical Central European ideology of liberalism confronted special problems in Austria resulting from the polyethnic, multilingual character of the Empire which also affected Jewish choices and behavioral patterns. For example, to which of the myriad nationalities of old Austria were urban or provincial Jews expected to assimilate? How did one define who was “Austrian,” “German,” or “Jewish,” who was “Magyar,” or “Slav” in an empire that was divided into such a multitude of regions, provinces, districts, associations, warring ethnic groups, political parties, or linguistic entities? Even in class terms, the problems of social integration into such a centrifugal and heterogeneous structure were multiple and extremely complex.<sup>11</sup>

Before 1848, such dilemmas were still not as important as the consequences of the fierce censorship and stark absence of basic human rights. It was the lack of freedom which drove the bulk of the still-small Viennese Jewish intelligentsia into the arms of German liberalism. In such circumstances it was difficult for many Jews to espouse an Austrian dynastic patriotism. Their opposition to the semi-feudal Habsburg regime initially assumed a “pan-Germanic” orientation precisely because neighboring Germany was seen as more liberal, dynamic and progressive than the repressive Austrian state.<sup>12</sup> The subsequent emergence of a commercial and industrial bourgeoisie in the Habsburg lands—which had a distinct Jewish coloring—encouraged this liberal “Pan-German” trend which would reach its peak in the 1870s.

The Prague-born publicist Ignaz Kuranda (1812-1884), leader of the German Liberal Party in Austria for twenty-three years and a politician who represented it with distinction in the Vienna *Gemeinderat* (city council) and

in the Imperial Parliament, epitomized the *grossdeutsch* tradition. He ably synthesized liberal Pan-Germanism with imperial Austrian patriotism throughout his long career.<sup>13</sup> An autodidact, Kuranda was a skillful journalist, who first attracted attention with his lectures on German literature in Belgium during his exile after 1838. In 1841 he founded the periodical *Die Grenzboten* in Brussels. Although banned in Austria it was smuggled over the border from Leipzig, the city to which Kuranda moved in 1842. This popular newspaper became the main organ of the pre-1848 liberal German opposition under Habsburg rule. Advocating a moderate constitutionalism, its sharp criticism of Austrian internal policy helped pave the way towards the overthrow of the Metternich regime. Arriving in Vienna in 1848, Kuranda was soon elected to the German National Assembly in Frankfurt, assuming leadership of the Committee of Fifty, which first issued the call for an all-German national Parliament. He headed the negotiations with Czech politicians in Prague, vainly seeking to persuade them to attend the Frankfurt Assembly. Kuranda's pan-German politics (and his Jewish background) aroused the ire of the Czech nationalists. They saw his activity as another expression of Bohemian Jewry's unwanted identification with the German cause. Indeed, Kuranda was forced to flee the town of Kolin (Bohemia) at the time of his wedding in 1848, when he was personally threatened by Czech hotheads.

After the defeat of the 1848 revolution, Kuranda, like his colleague, Adolf Fischof, came under Habsburg police surveillance. He nonetheless succeeded in establishing the *Ostdeutsche Post* in Vienna as a leading political journal and successor to the *Grenzboten*. Kuranda continued to espouse the cause of Pan-Germanism, constitutionalism, and Greater Austrian centralism, energetically opposing the "fratricidal war" with Prussia in 1866. The Prussian victory effectively removed Austria from internal German affairs, thereby undermining the *raison d'être* of Kuranda's *grossdeutsch* program. In the post-1866 climate of opinion, his platform had suffered a serious blow.<sup>14</sup> Kuranda remained, however, a deputy of the Lower Austrian diet to which he had been elected in 1861. He progressed to the *Reichsrat* (Parliament) before finally rising to the leadership of the Liberal Party. He was highly respected not only as a veteran freedom fighter of 1848 but also as a parliamentarian of wide experience with an expert knowledge of international affairs.

Kuranda's dedication to the cause of *Deutschtum* and his liberal Pan-Germanism did not prevent him from being active in Jewish affairs. He had been on the board of the Jewish community since 1860—the year in which he

won a famous libel case in Vienna against the leading Catholic antisemite of the era, Father Sebastian Brünner. The outcome of this trial struck an important blow for Jewish emancipation in Austria. Kuranda himself compared the case with the earlier emancipatory struggle of Protestants in Germany and Catholics in England. “Just as we were the first to carry the banner of civilization as a people or a nation or a tribe so we are the last,” Kuranda declared, “to knock at the portals of Humanity asking for admittance and equality of rights.”<sup>15</sup> He succeeded in depicting his clerical opponent as “the representative of a lost cause” who relied solely on hate and prejudice in the fight “against the general feeling for justice which is struggling for utterance in the course of history.”<sup>16</sup> Kuranda’s victory presaged the obtaining of civil equality for Austrian Jewry in 1867—itself a mark of the triumph of liberalism over clerical reaction.

The 1867 Constitution was the culmination of a long struggle for the emancipation of Austrian Jewry. It effectively guaranteed equality before the law and civic rights for Jews on the basis of general liberal principles upheld by the central government.<sup>17</sup> Henceforth support for the centralized Austrian Monarchy, liberalism, and the cultural values of the Austro-German bourgeoisie would become the common credo of Viennese Jewry. However, these principles already came under attack by 1880s with the rise of local particularisms, Slav and German nationalism, economic protectionism, political antisemitism, and the mass movements of Christian socialism and Social Democracy. Viennese Jews were thrust on the defensive though they never abandoned their dominant credo.

Both Joseph II’s *Toleranzedikt* (1781) and the 1867 Constitution emanated from a strong central power whose protective hand was perceived as essential to safeguarding Jewish rights. As the leading preacher of Vienna, Adolf Jellinek, put it in June 1883, Austrian Jews “want a strong Austria because they cannot forget that it was the central parliament...which voted for the *Grundrechte* (Bill of Rights).”<sup>18</sup> It was not the provincial diets, the Slav nations, or the advocates of federalism who had initiated such enlightened legislation. Nor would Jewish emancipation have been compatible with the continued predominance of a semi-feudal system dominated by large estates, the aristocracy, and the Catholic Church. One of its preconditions was the emergence of Jews as prominent bankers, railroad pioneers, coal and iron industrialists, founders of textile industries, owners of great metropolitan newspapers, and barons of the stock exchange. By the same token,

antisemitism in Austria was almost predestined to be illiberal and anti-capitalist.

The capitalist class in the Habsburg Empire (among whom Viennese and Budapest Jews played such a central role), were undeniably “a very efficacious force in the unification and cohesion of the Monarchy.”<sup>19</sup> The societal backwardness of both Austria and Hungary, the strength of inherited feudal traditions that despised industry and banking (largely in Jewish hands), and the absence of a fully developed indigenous bourgeoisie facilitated a pioneering role for the Jews as mobile innovators of the capitalist system. However, the main pillars of the Monarchy (especially in Austria)—the aristocracy, the church, the bureaucracy, and the army—showed no great interest in rapid modernization. This task devolved on the Austro-German bourgeoisie, with Viennese bankers and Jewish capitalists acting as their financial spearhead.<sup>20</sup> But no resolute “national” policy could be easily implemented in the framework of the multiethnic Monarchy.<sup>21</sup> Institutional and structural difficulties rooted in the polyglot character of the Empire and its anachronistic class structure made the free-trade ideology of liberalism something of an artificial plant in Habsburg Austria, though this was less true in Hungary.

The political weakness of Austrian liberalism has been succinctly summarized by Carl Schorske:

Austrian liberalism, like that of most other European nations, had its heroic age in the struggle against aristocracy and baroque absolutism. This ended in the stunning defeat of 1848. The chastened liberals came to power and established a constitutional regime in the 1860s almost by default. Not their own internal strength, but the defeats of the old order at the hands of foreign enemies brought the liberals to the helm of the state. From the first they had to share power with the aristocracy and the imperial bureaucracy. Even during their two decades of rule, the liberals’ social base remained weak, confined to the middle-class Germans and German Jews of the urban centers.<sup>22</sup>

Given this weak social base and dependence on the German bourgeoisie it is not surprising that Austrian liberals failed to transform the Habsburg Empire into a genuinely constitutional state. Not only did they lack the strength to replace the aristocracy as a ruling class but they could only hang on to their parliamentary power by preserving an undemocratic, restricted franchise. Furthermore, the centralism of the liberals was increasingly resented by the awakening Slav nationalities. Liberal identification with the capitalist

oligarchy (especially in Vienna) also made them the natural target of resentful social classes still excluded by the electoral system—the lower middle class, the peasantry, and the proletariat. Last but not least, the militant anti-clericalism of many Austrian liberals ensured the undying enmity of the Catholic Church.<sup>23</sup>

As in the German Reich, the year 1879 proved to be the beginning of the end of liberal hegemony in Austrian politics. Nevertheless, during the electoral campaign of that year, Adolf Jellinek restated with crystal clarity the central credo of emancipated Austrian Jewry:

The Jews of Austria must adhere to the Constitution and the forces of liberalism in accordance with their most vital interest. In respect of their background and education they incline to the German nationality, sympathizing with a grandly conceived Austria founded on a strong central government.

Jellinek went on to enumerate a lengthy catalogue of “political enemies” of the Jews who also happened to be adversaries of German liberalism. These enemies included the Catholic clergy, feudal aristocrats, pro-Slav federalists, and the rising labor movement—a list not without historical justification. German liberals in Austria had traditionally opposed clericalism, absolutism, and the “historic rights” of the provincial diets.<sup>24</sup> They represented the wealthiest, most educated, and “enlightened” nationality in the Empire, whose language was also that of the Imperial administration, of business life, and high culture. Did Austro-German Liberals not stand for representative government, secularism and free-trade capitalism—values with which most Viennese Jews tended to identify? Did not their enemies (including the Catholic Church, the feudal elites, and the Slav nationalities) represent all those illiberal forces of reaction and counterrevolution which had defeated the 1848 Revolution and opposed Jewish emancipation?

But even in 1879, this understandable Jewish commitment to the Verfassungspartei (German Liberal Party) could already be judged as one-sided in some respects. The fact remained that Jews continued to be excluded through the 1870s from the bureaucracy, diplomatic posts and the upper reaches of the judiciary.<sup>25</sup> They still had difficulty obtaining teaching positions in universities and gymnasia. Only converts like Julius Glaser or Joseph Unger—the founders of modern Austrian jurisprudence—were eventually appointed as ministers of state.<sup>26</sup> As baptized Jews, they could make remarkable careers unattainable by their former coreligionists. Thus Julius Glaser served as a Minister of Justice in the liberal Cabinet from 1871

to 1879. Unger was made Minister without Portfolio, and in 1880 he was appointed President of the Reichsgericht—the highest legal position in the Empire.<sup>27</sup>

Such examples underlined that even under liberal hegemony, conversion to Christianity was a sine qua non for exercising the highest offices of state. Moreover, the German Liberals (under growing pressure to defend their *Deutschstum* against the Slavs) were hardly “philosemitic.” They had no desire to appear as a “Jewish party” and endanger their position with the German lower classes in rural districts. Indeed, the liberal press avoided as much as possible any reference to the Jews. The Liberals preferred not to nominate too many Jewish candidates, let alone appoint them to office.

No less important were the consequences of Jewish involvement in the fight of “Germanism” against the Slavs and the social repercussions of their identification with the rise of capitalist modernity. These dangers had been foreseen by one of the more farsighted Austrian politicians of the century, Adolf Fischof (1816–1893), whose reflections on Habsburg nationality problems had a seminal influence on diverse currents in public life.<sup>28</sup> No other Jew, with the exception of Ignaz Kuranda and the founder of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, Victor Adler, exerted such an impact on 19th-century Austrian politics and none enjoyed a comparable moral authority. Born in Budapest, where he attended the Gymnasium, Fischof came to Vienna in 1836 to study medicine. After years of material hardship, which delayed his attainment of a medical degree, Fischof was appointed *Sekundararzt* (assistant physician) at the Vienna General Hospital in 1846.<sup>29</sup> Two years later, on 13 March 1848, in front of the *Landhaus* court, Adolf Fischof stepped out of his anonymity and in a fiery, improvised speech stirred the Viennese crowds to fight for press freedom, popular sovereignty, ministerial responsibility, liberty of conscience, and a new democratic union of the Austrian peoples.<sup>30</sup> Together with his coreligionists—Ludwig August Frankl, composer of the best-selling lyric *Die Universität* (the “Marseillaise” of the Viennese rising), Joseph Goldmark, and the martyred Hermann Jellinek—Fischof emerged as a leading figure of the Revolution, much esteemed for his sober, tactful, and statesmanlike behavior. Already in March 1848, he emerged as head of the *Sicherheitsausschuss* (Security Council), the highest governing body of the Revolution, and in the coming months he was active as a parliamentarian and in various administrative capacities. For two decades after 1848 he would remain a symbol of liberal-democratic aspirations that had yet to be fulfilled in Austria.<sup>31</sup>



Adolf Fischof  
Austrian National Library

Following the defeat of the Revolution, Fischof had to face trial for high treason but was acquitted after all witnesses testified in his favor. He was, however, deprived of political rights until an amnesty in 1867, earning his living with some difficulty as a physician in private practice. In 1861 he published *Zur Lösung der ungarischen Frage* (together with Joseph Unger) which anticipated many features of the *Ausgleich* compromise with Hungary six years later. It sharply criticized Habsburg repression of Hungarian constitutional traditions and rights.<sup>32</sup> Between 1867 and his death in 1893 Fischof became something like the “moral conscience” of Austria, a highly valued elder statesman who was visited by numerous Austrian politicians in his village retreat in Carinthia. In these years he tried to develop and systematize his reflections on the national question, first enunciated in 1848 when he had called for a “brotherly alliance” of the peoples of Austria to achieve strength in unity.<sup>33</sup> Though thoroughly German by education, feeling, and culture, Fischof sought to allay the fears provoked by the 1866 defeat and the rising Slav danger, stressing the need for peaceful reconciliation between the different ethnic groups.<sup>34</sup>

In 1867 Fischof first put forward the federalist model as a possible solution for the Czech-German conflict, arguing that if only the peoples of Austria were permitted a free development on Swiss lines, “Moscow will cease to be the Mecca of the Slavs.”<sup>35</sup> A year later he was advocating extensive administrative decentralization and broad municipal autonomy as the best guarantee for the preservation of individual and national liberties.<sup>36</sup> Without self-government, Fischof argued, parliamentarianism would remain

a hollow concept. The free municipality must become the foundation of the constitutional state. These premises were elaborated at greater length in *Österreich und die Bürgschaften seines Bestandes* (Austria and the guarantees for its existence), published in Vienna in 1869. This work was widely recognized as a classic of Austrian political literature. Fischof pointed out that Austria-Hungary was a multinational state (*Nationalitätenstaat*) masquerading under liberal German hegemony as a nation-state on the West European model. In effect it had a *dual personality*, being liberal with regard to the rights of the individual, but oppressive in its relation to the Slav nationalities, who were still being treated as “servant peoples” (*Bedientenvölker*).<sup>37</sup>

Fischof insisted that Austria could no longer be defined as a German state when its German inhabitants barely exceeded one-third of the total population in Cisleithania. Only in the Alpine lands did Germans constitute an overwhelming majority—above all in Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Vorarlberg, and Salzburg. In the industrially most developed region of Bohemia, Germans comprised 37 percent of the population, while the Czechs were already in a majority; Austrian Silesia was 44 percent German as against 32 percent Poles and 24 percent Czechs; Moravia was predominantly Czech with a German minority of 28 percent. Galicia, divided between a Polish majority in the west and a Ukrainian majority in the eastern sector, had very few Germans. In Bukovina, the Germans were a fairly small minority among Poles, Ukrainians, Romanians, and Jews. The southern parts of the Tyrol were Italian, as was Trieste. Carniola was overwhelmingly Slovene (there were also important Slovene-speaking minorities in Styria and Carinthia) and the Adriatic regions of Dalmatia, Istria, and the Austrian Littoral were predominantly Serbo-Croat.<sup>38</sup>

The demographic aspects of the nationality problem were closely linked to constitutional, economic, and political challenges to the continuation of German hegemony. During the 19th century, Slav nationalities had begun to develop their own intelligentsia, a flourishing literature, cultural-national consciousness, and political demands. They were no longer prepared to accept the political leadership role of the Germans as the exclusive *Staatsnation* or even their post-1867 subordination to a triumvirate of “master races”—the Germans, Hungarians, and Poles. (By 1910, Slavs taken as a whole already comprised 23.5 million inhabitants (45 percent) of the total population of Austria-Hungary.<sup>39</sup>) It was therefore a farsighted act on Fischof’s part to already recognize in 1869 that none of Austria’s

nationalities was strong enough to dominate the others, though each through its opposition could endanger the survival of the state.<sup>40</sup> Hence, he advised Austrian statesmen to abandon the fiction of a “unitarian state” (*Einheitsstaat*) and develop new constitutional forms that could satisfy the aspirations for social justice and national equality of non-German ethnic groups.<sup>41</sup> The Habsburg tradition of centralistic absolutism had, so he believed, created increasingly centrifugal tendencies among the newly awakening nationalities. Only if Austria were decentralized would it have a chance to ensure its long-term survival.

According to Fischof, the era of national privileges was already defunct, along with the traditions of Josephinian absolutism. German centralism, progressive in its time, had become a fetter on the free development of the Austrian peoples. Swiss-style federalism was the most rational solution. Fischof’s formula was indeed far ahead of its time: “Switzerland is a republican Austria *en miniature* just as Austria is a monarchical Switzerland writ large.”<sup>42</sup> The examples of Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, Britain, and the United States were decisive proof to him that federalism, extensive local government, and the decentralization of education did increase the prosperity, liberty, and patriotism of all citizens irrespective of their backgrounds.

The mistake of Austrian liberals lay in their failure to see that in Central and Eastern Europe individual liberties and the integrity of the state could only be guaranteed by recognizing the fact of nationality. For Fischof, the national principle was a logical extension to the liberation of the individual effected by the French Revolution but it had to be applied equally to the non-German “nationalities.” Hence his warning to the liberals of the Verfassungspartei that Austro-Germans could only maintain their leading role in the Empire “if we respect with German humanity the rights of the other nations and promote their linguistic and cultural development.”<sup>43</sup> The Austro-Germans could afford to and must become more generous in their national policy. They should rely on their industrial, commercial, scientific, and cultural superiority instead of engaging in institutional repression and electoral chicanery to preserve their hegemony.

Fischof was a consistent advocate of fusing universal, equal, and direct suffrage (without property qualifications) with the idea of the “curia-vote” to protect minorities against majorities in areas of mixed population.<sup>44</sup> He warned that territorial autonomy alone would not be inadequate since the boundaries of the historic crown lands did not coincide with those of the various ethnic groups. Voting in national curias would, however, ensure that

no measures were taken detrimental to the interests of a national minority in matters of education and culture. Fischof also favored legal guarantees for the use of the mother tongue by minority groups in schools, courts, local, and general administration. Though German must remain the language of central authority, the mother tongue of each nationality in a given territory would be taught as a compulsory subject, and instruction in the languages in everyday use (*Umgangssprachen*) would also been given in schools.<sup>45</sup>

Though far removed from Marxian socialism, Fischof's program anticipated by thirty years many of the ideas that underlay the Austrian Social Democratic Party's national program formulated at the Brünn Congress (1899). The influence of Fischof's federalism and his theories on the reorganization of the multinational state are clearly to be found in the works of the outstanding Austro-Marxist thinker and Chancellor of the First Republic, Karl Renner.<sup>46</sup> In 1918, on the eve of the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, Renner himself acknowledged that "alone among all the Austrian politicians of German nationality, Fischof understood the conditions of life of the Austro-Germans and of the empire."<sup>47</sup>

Even the future Christian-social leader, Karl Lueger, a year before he placed himself at the head of the antisemitic movement in Vienna, honored Fischof, identifying strongly with his efforts to secure the cohesion of the Austrian state by reconciling its nationalities. In 1886, on the occasion of Fischof's seventieth birthday, after the liberals on the Vienna City Council had vetoed a proposal to convey their congratulations, Dr. Lueger declared: "Not one of the gentlemen present in this hall is fit to carry water for Fischof and there is no one living who can equal him in political experience, in service to the city of Vienna, and in integrity."<sup>48</sup>

It was one of the great ironies of modern Austrian history that Lueger should have paid homage to Fischof, while the liberals and their Viennese Jewish supporters were among his sharpest adversaries. This was all the more remarkable since Fischof was not only the acknowledged leader of the 1848 democratic Revolution but a self-conscious, proud Jew with a well-developed sense of Jewish solidarity acquired during his upbringing and early years of schooling in Budapest.<sup>49</sup> He could write in Hebrew script and felt a powerful identification with the teachings of Judaism, with its vocation as the "ethical instructor of a great part of mankind," and with the Jews as a martyred nation.<sup>50</sup> In spite of some political differences with the liberal-minded preacher, Adolf Jellinek, Fischof wrote him a letter on 26 June 1891, praising in the warmest terms his "flaming eloquence" and passionate defense of

Jewish values, on the occasion of the Viennese preacher's seventieth birthday. In this letter Fischof stressed his commitment to the ennobling moral mission contained in the Hebrew Bible, which had so profoundly shaped the ethical code of civilized humanity. He affirmed his pride in the unparalleled spiritual strength displayed by Jews throughout their history which enabled them to resist centuries of persecution. In spite of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion they had never bowed to their enemies, nor would they yield now to the growing antisemitic witch-hunt in Vienna. "They wish to reduce us to helots, to humiliate us as pariahs but we are not the national material out of whom slaves can be made."<sup>51</sup> Fischof maintained that the "drive to education and knowledge," the respect for science, the urge to civilize humanity, were collective virtues of which not even "the cannibalistic greed of antisemitism" could strip the Jewish people.<sup>52</sup>

Fischof had taken a clear stand in favor of political equality for Jews in 1848, along with Vienna's leading rabbi, Isaac Noah Mannheimer, whose demand to abolish the "Jew-tax" he strongly supported. This battle for Jewish rights was an integral part of his general campaign for constitutional freedom, national equality, and social justice. Fischof also concerned himself with the economic misery of Galician Jewry. In 1851, following a study visit to Galicia, he prepared a model statute of association for the establishment of a Jewish agricultural association (*Israelitischer Ackerbauverein*) designed to improve the conditions of the Galician-Jewish proletariat through the promotion of farming colonies.<sup>53</sup> Another testament to Fischof's profound sense of Jewish identity came in 1870. After the achievement of Jewish emancipation, the amnesty Fischof had been offered a post in the Austrian Cabinet which he turned down. Health problems and political disagreements with the German liberals played a role in this refusal but the crucial fact was his unwillingness to convert. No Jew could accept a ministerial position without taking an oath of office in terms such as only a professing believer in Christianity could assume.<sup>54</sup>

Fischof's Jewish identification came even more sharply into focus with the rise of organized Viennese antisemitism in the early 1880s. In 1882, he enthusiastically supported the efforts of the maverick Galician rabbi, Dr. Joseph Samuel Bloch—the *enfant terrible* of the Viennese Jewish establishment—to defend the Talmud by carrying his fight against the Catholic antisemite August Rohling, into the proletarian suburbs of Vienna. Bloch, who regarded Fischof as a moral guide and political mentor (he later sought to apply his theories on national autonomy to Galician Jewry), sent

him a copy of his address on “The Workers in the Time of Jesus” given to a social-democratic gathering in Florisdorf.<sup>55</sup> Fischof not only warmly approved Rabbi Bloch’s “excellent lecture” but backed his successful parliamentary candidacy for a Galician constituency in 1883, regarding him as a courageous defender of Jewish civic rights against antisemitic slander. Dr. Bloch became a regular guest at Fischof’s Carinthian home in the village of Emmersdorf, seeking his advice on parliamentary affairs and various ways to defend the civic status of Austrian Jews against the swelling tide of antisemitism.<sup>56</sup> The Galician rabbi shared Fischof’s views on the priority of national reconciliation in Austria, his advocacy of federalism, and his skepticism concerning exclusive Jewish identification with the German national cause. The need to assume an active posture of collective self-defense against antisemitism, resulted in Rabbi Bloch’s drive to create the first Jewish civic defense organization in Austria, the *Österreichisch-Israelitische Union* (1886).<sup>57</sup>

Though Fischof was not directly involved in its deliberations, he publicly sympathized with the objectives of this Jewish self-defense grouping. Shortly after his death, at the annual meeting of the Union in April 1893, a speaker recalled that Fischof’s work for progress and humanity had been in the best traditions of Judaism.<sup>58</sup> According to a report in Dr. Bloch’s weekly, the speaker went on to observe

The people from whom Fischof stems will survive. When the enemies and persecutors of our community have been forgotten and the antisemitic movement will have become an object of social psychiatry, Fischof’s name will glow into the distant future.<sup>59</sup>

In 1897, the Union officially recommended that Austrian Jewry return to the national reconciliation program of “the unforgettable Fischof,” based on justice and equality before the law. This was the only rational solution to the chaos facing the Habsburg State, the Jews, and the Austrian fatherland.<sup>60</sup> Most poignant of all, was the address to the Union in April 1898 given by a close political associate of Fischof, the Viennese democrat (and philosemit) Dr. Ferdinand Kronawetter. He pointedly asked his listeners why Fischof had been shunned by his coreligionists when in 1882 when he sought to create a Deutsche Volkspartei to rally liberals from all nationalities.<sup>61</sup>

According to Kronawetter, this had been a tragic mistake and a missed opportunity to unite Austro-liberalism with the radical-democratic current of thought espoused by Fischof and his circle. Kronawetter was well aware of the fact that since 1848, Viennese liberals had systematically sought to

exclude the lower *Bürgertum* from the privileged curia voting system. Instead, the liberals had based their power on a solid middle- and upper *Mittelstand* of property-owners, officials, wealthy artisans, and prosperous shopkeepers.<sup>62</sup> This oligarchical interest-oriented politics had sacrificed the radical democratic ideals of 1848, and its exploitative aspect made it a major target of the lower middle-class antisemitic protest movement of the 1880s. It was cleverly used by populist politicians to focus attention on the role of the Jews in Viennese banking and commercial capitalism. Only a small group of left-liberal Viennese democrats like Kronawetter still remained faithful to the radical ideal of a unitary *Bürgertum* which had briefly surfaced in 1848. They opposed both the oligarchic tendencies of the liberals and the anti-capitalist antisemitism of excluded artisans and their demagogic Christian-social tribunes like Ernst Schneider.

One of the leading participants in the effort to establish a Deutsche Volkspartei was the publisher and editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, Theodor Hertzka (1845-1924).<sup>63</sup> An economist by training and a social reformer, who, like Fischof, was born to a middle-class Jewish family in Budapest, Hertzka achieved fame as the author of the lengthy utopian tract, *Freiland*.<sup>64</sup> It was Hertzka who composed the economic reform program of the Deutsche Volkspartei, proposing a moderate liberal socialism based on “mutualism” and cooperation. Both Fischof and Hertzka opposed the laissez-faire capitalism advocated by classical liberals, as well as the Marxist doctrines of class war which negated personal initiative and individual liberties. But they saw the vital necessity of raising the living standards of the proletariat and extending the suffrage to the working classes.

Like Kronawetter and his Viennese radicals, Fischof's Jewish disciples also argued the need for a moderate German national party that could regenerate the forgotten ideals of 1848 by cooperating with like-minded liberals from other nationalities. In a letter to Hertzka, published in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* on 28 May 1882, Fischof explained that electoral reform and constitutional guarantees for the Slav nationalities were essential to prevent an open clash between the Austrian state and its constituent peoples. The latter should not be driven to choose between Austrian patriotism and their own national-political interests. Liberalism, in order to become viable, must free itself from the justifiable reproach of intolerance towards non-Germans.<sup>65</sup>

Neither Fischof nor Hertzka supported the policy of the new Austrian Prime Minister, Count Taafe, who stood since 1879 at the head of a clerical-

conservative coalition which favored the Slav nationalities.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless they were vehemently attacked by the oppositional Verfassungspartei and the radical German nationalists for “betraying” the German cause. Liberal Viennese Jews also deplored Fischof’s espousal of federalism and greater national autonomy as a desertion of German centralism and as detrimental to Jewish interests.<sup>67</sup> Despite their pride in Fischof as an Austrian patriot and symbol of the 1848 revolution, Jewish communal leaders were profoundly unnerved by his social and political program. They saw Count Taafe and his conservative cabinet as the adversaries of Jewry and the return of the Liberals to government as their primary political goal.

Most Viennese Jews opposed Fischof in the great debate between centralism and federalism, between liberal capitalism and social reform or German hegemony and national equality. They were even ready to risk the wrath of the Taafe government by denouncing its national policy as “treason to the German cause,” though he had proposed at one point to collaborate with them to suppress the antisemitic movement.<sup>68</sup> Though antisemitism was mounting daily in Vienna, the President of the Kultusgemeinde, Joseph Ritter von Wertheimer (himself a veteran liberal) nonetheless told Rabbi Bloch that he would not accept this offer: “Zum Taafe gehen wir nicht.”<sup>69</sup> Bloch had to turn to Hertzka’s *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* to publish his militant counterattack against the clerical antisemite, August Rohling, since the Jewish communal leaders and the great liberal newspapers (owned mainly by Jews) preferred to keep a low profile.

In a private meeting in 1882—probably at Hertzka’s home—Fischof warned some of the Kultusgemeinde leaders who were present that they faced a clear choice: the nationalities of Austria would either be reconciled or turn antisemitic.<sup>70</sup> This warning was disregarded along with Fischof’s prophetic advice that the efforts of eight million Austro-Germans to dominate fourteen million non-Germans would create an irreversible *Rassenkampf*, poison all public debate, and eventually destroy the Austrian state itself.<sup>71</sup> Instead, the Liberals and the radical German nationalist movement under Georg von Schoenerer chose to carry on a tumultuous agitation against the creation of the Deutsche Volkspartei. As its first meeting on 16 July 1882, two of von Schoenerer’s leading followers, the future Social-democratic leader Engelbert Pernerstorfer, and the (Jewish-born) chief ideologist of Austrian Pan-Germanism, Heinrich Friedjung disrupted the proceedings.<sup>72</sup>

Fischof’s new party never recovered from this false start and from the determined efforts of the German Liberals and radical nationalists to render it

stillborn.<sup>73</sup> Thus evaporated what may have been one of the last opportunities to reconcile the nationalities in Austria. The pro-Germanism of the leaders of Austrian Jewry was, however, to bear bitter fruit. The sharpening of the national struggle speedily brought in its wake the emergence of a racial antisemitism that threatened the very existence of the Jewish community. By the mid 1880s, the Pan-German movement had expelled even such ardent apostles of “Germanism” as Heinrich Friedjung from its ranks and openly called for “the removal of Jewish influence from all sections of public life” as a central and indispensable plank in its program.<sup>74</sup>

The Moravian-born Friedjung was the most striking symbol of the tragic illusions of Jewish pro-Germanism and its unrequited courtship of *Deutschtum*. Like Fischof, Heinrich Friedjung recognized that the shock of 1866 necessitated a fundamental revision of past aspirations. German-Austrians could no longer hang on to the pre-1866 Austro-liberal dream of a Germany united under Austrian rule while also preserving German hegemony inside the Danubian Empire itself.<sup>75</sup> The time had come, so Friedjung believed, for a clear choice in favor of German rather than Austrian identity and a voluntary union with the new Bismarckian Empire. Unlike Fischof, Friedjung did not regard a federal solution to the national question as in any way desirable. On the contrary, he favored a more centralized and German-dominated commonwealth which would seek to reduce the number of Slavs in its borders. He blamed the “reactionary” Habsburg dynasty for the 1866 defeat at Königgratz (Sadowa) and sharply criticized the half-heartedness on the national question evinced by an older generation of Austrian liberal leaders like Dr. Eduard Herbst.<sup>76</sup>

Their Austrian patriotism seemed to Friedjung to be an artificial, self-alienated effort “to close off” their deeper emotional feelings as Germans in favor of a nebulous supra-national entity known as Austria. It was his conviction that “the highest duty of the political writer was to exert an influence on that obscure first cause of the history of all peoples, on the national character....” It was the task of the younger more Germanocentric generation to create a new *Nationalgefühl* (national feeling) among the Austro-Germans. As he wrote in 1877:

The only party which will be able to breathe new life into our fatherland is the one which rules Austria from a nationalistic point of view, which brings into being an alliance with Germany, which holds down the nationalities and which reaches an agreement with Hungary

that both states will rule themselves separately and independently of each other.<sup>77</sup>

Friedjung's Pan-German nationalism had a strong *völkisch* flavor, though his definition of membership in the German nationality was ultimately cultural rather than racial in character. The failure of the Slav nationalities to share his almost mystic belief in the superiority of German *Kultur* and its educational mission, was almost incomprehensible to him. A. J. P. Taylor's psychological explanation for this blind spot is worth noting:

Friedjung regarded himself as a German, but he was only a German by adoption: he had become a German, because he valued German culture, and the process was no less deliberate for being subconscious. He therefore tended to expect a similar subconscious recognition of German superiority from the other races and he could not understand the reluctance of the Czechs, the Slovaks, or the Croats to follow his example.<sup>78</sup>

According to Taylor, "Friedjung's race did in fact influence and warp his political career, for it made him overrate the ease with which the Germans could dominate and control the other races of the Empire."<sup>79</sup> The dynamic of radical assimilationism which argued that Jews should be completely absorbed into the nationalities among whom they lived, pushed him in the direction of an exaggerated German chauvinism.<sup>80</sup>

Friedjung, during his years as editor of the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* (1883-1886) and subsequently as editor-in-chief of the *Deutsche Zeitung* (the major publication of the Deutschnationale Partei), continued to espouse a vigorous, elemental nationalism which constantly recalled the glories of the tribal past and medieval Germanic greatness. Favorably contrasting "the mighty Chancellor" (Bismarck) with the "hoary" Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph, Friedjung claimed that a succession of feeble and reactionary Austrian regimes since 1848 had repressed the vital life-force of the German nationality in the Dual Monarchy. But tribal feeling was now undergoing a mighty resurgence, for as Friedjung wrote in January 1885: "We are of *one blood* and of *one tribe*, the children of the one mother Germania"—an ideological conviction to which he remained faithful to the end of his life.<sup>81</sup>

Friedjung had been a close collaborator of Georg von Schoenerer, the leader of the Austrian Pan-Germans. Initially, he chose to ignore Schoenerer's racist antisemitism, regarding it as an unfortunate diversion from the common central task of consolidating the German national rebirth

against the Slav menace. Like other Jewish Pan-Germans, Friedjung undoubtedly internalized a moderate dose of Judeophobia as part of his own espousal of *völkisch* ideology.<sup>82</sup> But von Schoenerer's turn to biological racism (after 1882) placed him and other Jews in the movement in an impossible position.<sup>83</sup> Friedjung could accept that Jews were too intellectual, too mercantile, rootless, or cosmopolitan; he himself insistently demanded that they dissolve themselves completely into the German nation.<sup>84</sup> But the new racial antisemitism cut the ground from under his feet, for it implied that even the most assimilated Jews could not play any active role in the German national rebirth. The longing for community and acceptance which underlay his assimilationist convictions was thus dealt a cruel blow while the already split German nationalist forces were still further divided.<sup>85</sup> Friedjung's efforts to create a new party that would bring together liberals and radical Pan-Germans in the German *Klub* looked for a moment as if it might succeed. But here, too, his Jewish origins provoked a bitter antisemitic controversy that split the parliamentary faction down the middle. Friedjung's political career was not only undermined as a consequence but he had to suffer the humiliation of insults directed at him as the alleged representative of "Jewish interests" which he had always repudiated. The careers of Friedjung and Fischof demonstrate that the ideology of radical assimilation had already backfired in Austria by the mid-1880s. The rise of an aggressively illiberal and racist *Volksdeutschum* whose prime target was modern, emancipated Jewry had cast its dark shadow over the whole strategy of assimilation in Habsburg Austria. It was both mirror and herald of the catastrophe that would four decades later descend upon Central Europe.

#### NOTES

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2. George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Cincinnati, Ohio 1985), 3-18.

3. See the essays in Andrei Corbea-Hoisie and Jacques LeRider, eds., *Metropole und Provinzen in Altösterreich (1880-1918)* (Vienna 1996), especially Angelo Ara, “Juden und jüdisches Bürgertum im Triest der Jahrhundertwende,” 264-74; and Andrei Corbea-Hoisie on Czernowitz, 162-79.
4. Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, “The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands, 1848-1918,” *The Jews of Czechoslovakia* (Philadelphia 1968), 32-35; Hillel Kieval, “Jews, Czechs and Germans in Bohemia before 1914” in *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich (London 1992), 19-37.
5. On Hungary, see Lázló Peter, “Language, the Constitution, and the Past in Hungarian Nationalism,” *Austrian Studies* 5 (1994): 13-26; Robert J. W. Evans, “Austrian Identity in Hungarian Perspective: The Nineteenth Century,” *ibid.*, 27-36. On the Jews, see Victor Karady, “Religious Divisions, Socio-Economic Stratification and the Modernization of Hungarian Jewry after the Emancipation,” in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy 1760-1945*, ed. by Michael K. Silber (Jerusalem 1992), 161-72; Nathan Katzburg, “Assimilation in Hungary during the Nineteenth Century: Orthodox Positions,” in *Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. by Béla Vago (Boulder, Colo. 1981), 49-55.
6. Ezra Mendelsohn, “A Note on Jewish Assimilation in the Polish Lands,” in *ibid.*, 141-49.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Hugo Gold, ed., *Geschichte der Juden in der Bukowina*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv 1958-1962); Peter Urbanitsch, “Die Deutschen in Österreich,” in *Die Habsburger Monarchie 1848-1918*, vol. 3: *Die Völker des Reiches* (Vienna 1980), 72-73.
9. Robert S. Wistrich, “The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: The Impact of German Culture in a Multi-ethnic State,” in *Towards Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. by Jacob Katz (New York 1987), 43-70.
10. *Ibid.* For the “periphery,” see the essays by Michael Silber on Hungary, *ibid.*, 107-158 and Lois C. Dubin on Trieste, *ibid.*, 189-224.
11. For some of the problems of self-definition and assimilation, see Marsha Rozenblit, “The Jews of Germany and Austria: A Comparative Perspective” in *Austrians and Jews*, 1-18; William J. McCagg, “Jewish Assimilation in Austria,” in *ibid.*, 58-81; Steven Beller, “Is there a Jewish Aspect to Modern Jewish Identity?,” in *Österreich-Konzeptionen und jüdisches Selbstverständnis*, ed. by Hanni Mittelmann and Armin A. Wallas (Tübingen 2001), 43-52.
12. Michael Pollak, *Vienne 1900: Une identité blessée* (Paris 1984), 38ff.
13. “Dr. Ignaz Kuranda,” *Die Neuzeit*, 29 Apr. 1881, 133-35. Max Grunwald, *Vienna* (Philadelphia 1936), 365-71.

14. Richard Grunberger, "Jews in Austrian Journalism," in *The Jews of Austria*, ed. by Josef Fraenkel (London 1966), 86.
15. Grunwald, *Vienna*, 368-69.
16. Ibid.; see also Wolfgang Häusler, "Orthodoxie und Reform im Wiener Judentum in der Epoche des Hochliberalismus," *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 6 (1978): 39-40.
17. See Gerald Stourzh, "The Age of Emancipation and Assimilation—Liberalism and its Heritage," in *Österreich-Konzeptionen*, 11-28.
18. Adolf Jellinek, "Jüdisch-Österreichisch," *Die Neuzeit* 23 (15 June 1883): 225-26; see Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989), 164.
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23. John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement. 1848-1897* (Chicago 1981), 136 ff.
24. P. G. J. Pulzer, "The Austrian Liberals and the Jewish Question, 1867-1914," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 33 (1963): 131-42; see also Gerald Stourzh, *Wege zur Grundrechtsdemokratie. Studien zur Begriffs- und Institutionengeschichte des liberalen Verfassungsstaates* (Vienna and Cologne 1989).
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26. Franz Kobler, "The Contribution of Austrian Jews to Jurisprudence," in *Jews of Austria*, 29.
27. Ibid., 30-31.
28. See Werner J. Cahnmann, "Adolf Fischof and his Jewish Followers," *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 4 (1959): 111-39.
29. Richard Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof: Das Lebensbild eines österreichischen Politikers* (Stuttgart and Berlin 1910), 10-11.
30. Ibid., 20.
31. Grunwald, *Vienna*, 262.
32. See the speech of 9 April 1898 by Dr. Ferdinand Kronawetter (leader of Austria's radical democrats) praising Fischof, reproduced in *Mittheilungen der Österreichisch-Israelitischen Union*, 10, no. 104 (1898): 6.
33. Ibid., 7.

34. Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof*, 198.
35. Ibid., 205.
36. Ibid., 214.
37. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 111ff.
38. Robert A. Kann, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburger Monarchie* (Graz and Cologne 1964) 2: 299ff; Urbanitsch, “Die Deutschen in Österreich,” 33-152 is an indispensable account with many useful statistical tables and data.
39. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918* (London 1981), 286.
40. Charmatz, “Adolf Fischof,” 223ff.
41. Kronawetter, *Mittheilungen* (1898): 11.
42. Charmatz, “Adolf Fischof,” 227.
43. Ibid., 225.
44. Ibid., 237, 270.
45. Kronawetter, *Mittheilungen* (1898): 14-15.
46. See Karl Renner’s early works (written under the pseudonym Rudolf Springer), *Staat und Nation* (Vienna 1899), and idem, *Der Kampf der österreichischen Nationen um den Staat* (Leipzig 1902); see also the excerpt in Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford 1978), 118-25.
47. Karl Renner, *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen in besonderer Anwendung auf Österreich* (Vienna 1918), 232.
48. Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof*, 296.
49. Ibid., 262; also Dr. Ferdinand Kronawetter, “Adolf Fischof und die Verfassungskämpfe der Gegenwart,” *Mittheilungen der Österreichisch-Israelitischen Union* 10, no. 104 (April 1898): 4.
50. “Gratulationsschreiben des Herrn Dr. Adolf Fischof and Herrn Dr. Adolf Jellinek,” *Die Neuzeit*, 3 July 1891, 262.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof*, 278-81.
54. Grunwald, Vienna, 303.
55. Josef S. Bloch, *Erinnerung aus meinem Leben* (Vienna and Leipzig 1922), 25ff, 53.
56. Ibid., 1: 53ff, 79, 270.
57. See ibid., 197ff.; Jacob Toury, “Troubled Beginnings: The Emergence of the Österreichisch-Israelitische Union,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 30 (1985): 475ff.; Robert S. Wistrich, *Die Juden Wiens im Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josephs* (Vienna 1999), 225-86.
58. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 128-29.

59. The speaker was Dr. Marcus Spitzer; see *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, 28 Apr. 1893.
60. *Mittheilungen der Österreichisch-Israelitischen Union*, 9, no. 92 (Mar. 1897).
61. Kronawetter, *Fischof, Mittheilungen*, 9, no. 104 (Apr. 1898): 5.
62. Boyer, *Political Radicalism*, 16-17.
63. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 122ff.
64. Theodor Hertzka searched for a third way between capitalism and socialism. His writings, including *Freiland: Ein soziales Zukunftsbild*, Leipzig 1890 and *Sozialdemokratie und Sozialliberalismus*, Dresden/Leipzig 1891, influenced the social thinking of his near namesake, Theodor Herzl – also born in Budapest.
65. Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof*, 391.
66. Ibid., 342-44.
67. Cahnmann, “Adolf Fischof,” 121.
68. Grunwald, *Vienna*, 429. For a fierce critique of established Viennese Jewry’s attitudes see Dr. Joseph Samuel Bloch’s polemical tract, *Der nationale Zwist und die Juden in Österreich* (Vienna 1886), which was secretly financed by Count Taafe.
69. J. S. Bloch, *Erinnerungen*, 167.
70. Isidor Schalit, “Kadimah: Aus meinen Erinnerungen,” MS [of prominent Austrian Zionist student leader], Central Zionist Archives, A 196/25, Jerusalem.
71. Charmatz, *Adolf Fischof*, 391.
72. On Schoenerer, see F. L. Carsten, *Faschismus in Österreich. Von Schoenerer zu Hitler* (Munich 1977); and Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna. A Dictator’s Apprenticeship* (New York 1999), 236-53.
73. Grunwald, *Vienna*, 426.
74. Pulzer, “Austrian Liberals,” 127.
75. See: Heinrich Friedjung, *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859-1866* (Stuttgart 1897-1898), which was his classic work, later translated into English by A. J. P. Taylor.
76. William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven 1974), 75.
77. Ibid., chapter by McGrath who examined the intellectual sources of Friedjung’s precocious pan-Germanism.
78. See A. J. P. Taylor’s introduction to Heinrich Friedjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy in Germany 1859-1866* (New York 1966), iv.
79. Ibid., xiv.
80. For similar reactions in Hungary, see Jászi, *Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 171; George Barany, “Magyar Jew or Jewish Magyar?,” *Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe*, 51-98.

81. *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, no. 43, 25 Oct. 1885.
82. See George L. Mosse, “The Influence of the Volkisch Idea on German Jewry,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 12 (1967): 84-86.
83. For the reaction of Victor Adler, future leader of Austrian Social Democracy and a close collaborator of Friedjung and Schoenerer in 1882, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary*, London/Toronto 1982, pp. 232-261.
84. *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, no. 43, 25 Oct. 1885. Friedjung wrote that the only possible solution for Jews lay “in dem vollständigen Verlassen der Sonderstellung, welche die Juden vielfach einnehmen”; in their radical dissolution into the modern nationalities among whom they lived, especially into *Deutschum* (Germanness). For they had already completed “the world-historical task that was assigned to them” (die weltgeschichtliche Aufgabe, welche ihnen zugeteilt wurde....”). Dr. Joseph Samuel Bloch regarded this radical assimilationism as a form of “Semitic antisemitism” and attacked Friedjung in a series of articles in his *Österreichische Wochenschrift*; see 16 Jan., 16 July, and 14 Nov. 1885.
85. Pulzer, “Austrian Liberals,” 114-16.

## CHAPTER 3

### Austro-Marxist Interpretations of the “Jewish Question”

Austrian Social Democracy adopted a highly ambivalent attitude towards the “Jewish Question” before and after the First World War. Though much less openly antisemitic than rival mass movements such as the Christian-Social Party or the Pan-Germans led by Georg von Schoenerer, the Social Democrats were far from being “philosemitic”—a charge which they vigorously repudiated whenever possible. The dominant figure and founding father of the Marxist-oriented Social Democratic Party in Austria, Victor Adler, had set the tone by rejecting all appeals to defend the Jewish community as being a diversion from the primacy of the class-struggle. Himself a Jewish convert to Protestantism (he had taken this step at the age of 26, at least in part to escape antisemitic attacks), Adler consistently regarded his Jewish background as a burden to the Party.<sup>1</sup> In 1891, he had opposed the efforts of the American Jewish Labor leader, Abraham Cahan, to convince delegates at the Brussels Congress of the Socialist International, that antisemitism should be explicitly condemned. This, he felt, would help the antisemites by identifying the cause of international socialism with that of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> Worse still, Adler—who equated “philosemitism” with the defense of liberal capitalism—regarded it as a more dangerous enemy of the labor movement than the populist antisemitic agitation which, he believed, at least opposed the prevailing status quo.

Unlike most leading German Marxists at the time, Adler did not advocate socialist intervention during the Dreyfus Affair, or even at the time of the Beilis blood libel in Tsarist Russia in 1912. His response to the Beilis case was particularly revealing: “Jews and more Jews. As if the entire world revolved around the Jewish question!”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, when asked by the leading Belgian Socialist, Camille Huysmans, what he thought about antisemitism, he apparently responded: “My dear comrade! One must have Jews, but not too many!”<sup>4</sup> This was a stance echoed by his heir and successor as leader of the interwar Austrian Social Democrats, Otto Bauer, who wrote in 1910, that

ever since the days of Karl Marx, the labor movement had opposed “philosemitism.” Not only Bauer but most of the other Austro-Marxists never tired of repeating that: “Social Democracy has never been a Jewish protective guard.”<sup>5</sup>

Socialism, from the beginning of its history, had an attitude to Jewish economic activity that was different from its liberal predecessors. Since the first half of the 19th century, Jews were identified on the Left with petty huckstering and allegedly “parasitic” occupations. The young Marx had made it clear in his *Zur Judenfrage* (1844) that “Emancipation from *haggling* and *money* from practical, real Judaism would be the self-emancipation of our time.<sup>6</sup> Marx’s anti-Jewish stereotypes had a powerful influence on the Jewish (and non-Jewish) leaders of Austrian Social Democracy, reinforced by the large-scale settlements of *Ostjuden* in the border regions of the Habsburg Monarchy. The middleman role of Galician Jews seemed to many Austrian socialists a microcosm of everything that was backward in a decomposing feudal society still in transition towards capitalism. Galicia, the home of two-thirds of Austrian Jewry in the 19th century, was perceived by socialists (as it was by Josephinian bureaucrats and many Jewish *maskilim*) as “half-asiatic” (*Halb-Asien*). The social structure of the Austro-Polish province was considered antithetical to the progress, culture, and humanity symbolized by Western Europe. *Halb-Asien* was a realm of darkness, sordid barbarism, clerical fanaticism, and violent hatreds.<sup>7</sup> The Jewish ghettos were depicted as centers of obscurantist superstition, clinging to obsolete customs, an outmoded Yiddish language (denigrated as a corrupt and vulgar jargon), and an incorrigible ethnic particularism. Galicia with its myriad *Luftmenschen* was the living incarnation to many socialists of Marx’s haggling, usurious, and non-productive Jew. Thus their reactions to Austrian antisemitism, like those of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie of Vienna, were from the outset prejudiced by this background. To a remarkable degree, the Jews in the Austrian socialist leadership internalized the commonplace anti-Jewish stereotypes of their Gentile environment concerning ghetto Jews and traditional Judaism. Precisely because they considered themselves to be in the vanguard of “progress,” leaders like Victor and Friedrich Adler, Otto Bauer, Friedrich Austerlitz, and Wilhelm Ellenbogen, who were thoroughly Germanized in culture, shared the revulsion of most Gentile Austrians against the shabby appearance, stubborn orthodoxy, “exotic” customs, and national separatism of East European Jewry.

Though Austrian Marxists of Jewish origin were by no means blind to the perniciousness of modern antisemitism, their opposition to it was at times paralyzed by this hostility to *Ostjuden* and the unconscious self-hatred it engendered. In this respect they were heirs of the great German-Jewish iconoclasts of the first half of the nineteenth century such as Karl Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, and Ferdinand Lassalle. Like their forerunners (with the exception of the repentant Heine) they regarded “Judaism” in the socio-economic sense as a symbol of alienation and the antithesis of the universal dialectic of human emancipation. Jewry was perceived as the embodiment of greed, egoism, and the capitalist ethic as well as one of the pillars of European feudal reaction. In their hostility to the Rothschilds and the Jewish *Finanzaristokratie*, for example, there was little to distinguish the Social Democrats from the Austrian antisemitic parties. Much the same could be said of the consensus existing between many socialists and the Viennese antisemites concerning the *Ostjuden*.

In a famous passage on the Galician *Ostjuden* who had settled in Vienna’s Second District, the Leopoldstadt, during and after the First World War, the novelist Joseph Roth observed:

It is terribly difficult to be an East European Jew; there is no harder fate than to be an East European Jewish alien in Vienna... For the Christian-Social party, they are Jews. For German Nationalists, they are Semites. For Social Democrats, they are unproductive elements.

Both the Christian-Socials and the Deutschnationale Partei, as Roth pointed out, “include antisemitism as an important point in their programs.” The Socialists, on the other hand, “fear being labeled as a Jewish party.”<sup>8</sup> The Austrian Social Democrats, influenced as they were by classic leftist prejudices against Jews and Judaism and desperate to prove that they were no *Judenschutztruppe* (Jewish protective guard), could scarcely wage an effective battle against militant political antisemitism. The fact that they did eventually take a stand against Catholic and Pan-German antisemitism should not obscure the extent to which the party leadership flirted with and contributed to the growth of the phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

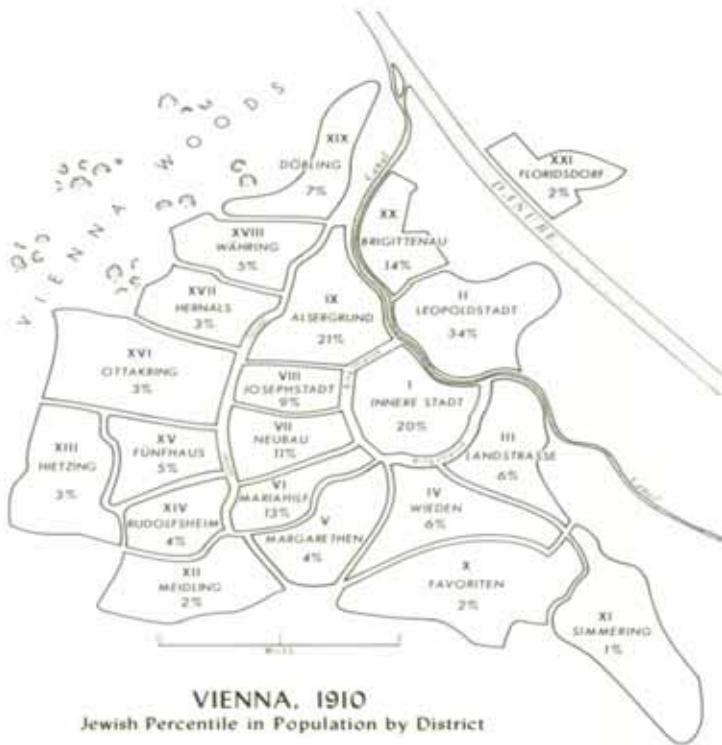
The discussion of Marxist attitudes to the “Jewish Question” (whether in Austria or elsewhere) has often been confused by an erroneous and illogical assumption that left-wing parties are immunized against racial, religious, or ethnic prejudice.<sup>10</sup> The theory and praxis of the Austrian labor movement illustrate how misleading this assumption can be when examined in the light of concrete historical situations. The workers movement was in fact rather

receptive to the cultural and political antisemitism that began to pervade broad strata of German-Austrian society from the early 1880s onward and by no means immune to prejudice against Jews.<sup>11</sup> This was just as true at the lower levels as it was in the upper reaches of the Austrian party. However, in contrast to German Nationalists or to the Christian Socials in Austria, this “socialist” antisemitism was never activated as a major strategic weapon in the labor platform. It did not feature in official party manifestoes, nor was there any intention of deliberately discriminating against Austrian Jews, though calls to limit their presence and influence within the Socialist party were heard on a number of occasions.<sup>12</sup>

The main expression of later left-wing antisemitism lay, however, in the highly ambivalent stance adopted toward the rise of a powerful populist *Antisemitenbewegung* in Vienna after 1890. The seeds of the failure to strongly resist and combat the propaganda of racist antisemitism are already apparent in a letter of Karl Kautsky from Vienna in 1884 in which he complains:

We are having trouble preventing our own people from fraternizing with the antisemites. The antisemites are now our most dangerous opponents, because their appearance is oppositional and democratic, thus appealing to the workers’ instincts.<sup>13</sup>

Kautsky regarded the impact of these early antisemitic appeals by the Austrian Pan-Germans to the working classes as an expression of the *kleinbürgerlich* character of the Viennese population.<sup>14</sup> His Austro-Marxist pupils also sought to explain antisemitism in socioeconomic terms as a reaction of *déclassé* petit bourgeois strata to the impact of large-scale capitalist methods of production.<sup>15</sup> This explanation admittedly had a certain validity for Vienna, where the artisanal character of local industry and the crisis of craftsmen were indeed pertinent to understanding the *origins* of the antisemitic movement in the 1880s. It is also true that in the early phases of industrialization in Austria there was no clear dividing line between the lower *Bürgertum* and the proletariat, which meant that typical antisemitic stereotypes could more easily infiltrate the nascent working class.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless the classic Marxist schema, according to which antisemitism (to quote Friedrich Engels’s letter of 1890 to an Austrian correspondent) is exclusively a reaction of “medieval, declining strata against modern society,” was obviously lacking in credibility or explanatory power.<sup>17</sup> When Judeophobia suddenly flared up in fin-de-siècle France, it was supported by secular republican and leftist forces no less than by the “reactionary” strata of



prerevolutionary French society. Such interpretations of antisemitism singularly failed to immunize the labor movement against ethnic prejudices.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, assumptions that modern capitalism must inexorably lead to the disappearance of premodern and preindustrial lower middle strata in the population proved to be a decidedly flimsy basis on which to wage successful resistance to antisemitic demagogic. Its only practical result was the propagation of a new Marxist dogma in the 1890s to the effect that "historical development" would inevitably drive the antisemitic *Kleinbürgertum* into the arms of the only genuine anti-capitalist party—the Social Democrats.<sup>19</sup>

In their reliance on mechanistic and fatalistic notions of historical development, Austro-Marxist theoreticians did not deviate much from their

colleagues in most other European social democratic parties. The social, economic, and political context in which they operated, *was*, however, very different, and this is what explains their extensive concessions to antisemitic terminology. For the “Jewish Question” in Vienna had indeed become more acute by the 1890s than elsewhere in Western or Central Europe. Between 1869 and 1880 the Jewish population had risen from 40,277 (6.10 percent of the total population) to 72,588 (10.06 percent). By 1910 there were 175,818 Jews in Vienna (8.63 percent of the city’s population), where fifty years earlier there had been only 6,217 (2.16 percent). This was a remarkable rate of growth and given the occupational structure of emancipated Viennese Jewry and the historic traditions of Judeophobia in Catholic Austria, it makes the rise of political antisemitism seem in retrospect almost inevitable. The economic success of Viennese Jewry, in particular its crucial role in banking, industrial capitalism, commerce, department stores, the liberal press, and the free professions, could hardly make the Jewish community a natural ally of the proletarian movement.<sup>20</sup>

Even among the poorer Jews of the Leopoldstadt, who had migrated after 1860 from Hungary, Galicia, or Moravia to Vienna, there were serious social and cultural obstacles to participation in the labor movement. Most of the immigrant Jews of lower status were not genuine proletarians, and very few were factory workers.<sup>21</sup> They did not live in the typical proletarian quarters of Ottakring, Hernals, or Favoriten, and a far greater proportion of Jews than Gentiles, even at the lowest levels of society, were *selbstständig* (independent).<sup>22</sup> Even more significant, the poorer Jews were far from assimilated, retaining in many cases their distinctive language (Yiddish), dress, mannerisms, mores, and religious customs. At the turn of the century, with the increased immigration to Vienna of the more traditionalist and Orthodox *Ostjuden* from Galicia, the cultural gap between this Jewish sector and modern Social Democracy appeared almost unbridgeable.<sup>23</sup> The rise of Jewish nationalism in fin-de-siècle Vienna was a further factor alienating an important section of the Jewish population from the Social Democrats. The Austro-Marxists were notoriously unsympathetic to Zionism as well as to more modest claims for Jewish cultural-national autonomy in Galicia and Bukovina.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, by the end of the 19th century there were also the first clear signs of active Jewish participation in the Austrian labor movement. The most striking feature of this new trend was the role played by a growing section of the Jewish intelligentsia in the leadership of the Social Democratic

party, in the party press, and in its myriad cultural, youth, and sport organizations. This intelligentsia was already thoroughly Germanized and embraced with neophyte zeal both the national and the social objectives of the pan-Austrian labor movement.<sup>25</sup> Along with this assimilated stratum of middle-class intellectual Jews, there was also a palpable drift towards Social Democracy among the new class of *Handelsangestellten* who constituted a significant proportion of Vienna Jews by the turn of the century.<sup>26</sup> A small, nationally-minded sector among these commercial employees was attracted to labor Zionism after 1900. Significantly the Poalei Zion organizations in Austria before 1914 recommended voting for the Social Democrats wherever Jewish national candidates were not available.<sup>27</sup>

After the First World War, the drift of Viennese Jews toward the Social Democrats, especially among the educated bourgeois and intellectual strata of Jewry, became a flood. As a result, the image of “Red Vienna” fused in antisemitic circles with that of “Jewish” subversion.<sup>28</sup> Both Jews and Marxists were stigmatized as seeking the systematic destruction of traditional Catholic society and culture. However, the seeds of this postwar clerical and fascist propaganda against Red Vienna can already be found in the late Habsburg period. It was no accident, for example, that the young Adolf Hitler explicitly related his hatred of Jews and Social Democrats to his experiences in turn-of-the-century Vienna. The fear and anxiety induced by the *Judensozi* (the “Jewish” Social Democrats) were rooted in class distinctions that continued to pervade Gentile Austrian society and were exacerbated by the impact of the Christian-Social agitation after 1900. Having finally conquered the city of Vienna in 1897, the Catholic populists under the leadership of Karl Lueger had turned the focus of their propaganda against their newest and most dangerous rival, the Social Democratic party. Christian Socialism sought at the turn of the century to become *the* party of the Viennese German bourgeoisie and the supreme defender of *Mittelstand* interests against the “Red Menace.”

Karl Lueger, who in the 1890s had so successfully united the middle and lower *Bürgertum* against the decaying liberal order in the name of the traditional ideals of Austrian *Bürger* culture, now found a new rallying cry in the crusade against Social Democracy.<sup>29</sup> The “Red Menace” and the “Jewish Question” merged in the propaganda of Lueger’s movement once it had achieved office. Anti-intellectualism, *Mittelstand* phobias concerning proletarianization, anxiety over socialist atheism, and petit bourgeois fears of Jewish competition were cleverly exploited by the Christian Socials to



Otto Bauer (1881-1938) led the Austrian labor movement in the interwar period.

Austrian National Library

mobilize their bourgeois clientèle. It was from this agitation, which synthesized hatred of socialists and Jews, that Hitler picked up his hysterical anti-intellectualism as well as his fateful identification of Marxism with Jewry.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, it was in pre-1914 Vienna that Hitler “discovered” the decisive role that Jewish intellectuals played in the Marxist parties and arrived at the roots of what he had convinced himself was a satanic conspiracy against the German *Volk*. “The names of the Austerlitzes, Davids, Adlers, Ellenbogens, etc.,” he histrionically recalled in *Mein Kampf*, “will remain forever engraved in my memory.”<sup>31</sup>

Hitler’s racist hatred, which ultimately led to the mass murder of European Jewry, was of course far removed from the actual theories of Austro-Marxism and the praxis of the Social Democratic movement in the Dual Monarchy. Not only did he ignore the pronounced German character of the Austrian Social Democratic party (and its strong emotional attachment to the idea of *Anschluss*), but he clearly knew little about the outlook and attitudes of the Jewish intellectuals prominent in the labor movement.<sup>32</sup>

Far from favoring “Jewish” interests or identifying with other Jews (whether in ethnic, religious, or class terms) the “Jewish” leadership of the Austrian Social Democracy bent over backwards to *dissociate* themselves from their former coreligionists. In order, perhaps, to refute the antisemitic attacks on their leadership, they indulged in strategies either of avoidance, trivialization of antisemitism, or even sophisticated justifications that only revealed the extent of their alienation from Jewry. The founder and leader of the Social Democratic party in the Habsburg Empire, Victor Adler, convert

son of a wealthy Jewish family from Prague and a fervent German nationalist in his younger days, set the tone on this as on other major issues.<sup>33</sup> Adler tried to solve his own personal “Jewish Question” by adopting an official policy of neutrality on all problems involving conflicts between philo- and antisemites. In practice, under Viennese conditions of the 1880s and 1890s, this meant favoring the antisemites against their liberal “philosemitic” opponents. Otto Bauer, who belonged to the younger generation of Austro-Marxists, continued this policy. Writing in 1910, he asserted that “Marx’s essay on the Jewish question [of 1844] already differentiated us sharply from liberal philosemitism.”<sup>34</sup>

The reluctance of the Viennese Social Democrats to recognize the specificity of the “Jewish Question,” especially in its national dimension, reflected two distinct traditions—the optimism of the liberal Jewish bourgeoisie and the class imperatives of Marxist ideology. Both came together in a common antipathy to feudal-clerical antisemitism, the *Ostjuden*, and Zionism. At the 1897 party congress, delegates found themselves dragged (as a result of Lueger’s triumph in Vienna) into an unexpectedly frank discussion of both anti- and philosemitism: it was, interestingly enough, a rank-and-file socialist Jew from Moravia (Jakob Brod) who boldly challenged Victor Adler’s policy of indifference to antisemitism. According to Brod this escapism was one of the causes of the Social Democrats’ defeat in the recent Reichsrat elections.

The party’s strategy, thus far, has been to remove at all cost any suspicion that it is Judaized. We simply wished to demonstrate that we are not slaves of the Jews. But I say to you that even if we live a hundred years, we will never convince the petite bourgeoisie. What have the comrades from the party leadership done to persuade the unenlightened elements that there is a Jewish proletariat alongside the Jewish bourgeoisie? In Vienna, “Jew” and “capitalist” are synonymous terms. I have never known it mentioned in the *Arbeiterzeitung* or at any meeting (shout: Oho!) that the Jewish proletariat is the most oppressed, miserable, and backward of all (Shout: but yes!). I mean, it has not been discussed enough.<sup>35</sup>

Brod’s criticisms, angrily rebuffed at the congress, pointed to one of the fundamental weaknesses of the Marxist Left in attempting to counter antisemitic demagogic. Instead of emphasizing the class differentiation within Austrian Jewry, the socialists frequently equated capitalism and Jewry, along the familiar lines of Christian-Social ideology. Since the *Judengeist*

Victor Adler (1852-1918), founder of  
the Austrian Social Democratic Party  
Austrian National Library



according to Marx, as well as Baron Karl von Vogelsang (Lueger's spiritual godfather), was identical with the "spirit of capitalism," it followed that a consistent antisemite should ultimately wish to join the only party (i.e., the socialists) that was determined in both theory *and* practice to eliminate capitalism. In this way, the Austrian Social Democrats continued (implicitly and explicitly) to flirt with the antisemitic mass constituency, by depicting themselves as rigorous adversaries of "Jewish" (and Gentile) capital.

This use of antisemitic rhetoric under a Marxist veil to undermine adversaries of the labor movement was a dangerous game to play. The liberals, in spite of their own equivocacy on the "Jewish Question," usually resisted such dubious tactics. Socialists, however, were perfectly willing to express an antisemantically-tinged approval for Lueger's crusade against Austro-liberalism.<sup>36</sup> Thus, they periodically denounced the Viennese *Judenpresse* (itself a classic antisemitic expression) as the bastion of liberal capitalist opinion and damned its hypocrisy for opposing the demands of the workers for universal suffrage.

In the eyes of Victor Adler and his colleagues, the *Neue Freie Presse* and "capitalist Jewry" as a whole were more dangerous enemies of the labor movement than the rowdy antisemitic *Kleinbürgertum* of Vienna.<sup>37</sup> Hence their insistence on equating the dangers of "philosemitism" (the defense of "capitalist" Jewry) with those of antisemitism, while striking harder at the liberals. As Jakob Brod put it at the 1897 party congress: "If here and there he (Comrade Dr. Adler) dealt the antisemites a blow, he made quite certain that the liberals came in for similar treatment (Cries of: Quite right!)."<sup>38</sup> The

party leadership rejected this critique, though by then it was increasingly clear that the real danger to the workers' movement came from Lueger's cohorts.

Franz Schuhmeier, the leader of the proletarian populist wing of the party, characteristically declared: "Indeed, the liberals are simply waiting for the moment, when we make the antisemites the sole object of our attack, to rehabilitate themselves." Victor Adler himself reaffirmed that "We have always said: Let the Christian-Socials work, for they are working for us in the last analysis. I still think so, even today." With regard to the Jews, Adler sarcastically asserted: "The special feature of the Jewish Question as it exists here in Vienna, is that the capitalist bourgeoisie has a Jewish complexion. That the Jews must suffer this burden is sad. But we are also tired of always finding Jews in our soup."<sup>39</sup>

Adler's strategy cannot be explained away as a *natural* reaction to the predominantly bourgeois ethos of Viennese Jewry (somewhat exaggerated by the Social Democrats) or to its socio-economic influence. From a Marxist viewpoint it would have been more logical for the labor movement to favor an alliance with "progressive" Austro-liberal elements (among whom the Jews were disproportionately represented) against the feudal-aristocratic ruling classes of Austria-Hungary. But the Social Democrats preferred to exploit the profound unpopularity of the liberals for their own purposes. They obviously calculated that defense of the Jews was not a vote-catching cause in Vienna. Moreover, they assumed that if Austrian antisemitism was merely a temporary expression of *Mittelstand* protest (doomed to disappear) then there was every reason to welcome the Christian-Social victory over liberalism. Why not wait patiently to inherit the Promised Land once the disoriented mass of petty bourgeois awoke from their illusions and turned to the only party which was truly anticapitalist?

The fruits of this strategy would only become apparent after the First World War when a truly democratic suffrage permitted the working classes to assert their full voting power in Vienna. Before 1914, however, the Social Democrats—as the leading opposition to the ruling Christian-Social administration of Vienna—continued to demonstrate a deep ambiguity on the "Jewish Question." The main thrust of their policy was to paint Lueger and his colleagues as hypocritical *Judenknechte* (Jew-lackeys) who did business with rich Jews and cynically hoodwinked the "fools of Vienna"—the same petit bourgeois masses who had put them in power.<sup>40</sup> Lueger was pictured as the Roman Catholic protector of the Rothschilds and Gutmann brothers, the

Jewish barons of high finance and industry. In Marxist propaganda, the Christian Socials were ridiculed as the real *Judenschutztruppe* (“Jewish protective guard”). Viennese Jewry was described in newspapers like the *Arbeiterzeitung* as controlling the metropolitan liberal press, the banks, big industry, the universities, the arts and sciences.<sup>41</sup> The party central organ outdid itself in turning antisemitic demagogic on its head: “If there is anyone to whom one can apply the word ‘Judaized,’ it is to the Viennese mayor.”<sup>42</sup> Its editor, Friedrich Austerlitz (a converted Moravian Jew), took undisguised pleasure in claiming that never had Jewish millionaires prospered so much as under Lueger’s rule. Austerlitz was not entirely mistaken. But his emphasis on the ethnic origin of capitalist millionaires appeared to be restricted solely to Jews.

Socialist use of this type of rhetoric was intended to unmask Christian hypocrisy by inverting a familiar antisemitic terminology. The aim was to expose the gap between words and deeds that typified Christian-Social rule. Unfortunately, the result was that antisemitic stereotypes of radical provenance which equated “capitalist” and “Jew” received a new kind of respectability. They were more acceptable precisely because they were used by those who claimed to be fighting against antisemitism.<sup>43</sup> Far from immunizing workers against Judeophobic prejudices, the Social Democrats were reinforcing the potency of ancient stereotypes in the mistaken belief that ridicule would work to their advantage.

Austro-Marxist attitudes toward antisemitism were profoundly influenced by the desire of many socialists of Jewish origin for full assimilation. They believed that socialism demanded the radical negation of Jewish ethnic particularism, the ostentatious rejection of “Jewish capitalism,” and the repudiation of the Jewish religion. Already alienated from Judaism and Jewry, radical Jews felt obliged to seek a revolutionary solution to the “Jewish Question.” Their critique of modern “Judaized” society could at times sound remarkably like Christian-Social and Pan-German attacks against liberal capitalism and Jewry. True, there were also important differences. Radical Jews, unlike the Catholic antisemites, did not desire the restoration of a Christian corporatist society or clerical rule. Unlike German nationalists they could hardly favor imposing ethnic homogeneity by discriminatory legislation. The socialist response was based on *universalism* and supranational loyalty to the common cause of the proletariat as well as a messianic belief in the definitive overthrow of capitalism. The socialist vision claimed to “transcend” the partiality of the antisemites by postulating a

classless society in which traditional Jewish and Christian identities would automatically dissolve. Marxists incorporated elements of the antisemitic assault on “Jewish” egoism and materialism but subordinated them to a secularized vision of the Promised Land that owed much to Jewish inspiration.<sup>44</sup>

Marxist denunciations of money as a *universal* form of alienation (affecting both Christian and Jew) undermined the insistence of antisemites on singling out “Jewish” materialism as a *unique* and eternal characteristic of Jews as a race. Austro-Marxists had to negate this premise of racial antisemitism if they were not to betray their own core ideology. At the same time their own socialist commitment was sometimes used to hint to the workers that the curse of Jewish “materialism” could be exorcised and purged. They were the living proof that Jews could selflessly devote themselves to universal ideals and to the service of egalitarian values. The socialist Jews followed the example of Börne and Marx, who had first linked de-Judaization (or the purging of Jewish characteristics) with the general cause of human liberation. In fin-de-siècle Vienna, this self-cleansing and radical negation of “Judaism” usually involved a dual assault on the economic “domination” of liberal Jewry and the “reactionary obscurantism” of the ghetto. This is what linked Austro-Marxist intellectuals with the relentless guerilla war waged against the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Ostjuden* (not to mention the Zionist movement) by Karl Kraus, Vienna’s foremost satirist. In both cases Jewish self-negation went hand in hand with a publicly paraded “higher” universalist morality that despised ethnic particularism.

Those leaders of Austrian Social Democracy who had been born as Jews simply eradicated “Jewishness” from their identity. They replaced it with a quasi-messianic faith in the proletariat as the chosen instrument of world history which had first been postulated by Karl Marx. Yet this act of self-negation could not resolve their personal “Jewish problem” in antisemitic Vienna. Their origins still placed them in a precarious position of perpetual self-examination and ultimately of self-denial. Nor could they ignore the exploitation of this issue by their political adversaries (especially by Lueger’s Christian-Social movement) which pushed them on the defensive. Their vulnerability was a revealing barometer of the dilemma inherent in assimilation in the Central European context and the problematic responses to antisemitism that it often engendered. This pattern of behavior also continued under the First Republic. In July 1926, Robert Danneberg, one of the most prominent Jews in the socialist party leadership, made a parliamentary speech

condemning the “Aryan” banks of Vienna for their ties to Jewish businessmen and bankers. “If I know these Jewish banks they do not engage in business dealings with their Aryan counterparts because of ‘Christian charity’, but rather for ‘jingling coins.’”<sup>45</sup> This use of the “Judaization” smear against Jews and antisemites alike so delighted his socialist colleagues that they had Danneberg’s speech published in the form of a pamphlet.

There were only a handful of prominent Austro-Marxists like Max Adler or Julius Braunthal who were sympathetic in the 1920s and 1930s to the aims of the Zionist labor movement in Palestine. They remained the exception to the rule. The dominant trend was always hostile to Zionism as it was to other manifestations of autonomous Jewish existence and to the Jewish community as an economically successful group. The anti-Zionist position was consistently held by the “Jewish” leaders of the Socialist party from Victor Adler and Otto Bauer until Bruno Kreisky in the 1970s. In other words, for a whole century the assimilationist dogma reigned supreme. Friedrich Adler (son of Victor Adler), a renowned physicist and a leading Austrian Social Democrat of the interwar years, writing in 1949 in a Swiss socialist newspaper, summed up its rationale with the kind of obstinacy that still characterizes broad swathes of the radical Left:

I, like my father, always considered the complete assimilation of the Jews not only desirable but also possible, and even the bestialities of Hitler have not shaken my view that Jewish nationalism is bound to lead to reactionary tendencies—namely, to the resurrection of a language which has been dead for almost two thousand years and to the rebirth of an antiquated religion.<sup>46</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Julius Blumenthal, “The Jewish Background of Victor and Friedrich Adler. Selected Biographical Notes,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 10 (1965): 266-76.
2. Abraham Cahan, *Bleter fun mayn Lebn* (New York 1926), 3: 158-63.
3. Ber Borochov, *Ketavim* (Tel Aviv 1955), 3: 265.
4. C. Huysmans, “Sur le Sionisme,” in Bernstein Nachlass (Archive of Eduard Bernstein), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, B. 10.
5. Otto Bauer, “Sozialismus und Antisemitismus,” *Der Kampf* 4 (1910): 94.
6. Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” (1844) in *Early Writings*, introd. by Lucio Colletti (London 1975), 236.

7. The term *Halb-Asien* (Half-Asia) was coined by the Austrian writer, Karl-Emil Franzos (1848-1904). His tales and sketches, entitled *Aus Halb-Asien*, were first collected in two volumes in 1876. Franzos understood by *Halb-Asien* not only a geographical area (including Rumania and southern Russia, as well as Galicia and Bukovina) but a condition in which European culture and Eastern *Unkultur* coexisted.

8. Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Berlin 1927), quoted in his *Romane-Erzählungen-Aufsätze* (Cologne 1964), 559ff.; see also Jack Jacobs, "Austrian Social Democracy and the Jewish Question in the First Republic," in *The Austrian Socialist Experiment. Social Democracy and Austro-Marxism, 1918-1934*, ed. by Anson Rabinbach (Boulder, Colo. 1985), 157-68.

9. Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London 1982).

10. Paul Massing, *Rehearsals for Destruction: A Study of Political Antisemitism in Imperial Germany* (New York 1949), 151; see also, for examples of this viewpoint, Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria* (London 1964), 259; Reinhard Rürup, "Sozialismus und Antisemitismus in Deutschland vor 1914," in *Juden und Jüdische Aspekte in der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, 1848-1918*, ed. by Walter Grab (Tel Aviv 1976), 203-27.

11. See Avram Barkai, "The Austrian Social Democrats and the Jews," *Wiener Library Bulletin* 24, nos. 1-2 (1970): 32-40, 16-22. For a more detailed analysis, see Robert S. Wistrich, "Austrian Social Democracy and Antisemitism, 1890-1914," *Jewish Social Studies* 38 (1975): 323-33; idem, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (London 1976), 95-129.

12. See, for example, *Verhandlungen des sechsten österreichischen Sozialdemokratischen Parteitages* (Vienna 1897), 91-92; and the discussion in Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 265-68.

13. Karl Kautsky to Friedrich Engels, 23 June 1884, *Friedrich Engels Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky*, ed. by Benedikt Kautsky (Vienna 1955), 125.

14. Kautsky to Engels, 22 Dec. 1884, *ibid.*, 159.

15. Wilhelm Ellenbogen, "Der Wiener Antisemitismus," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (Sept. 1899): 418-25.

16. On this point, see Gerhard Botz, Gerfried Brandstetter, and Michael Pollak, *Im Schatten der Arbeiterbewegung: Zur Geschichte des Anarchismus in Österreich und Deutschland* (Vienna 1977).

17. For the full text of Engels's letter of 21 March 1890 to Isidor Ehrenfreund, a Jewish bank employee in Vienna, see *Arbeiterzeitung* (Vienna), 9 May 1890; and *Marx-Engels Werke* (East Berlin 1963), 22: 570.

18. For a diametrically opposed view on the question of “immunization,” see John Bunzl, “Arbeiterbewegung, ‘Judenfrage’ und Antisemitismus: Am Beispiel des Wiener Bezirks Leopoldstadt,” in *Bewegung und Klasse: Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte*, ed. by Gerhard Botz, Hans Hautmann, Helmut Konrad, and Josef Weidenholzer (Vienna 1978), 760.

19. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 250-56. See also Edmund Silberner, “Austrian Social Democracy and the Jewish Problem,” *Historia Judaica* 13 (1951): 121-40.

20. For an elaboration of this point, see Robert S. Wistrich, “Victor Adler: A Viennese Socialist against Philosemitism,” *Wiener Library Bulletin* 27, n.s. no. 32 (1974): 26-33.

21. On the occupational structure of the Jewish and the Gentile population in the Leopoldstadt, see Bunzl, “Arbeiterbewegung,” 743-50.

22. For further details, see the demographic study by Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, N.Y. 1983), 78-79, who argues that Jewish residential distribution in Vienna did not depend on class: “Poor Jews shunned residence in the lower-class outer districts in order to live side by side, if not with wealthy Jews, certainly with middle-class Jews in the Leopoldstadt (II) and the Alsergrund (IX).”

23. Ibid., 43. Rozenblit emphasized that the Galician Jews were not only the most recent and the most religious of the Jewish immigrants to Vienna around 1890 but also had a keen sense of themselves as a distinct group—“an East European outpost in a sea of Central European Jews.”

24. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 309-43; see also idem, “Austrian Social Democracy and the Problem of Galician Jewry, 1880-1914,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* (henceforth *LYIYB*) 26 (1981): 89-124. For the emergence of Zionism in Austria, the most detailed study is by Adolf Gaisbauer, *Davidstern und Doppeladler* (Vienna 1988).

25. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 332-34.

26. Bunzl, “Arbeiterbewegung,” 746-50; and Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 48-70, who pointed out that Viennese Gentile *Angestellte* generally worked for the imperial and municipal civil service, while Jewish employees worked as clerks, salesmen, or managers in the business world.

27. For further details, see Ber Borochov, *Ktavim* (Tel Aviv 1955-66), 3: 496-500, 534, 536.

28. On the electoral swing toward the Social Democrats among Viennese Jews during the First Austrian Republic, see Walter B. Simon, “The Jewish Vote in Austria,” *LYIYB* 16 (1971): 97-123.

29. John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897* (Chicago 1981).
30. See John W. Boyer, "Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews," *LBIYB* 26 (1981): 139-40; and Robert S. Wistrich, "Karl Lueger and the Ambiguities of Viennese Antisemitism," *Jewish Social Studies* 45 (1983): 251-62.
31. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston 1942), 61.
32. For Hitler's encounter with the Austrian Social Democrats in Vienna, see J. Sydney Jones, *Hitler in Vienna, 1907-1913: Clues to the Future* (New York 1983); and Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi Legacy* (London 1985), ch. 1.
33. See Robert S. Wistrich, "Victor Adler: A Viennese Socialist against Philosemitism," *Wiener Library Bulletin*, 27, no. 32 (1974): 26-33.
34. Otto Bauer, "Sozialismus und Antisemitismus," *Der Kampf* 4 (1910-11): 9.
35. *Verhandlungen*, 87.
36. See, for example, Friedrich Austerlitz, "Karl Lueger," *Die Neue Zeit* 2 (1900-1901): 36-45.
37. "Die Neue Freie Presse," *Arbeiterzeitung* (Vienna), 30 June 1893.
38. *Verhandlungen*, 87.
39. Ibid., 92, 101, 103.
40. "Christlich-sozialer Schwindel," *Volkstribune*, 21 Feb. 1906, 2.
41. Friedrich Austerlitz, "Luegers Tod," *Arbeiterzeitung* (Vienna), 11 Mar. 1910.
42. *Arbeiterzeitung* (Vienna), 6 Apr. 1900.
43. See Christoph Hinteregger, *Der Judenschwindel* (Vienna 1926), 23, 56, who argued that "the Christian Socials under Msgr. Seipel's leadership defended...the citadel of Jewish capital...and that Seipel was one of the darlings of the Jewish press." Throughout the interwar period, it was a leitmotif of Marxist propaganda to present the antisemites as being *verjudet* (judaized).
44. Julius Braunthal, *In Search of the Millennium* (London 1945).
45. Robert Danneberg, *Die Schiebergeschäfte der Regierungsparteien; der Antisemitismus im Lichte der Tatsachen* (Vienna 1926), 11.
46. Quoted in "Jewish Background of Victor and Friedrich Adler," 275.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Rosa Luxemburg, Polish Socialism, and the Bund**

Rosa Luxemburg, born in Zamość in Russian Poland (the birthplace of the famous Yiddish poet Y. L. Peretz) in 1871, was the outstanding feminine personality and most vibrant representative of internationalism in the socialist movement before 1914. The daughter of assimilated Jewish middle-class parents, she grew up in a family that took no active interest in Jewish affairs. Polish rather than Yiddish was the language of the Luxemburg household. Her father, Eliasz, a timber merchant with a definite sympathy for Polish national-revolutionary aspirations, moved with the family to Warsaw when Rosa Luxemburg was three years old. Here she was able to enter an exclusive High School for Girls, reserved for the children of Tsarist officers and officials, to which few Poles, let alone Jews, were admitted. Rosa's mother (*née* Line Löwenstein) was a cultivated woman with a passion for classic Polish and German literature, which she inculcated in her daughter, along with a more traditional reverence for the Bible. It is highly possible that her mother's love for the Bible derived from the fact that she was the daughter as well as the sister of rabbis.<sup>1</sup> The Löwenstein family tree reveals indeed an impressive line of rabbinical ancestors, including the talmudic commentator and eighteenth-century *maskil*, Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk.<sup>2</sup>

Rosa Luxemburg, like Karl Marx, never made any public or private references to her rabbinical ancestry. Indeed it appears to have escaped the attention of her various biographers. However, she did mention in one of her prison letters that her mother regarded Schiller and the Bible as "the supreme sources of wisdom" and fervently believed that King Solomon "understood the language of birds." With all the prescient superiority of a clever fourteen-year-old girl, trained in the natural sciences, Rosa Luxemburg attributed this belief to her mother's "simplicity," but, as she later pointed out with touching self-irony, she too had learnt to "understand the language of birds and beasts" during her wartime incarceration in a German prison.<sup>3</sup> Luxemburg would achieve international fame as a left-wing Social Democrat in Germany



Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) addresses a Socialist rally in Germany before the First World War.

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(where she permanently resided after 1898), but her roots were in Poland and it is this background which best explains her attitude to the “Jewish Question.”

Rosa Luxemburg became involved in the Polish socialist movement, *Proletariat*, while still at high school in Warsaw. This led to her surveillance by the Tsarist police and her subsequent flight from Poland to Zurich in 1889. It was here in 1893 that she founded, together with Julian Marchlewski, Adolf Warski, and Leo Jogiches, the SDKP (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland).<sup>4</sup> With the exception of Marchlewski, who came from a patrician background, the central leadership (Warski, Jogiches, and Luxemburg) were all from assimilated Jewish families.<sup>5</sup> This was consistent with the fact that the Jewish urban intelligentsia, along with members of the ruined nobility and petty gentry, formed the elite of the Polish socialist leadership by the 1890s. In the ranks of the nationalist Polish Socialist Party (PPS), founded in Paris in 1892, assimilated Jews like Stanislaw Mendelsohn, Feliks Perl, Hermann Diamand, and Hermann Lieberman played a very prominent role.

The SDKP had originally set itself up as a breakaway splinter-group which opposed the main platform of the PPS, the restoration of Polish independence as a prerequisite for achieving the social emancipation of the Polish working class. The PPS from the outset asserted its all-Polish character and worked for the unification of the socialist movements in Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Poland. It aimed to harness the emotional patriotism of the Polish masses for its own program of national self-determination and the establishment of an independent, democratic Polish republic. The SDKP, on the other hand, as its name implied,<sup>6</sup> restricted its activities to Russian Poland and stigmatized the aim of Polish independence as a “utopian” and reactionary goal. At most it favored cultural-national autonomy for Poland in the framework of a democratic all-Russian constitution.

In her doctoral dissertation, published under the title *Die Industrielle Entwicklung Polens* (1898), Rosa Luxemburg buttressed her opposition to Polish independence with economic arguments, suggesting that the Kingdom of Poland was dependent on Russian markets and that its “organic incorporation” into the Russian state was in the interests of the Polish working class. The Luxemburg group (like the first socialist mass party in Poland organized by Ludwik Waryński in the 1880s) emphasized the need for common action with the Russian revolutionaries and asserted the primacy of international social revolution over national interests. It was in this context that the SDKP first sought to define its attitude to the emerging Jewish labor movement in the Tsarist Empire. The origins of this movement were in Vilna, although subsequently, under the aegis of the Bund, it was able to spread its influence to the Ukraine and Russian Poland, especially Warsaw and Łódź.<sup>7</sup> Like the older Polish labor movement, which to a certain degree influenced its development, Jewish socialism had emerged as a result of growing industrialization in the Russian Empire. There was also the impact of Marxist ideology, and the gradual secularization of Jewish life.<sup>8</sup> The Jewish workers’ movement had certain specific features which resulted from its isolation in the Pale of Settlement and the peculiar demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Jewish population in the Russian Empire.

In Vilna, the cradle of Jewish socialism, the mass of oppressed Jewish workers and craftsmen did not speak Russian or Polish. In the late 1880s an attempt had been made to overcome the gulf between Jewish and non-Jewish workers by the establishment of socialist circles (*kruzhki*) in which the workers were taught Russian literature, economics, and natural sciences. The aim was to produce cadres for the Russian revolutionary movement. But the

“circles” failed to achieve a mass impact. Leo Jogiches (1867-1919), who was Rosa Luxemburg’s lover and closest “comrade” and a “Russified” Jew from a wealthy family in Vilna, had been involved in the activities of the “circles” before his exile to Switzerland.<sup>9</sup> His links with Jewish labor leaders in Vilna continued after his forced expulsion from Tsarist Russia. One of the co-founders of the SDKP with Rosa Luxemburg he continued to follow with careful attention the emerging Jewish workers’ movement in Russian Poland and Lithuania.

In 1893 he published a brochure called the *Four Speeches of Jewish Workers*, which had been delivered in Russian and Yiddish at a May Day rally in Vilna. The brochure appeared in Geneva with an introduction by Boris Kritchevsky. It was almost certainly edited by Rosa Luxemburg.<sup>10</sup> Both Leo Jogiches and Luxemburg, whose ideas are virtually impossible to separate at this time, clearly regarded the speeches as an important expression of Jewish working-class solidarity with the ideals of the international socialist movement. It is therefore worth looking in some detail at the article which Jogiches wrote in January 1894 for *Sprawa Robotnicza* (the organ of the SDKP edited by Rosa Luxemburg) about the Vilna speeches.<sup>11</sup> “In moving words, full of feeling and in the picturesque form characteristic of the Yiddish language, the poor, persecuted Jewish proletarians paint their working-class situation and express their aims and aspirations.” Jogiches then approvingly quotes a Jewish worker denouncing the common yoke of capital which oppresses his brethren as much as the proletarians of other nationalities. There was no question, Jogiches pointed out, but that Russian Jewry was subjected to special oppression by the Tsarist despotism. “Jews are the most deprived of rights and the most enslaved of all the subjects of the Tsar.”

Laws exist which do not permit the Jews entry to a whole range of occupations, which limit their numbers in schools, forbid them to acquire property, etc. We shall not discuss that; although the laws themselves merit condemnation, they do not touch the Jewish proletariat much. But the greatest onus of persecution falls as usual on the backs of the poor working people.<sup>12</sup>

It was the “poor, defenseless Jewish proletarian,” not the wealthy Jews (who could bribe officials to ensure their protection) who received the worst blows. Since the pogrom of 1881 the Tsarist autocracy had unscrupulously used the Jews as a scapegoat for the discontent of other subject nationalities. The most recent example had been the anti-Jewish pogrom organized by the

Tsarist police in Łódź as a pretext for bloodily repressing the strikes and demonstrations by Polish workers.<sup>13</sup> The SDKP in its paper *Sprawa Robotnicza* had praised the Polish workers of Łódź for refusing to become the accomplices of the Tsarist autocracy by participating in the pogrom.

You have shown the whole world that for you a Jew or a German does not exist, that you know your enemies well, the capitalists of all faiths and nationalities—that a Jew like Poznanski or a German like Scheibler are your deadly enemies, but that the poor Jewish tinker or German textile worker are your comrades in misery and oppression.<sup>14</sup>

In a report from Warsaw (July/August 1893) the SDKP organ again noted that

At a time when violent antisemitism is raging in bourgeois intellectual circles, the workers are once more demonstrating as they did last May in Łódź, by courageous actions, that they understand the meaning of class solidarity with the Jewish proletariat and that no prejudices of racial hatred exist for them.<sup>15</sup>

Leo Jogiches emphasized the readiness of the Jewish workers in Vilna to rise above the special anti-Jewish persecutions to which they were subjected. Rosa Luxemburg, Jogiches, and Warski all clearly understood that Jewish workers would scarcely be convinced of their common class interests with the Polish and Russian proletariat unless they had confidence in the ability of the latter to resist antisemitism. This preoccupation becomes clear in Jogiches' commentary on the Vilna speeches, and it also helps to explain the opposition of the SDKP to Zionism.

The yoke which they perpetually bear as Jews could conceal from them the yoke which they suffer as workers. In a word, they could fall into a trap and perceive their chief enemies as foreign nationalities rather than the capitalist class and the Tsarist regime.

This trap might be all the more tempting since a “patriotic” movement had arisen among the Russian Jews under the influence of the Hovevei Zion circles, who were particularly active in Vilna. Jogiches referred in some detail to the polemics of the Jewish workers against this “Palestinian” movement, as it was then called.

The ancestors of Jewry, say the leaders of the Palestinian movement, once lived in Palestine and had their own independent State. In order to free ourselves from the persecutions of the Russian government and

society, we should build up our own independent Jewish State – let us go out to Palestine, let us buy land and arrange things to suit ourselves.<sup>16</sup>

These early Zionists or “Palestinophiles” had told the Jewish workers that only in their own country could they become masters of their own fate and live in freedom and material contentment. If the Jewish workers had been won over to this program, Jogiches observed:

then the Jewish proletariat would dissociate itself from all the Polish and Russian workers. Instead of the class standpoint, it would adopt a nationalistic one and following Jewish patriotism arrive at hatred for other nationalities. The Jewish worker would hate his brothers—the Polish and the Russian workers—he would feel solidarity with every Jew, even if he were a capitalist, his enemy and his exploiter.<sup>17</sup>

From this reasoning it is obvious that Jogiches, Luxemburg and the SDKP leaders considered any form of Jewish ethnic solidarity as inimical to international proletarian brotherhood. This was their fundamental objection to Zionism, several years before it had been given a precise political formulation by Theodor Herzl. Jogiches noted with satisfaction that the Vilna workers had not been seduced by the nationalist program of the “Palestinophiles.” With approval he quoted the argument of the Vilna speakers that they would encounter in Palestine exactly the same social system based on exploitation as in the Russian Pale. Socialism could not be built by emigration but only by proletarian struggle against both Russian and Jewish capitalists.

And so our comrades understand that the rebuilding of their own State will not destroy capitalism, that the working people will continue to be the exploited and persecuted class, that freedom to use their own language will neither feed nor clothe them. As for political freedom, which is indispensable for the improvement of the workers welfare and for the struggle against capitalism, the Jewish comrades also understand clearly that this, not the rebuilding of a utopian Jewish State, is their goal.<sup>18</sup>

Political freedom could only be achieved according to Jogiches and Luxemburg through a *common struggle* by all the nationalities of the Russian Empire against Tsarist autocracy. The fact that Jewish workers in Vilna, “notwithstanding all the national persecution and despite the patriotic agitation,” had nonetheless adopted a consistent class standpoint was

therefore a matter of considerable importance. It was concrete evidence, Jogiches remarked, of “how fertile the soil in the Russian State has become for socialistic agitation, and this fills us with confidence as it regards its further development in the workers” movement.” Even if the “Palestinophile” movement which “recruits its few adherents chiefly among the petty bourgeoisie and a certain part of the intelligentsia” became a movement of “social-patriotic” flavor, Jogiches and Luxemburg were sure that “our comrades will certainly give a sharp retort.” The class solidarity of the international proletariat “will be the answer of our Jewish comrades if the Jewish patriots would want to combine the socialist movement among their co-religionists with national aspirations.”<sup>19</sup> On this common platform of opposition to Jewish nationalism the SDKP welcomed the Vilna workers as “new comrades” to the “international family of the proletariat” and to the struggle against Tsarist absolutism.

Leo Jogiches, Rosa Luxemburg, and the future leaders of the Bund (established in 1897) shared a common belief in the need for united mass action by the Russian, Polish, and Jewish proletariat. This attitude contrasted sharply with that of the PPS, which jealously guarded its independence from Russian Social Democracy and regarded the non-Russian nationalities as its closest allies. At a time when Jogiches was welcoming Jewish workers as “new comrades” of the Polish and Russian proletariat, Józef Piłsudski, the leader of the PPS (and future architect of the independent Polish Republic) was seeking to win them away from “Russian” influence. Piłsudski, in his appeal to Jewish social democrats in 1893, depicted antisemitism as a product of “alien” Russian domination and recalled the historic friendship between Poles and Jews. At the same time (and this complaint was constantly echoed in PPS literature before 1914) he reproached Jewish socialists for their *indifference* to Polish independence and their use of the Russian language.<sup>20</sup>

The PPS was opposed from the outset to the creation of a specifically Jewish organization to protect the interests of the Jewish proletariat. It made considerable efforts to win over Jewish workers in the 1890s by sponsoring propagandist literature in Yiddish, founding a Jewish section in its own party, and even published Jewish newspapers (especially in Austrian-ruled Galicia). But the PPS insisted on the outright assimilation of Jewish workers to Polish culture and their support for the Polish *national* cause. On the other hand, the cosmopolitan Luxemburgist group rejected any form of Polish chauvinism, although it, too, favored linguistic and cultural assimilation as part of its internationalist program. Unlike the PPS, the SDKP did not, however, regard

the emergence of the Jewish Bund in 1897 as a serious threat to its own position within the general workers' movement on Polish soil. The numerically large Jewish proletariat, including factory workers and weavers in Łódź and Warsaw as well as craftsmen and peddlers, constituted an important social stratum in Russian Poland and Lithuania. This fact was well known to the PPS, which now found itself competing with the Bund as well as SDKPiL (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) for their support. It was particularly angered by the Russian orientation which the Bund shared with Rosa Luxemburg. In 1898, the Bund had become a constituent member of the all-Russian Social Democratic Party, which it helped indeed to bring into existence. It was no surprise, therefore that at its Fourth Congress the PPS attacked the policy of the Bund as lacking solidarity "with the Polish and Lithuanian proletariat in the struggle for liberation from the Russian yoke."<sup>21</sup> This was not an accusation that either Rosa Luxemburg or Leo Jogiches would have leveled at the Bund, although like the PPS they sharply disapproved of its "separatist" tendencies as being divisive to the international proletarian movement.

The Bund, for its part, responded at its Third Congress in 1899 by refusing support for an independent Poland, accusing the PPS of seeking to "weaken its independence and undermine its existence."<sup>22</sup> The *Yidishe Arbeter* even published an article by Rosa Luxemburg against the PPS, though it was fully aware that she was critical of Bundist separatism.<sup>23</sup> More significant still, the Bund at its Fourth Congress envisaged a federal link with the SDKPiL, something that would have been inconceivable with the PPS. John Mill, one of the leaders of the Bund who enjoyed close contacts with Leo Jogiches and Rosa Luxemburg, summarized in his memoirs the reasons for the Bund's negative attitude to the PPS:

We, who looked upon the common struggle of all socialist and revolutionary organizations against Tsarism as the most important task...could not accept the distrust of the Russian socialists by the PPS, its unfounded doubts concerning the possibility of revolution in Russia, its chauvinist language.<sup>24</sup>

The Bund, like Rosa Luxemburg and the leaders of the SDKPiL, believed that the liberation of the Jewish masses would come not through Polish independence but only as a result of the victory of socialist revolution in both Russia and Poland. This was the primary reason why both the Bund and the SDKPiL sought a federal link with the Russian Social Democratic Party to achieve these ends.

The SDKPiL was critical of the way in which the PPS treated the “Jewish question,” especially at its Sixth Congress in 1902. A month later, an editorial in the leading theoretical review of the SDKPiL, *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, expressed a sympathetic attitude to the Bund. It argued that this “fraternal organization” was a valuable ally in the struggle to awaken the class consciousness of Jewish workers and defended a common cause. Through the class struggle waged by the Bund, the Jewish proletariat was becoming more aware of its common interests with the Polish proletariat. In that sense the Bund was performing an indispensable integrative function and the fact that “this assimilation must express itself in Yiddish changes nothing.”<sup>25</sup> The editorial observed: “Without the Bund the Polish proletariat would not have such a valuable partner in the struggle as it now possesses in the Jewish proletariat.”

At the same time the SDKPiL, while recognizing the Bund as an “independent fraternal organization” and the “sole class organization of the proletariat” did not share its viewpoint on certain issues. This included the crucial question of whether the Russian Empire should be transformed into a federation of nationalities—a position which led to the rift between the Bund and the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party led by Lenin. There was also a significant difference between the position of the SDKPiL and the Bund on the Jewish national problem. An indication of this difference had already appeared in Leo Jogiches’ comments on the Vilna speeches (1893), made at a time when the national program of the Jewish labor movement had not yet crystallized. Jogiches omitted any mention of the fact that the Vilna speakers also claimed that they were fighting for their nation as well as mankind.<sup>26</sup> The Vilna speeches had included certain references to the history of the Jews as constituting a history of glorious martyrdom. They emphasized that there was no shame in belonging to the Jewish race. By the late 1890s the national component in the Jewish workers’ movement was slowly beginning to crystallize. Julius Martov, the future leader of Russian Menshevism, in a famous speech in May 1895 that has often been seen as the founding charter of Bundism, even described the national “indifference” of the Jewish masses as a hindrance to the awakening of their class consciousness.<sup>27</sup> Martov urged the need to stamp a definite “Jewish” character on the workers movement and to create a specifically Jewish socialist organization. The Jewish proletariat had a national as well as a social role in the struggle for obtaining equal rights for Russian Jewry. It

could no more rely on the Russian and Polish proletariat than it could on the Jewish bourgeoisie to secure the *national* rights of the Jewish masses.

By 1901, at its Fourth Congress, the Bund recognized that the concept of “nationality” applied to the Jews of the Russian Empire. It protested against the “oppression of the Jewish nation,” although it hesitated to define a clear national program, for fear that this might dilute the class consciousness of Jewish workers. By 1903 the Bund had even officially incorporated the demand of Jewish cultural-national autonomy into its program. Though hesitant and often torn between particularism and a more universalist socialist stance, the Bund after 1900 felt obliged to revise its negative position on Jewish nationality. The pressure of Zionist rivalry from the Jewish street as well as Polish and Russian pressures for assimilation from within the general labor movement exerted a major impact. The Bund was now on a collision course with the radically assimilationist Jewish Marxist intelligentsia in the Russian and Polish revolutionary movements.<sup>28</sup>

The SDKPiL (like the German, Austrian, and Russian Social Democrats) appreciated the services of the Bund as an opponent of traditional Judaism, Hebrew culture, and above all, Zionism. It was also sympathetic to the Bund insofar as it was the object of PPS attacks for its alleged role as an agent of “Russification.” The SDKPiL consistently praised the contribution of the Bund to fostering class consciousness among Jewish workers. But it could not abide the increasing cultivation of Yiddish culture by Bundist leaders or their desire to maintain Jewish ethnic identity and a separate organization. The Bund’s championing of Jewish proletarian nationalism in the name of socialist ideals was ultimately the antithesis of Rosa Luxemburg’s internationalist credo.

The SDKPiL wished on the contrary to make Polish Jewry less separatist in its way of life, to bring about a gradual assimilation of Jewish workers to the Polish proletariat. This program clearly entailed the abandonment of Jewish customs and national festivals as well as the adoption of the Polish language and culture. On the issue of “assimilation” the Luxemburgists differed ideologically from the PPS in that they advocated an internationalist rather than a national form of integration. Their approach was more consistent with the Marxist premise that, under socialism, all forms of national differentiation (the result of capitalist class antagonisms) would eventually disappear. In this respect, the positions held by Luxemburg, Jogiches, or Warski were close enough to the orthodox German and Russian Marxists. Significantly, in 1903, when the SDKPiL was seeking a

rapprochement with the RSDRP (Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party), it began to indict the Bund for its "separatism," though its polemics were less strident in tone. The Bund was sharply criticized for failing to see that the closest unity of the proletariat of all nationalities in the Russian Empire must be the priority goal.

Rosa Luxemburg used similar terms to Lenin in attacking the Bund even though she disagreed with his ultra-centralist, monolithic concept of party organization, and negotiations for a merger with RSDRP broke down over Bolshevik insistence on the principle of national self-determination.<sup>29</sup> Luxemburg certainly agreed with Lenin's assessment in February 1903 that the autonomy provided under the rules establishing the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1898 gave the Jewish working class all it needed:

Propaganda and agitation in Yiddish, its own literature and congresses, the right to advance separate demands, to supplement a single general Social-Democratic program and to satisfy local needs and requirements arising out of the special feature of Jewish life. In everything else there must be complete fusion with the Russian proletariat, in the interests of the struggle waged by the entire proletariat of Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Rosa Luxemburg broadly agreed with Lenin's condemnation of the Bund for seeking the "complete separation and demarcation of the Jewish and non-Jewish proletariat of Russia," a policy which the Polish Social Democrats also considered would ultimately lead to division and dismemberment of the working-class movement. As Lenin, Martov, and Trotsky had argued at the 1903 Congress of the RSDRP, the Bund's separatism implied a suspicion that the Social-Democratic convictions of the Russian party were not completely sincere and consistent. There was, however, an inconsistency in the fact that Rosa Luxemburg and the SDKPiL went along with these Russian criticisms and were prepared to advocate the Bund's complete subordination to the centralized control of the Russian party. One of the chief reasons that the SDKPiL itself refused to merge with the RSDRP was that its "Polish-Jewish" intellectual elite disliked the hierarchical structure and rigid discipline which Lenin sought to impose upon the all-Russian party.<sup>31</sup> This paradox can perhaps be explained by the fact that Rosa Luxemburg, one of the sternest critics of Lenin's bureaucratic ultra-centralism in organizational matters, was, if anything, even more centralist than the Bolshevik leader regarding the national problem.

In the Polish context the organizational issue which lay at the heart of Lenin's increasingly violent polemics against the Bund was far less acute. Moreover, the attitude of the SDKPiL was modified by its violent hostility to PPS chauvinism, an opposition which the Bund broadly shared.<sup>32</sup> Thus Rosa Luxemburg could afford to adopt a position of benevolent neutrality towards the Jewish labor movement when it accused the PPS of inflaming antisemitism among Polish workers. The PPS resented the influx of Lithuanian Jews ("Litvaks") into the Kingdom of Poland and the extension of the Bund's influence among Jewish craftsmen, apprentices, and workers in Warsaw and Łódź. It continued to regard the Bund as an agent of "Russification," even accusing it of being a tool of the Jewish bourgeoisie and the Tsarist regime. Rosa Luxemburg sympathized with the Bund's indignation at these charges, the more so as similar accusations had been flung by PPS leaders against her own party.<sup>33</sup> In reviewing a Bund pamphlet against the PPS in April 1903, she pointed out that the Bund's defensive nationalism was simply the reverse side of the aggressive chauvinism espoused by the PPS. Luxemburg warned that it was in the nature of every nationalism, whether bourgeois or socialist, to adopt an exclusivist or hegemonic attitude to minorities in its midst.

Nevertheless Rosa Luxemburg remained critical of the Bund's self-assertiveness as a specifically Jewish organization which claimed to defend the national rights of Jewish workers as well as their class interests. She could not accept that the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of the Jewish proletariat or its special "national psychology" justified the separatist approach of the Bund. In particular, she opposed the Bund's position that there was a need to defend the national rights of Russian Jewry if it was to achieve full civic equality. The achievement of civil rights was an issue affecting the Russian and Polish proletariat no less than the Jewish workers, and it was therefore an integral part of the program of both the RSDRP and the SDKPiL. She was convinced that with the abolition of the Pale of Settlement and the future establishment of a democratic Russian republic, the *raison d'être* of an organization like the Bund would disappear.<sup>34</sup> Its only real justification was in the sphere of local agitation and propaganda among the Jewish masses in the Yiddish language, an area in which the Bund had, according to Rosa Luxemburg, achieved "excellent results." While she despised Zionism as an aberrant symptom of "petty-bourgeois reaction," Luxemburg was not without respect for the Bundists.

Rosa Luxemburg's standpoint was echoed by her close associate Adolf Warski (a future leader of the Polish Communist Party) in a letter written in June 1903 to Karl Kautsky, at that time the leading theoretician of the German Social Democrats. In this previously unpublished letter, Warski urgently requested Kautsky to write an article for the SDKPiL theoretical organ *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* (Social Democratic Review) on antisemitism and the tasks of Social Democracy, "in the wake of the recent dreadful massacre in Kishinev."<sup>35</sup> The SDKPiL feared that the latest pogroms instigated by the Tsarist autocracy might divert the Polish and Russian workers away from the revolutionary movement and incite them against the Jewish population. Russian antisemitism had caused an influx of "Litvaks" into Russian Poland and had thereby aroused nationalistic feelings against the "alien" immigrants. In his letter, Warski emphasized: "The issue has even greater significance for Polish social democracy because the bulk of the Jewish population lives in Russian Poland and Lithuania, as a result of laws which forbid them to settle in other parts of Russia."<sup>36</sup> The Kishinev pogrom, Warski pointed out to Kautsky, also had the effect of reinforcing the separatist tendencies among Jewish workers and especially the national program of the Bund.

The "Bund" has, for example, created a superior organization, thereby bringing much enlightenment and still more revolutionary enthusiasm to the Jewish working class, by means of Yiddish (*Jargon*) and its knowledge of Jewish life in general. But at the same time, ever more nationally inclined, the "Bund" increasingly demonstrated the tendency towards separate party organization and the separatist removal of the Jewish working masses from the working class as a whole in the Empire and its provinces.<sup>37</sup>

The SDKPiL leaders were obviously concerned about the impact of this trend on the united proletarian front against Tsarism. "Now we fear that the recent pogroms will drive the Bund further in the same separatist direction, thanks to its theoretical confusion, though it is more than ever necessary to bind the Jewish working masses firmly to the Russian and Polish [proletariat]." Warski informed Karl Kautsky that the SDKPiL had issued a proclamation to the Polish workers after the Kishinev massacre, denouncing Tsarist antisemitism and calling on them "to defend the Jewish population." But this appeal was made more difficult by the Bund's insistence that it alone could defend the national interests of Jewish workers.

Recently we have got to the point (as have our Russian comrades) that in every town we have two party organizations—Polish (or Russian) and national-Jewish—which can only complicate the tasks of Social Democracy with respect to antisemitism. Quite apart from the question of whether the Jews are really a nation and have a national future in Russia—as the Bund asserts—the problem of party organizations and the relation of the Jewish workers to the working class as a whole—must be solved according to common interests—and not according to burning national interests.<sup>38</sup>

Kautsky responded to the appeals of Warski and Rosa Luxemburg by writing his important article “The Kishinev massacre and the Jewish Question,” which he published in the *Neue Zeit* (the leading German Marxist journal) in 1903.<sup>39</sup> It was also published in *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* and in Lenin’s *Iskra*, becoming a classic statement of the Marxist position on the “Jewish Question” before 1914. Kautsky’s immense prestige as the guardian of German Marxist orthodoxy assured his views an immediate influence. Although he did not mention the Bund in the course of the article (his polemic was primarily directed against the Tsarist autocracy and the divisive role of Zionism), the implication of his line of argument was clear to Lenin and Luxemburg. Both the Russian and Polish Social Democrats interpreted his article as clear disapproval of any separatist tendencies in Jewish socialism and as a decisive support for upholding a united proletarian front against Tsarism. In a letter to Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg reported with satisfaction that Warski was “highly delighted” with his Kishinev article.<sup>40</sup>

Kautsky’s main thesis insisted that the segregation of the Jewish masses in the ghetto was the primary cause of Russian antisemitism. As long as the Russian and Polish Jews retained their “alien” national characteristics they would remain the easiest and most natural scapegoats of the Tsarist regime. The only solution to this vulnerable condition lay in the most rapid assimilation of the Jewish masses with the neighboring Slavic peoples through participation in the common revolutionary struggle. Anything that retarded the fusion of Jewish and non-Jewish workers in the socialist movement was to be condemned. This viewpoint was exploited by Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin even more against the Bund than against the Zionists.

Rosa Luxemburg never drew the crude parallel between Bundism and Zionism as twin forms of “Jewish separatism,” made by Plekhanov, Trotsky, and Lenin. But she undoubtedly shared the central premise of the German and Russian Marxists that assimilation was the only “progressive” solution to

the Jewish national problem in Eastern Europe. In her view (and that of the SDKPiL), any concessions to nationalism could only delay the advent of socialism and retard the class struggle. Antisemitism was not a specifically “Jewish problem,” necessitating a special struggle. It was but one of a whole range of social problems created by capitalist society and the maneuvers of the counter-revolution.<sup>41</sup> As she put it in a polemic against the so-called “progressive” Polish intelligentsia in Warsaw, written in 1910:

for the followers of Marx, as for the working class, *the Jewish question as such does not exist*, just as the “Negro question” or the “Yellow Peril” does not exist. From the standpoint of the working class, the Jewish question...is a question of *racial hatred as a symptom of social reaction*, which to a certain extent is an indivisible part of all societies based on class antagonism.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, the radical transformation of the capitalist system through socialist revolution would automatically solve the “Jewish question,” along with all other problems of ethnic, religious, racial or sexual discrimination.

Rosa Luxemburg continued to differ from the Bund over its growing insistence on regarding the Jews as a distinct national entity with a right to full cultural autonomy. In this respect her position was not substantially different from that of Kautsky, the Austro-Marxists, or Lenin although, for reasons which we have already suggested (notably her intransigent opposition to the PPS), it was slightly more nuanced. Referring in 1910 to an SDKPiL polemic against the Bundist theoretician Bronislaw Grosser, Rosa Luxemburg made it clear that she considered the long-term prospects for an independent Jewish culture in Poland to be hopeless:

The separateness of the Jewish nationality is based in Russia and Poland on the socially backward petty-bourgeois small-scale production, on petty commerce, life in small towns and close links with the religious element. As a consequence, the separate Jewish consciousness which is supposed to be the basis of extra-territorial Jewish autonomy displays itself not through a separate bourgeois metropolitan culture—but through small-town lack of culture. All the efforts to develop a Jewish culture through the initiative of a number of Yiddish publicists and translators are futile.<sup>43</sup>

For Rosa Luxemburg and most of the Jewish Marxist intelligentsia from Russia and Poland the only culture worth fighting for was not that of the bourgeois past or present but the “proletarian” internationalist culture of the

socialist millennium. As she put it in a prison letter of 1917 to Mathilde Wurm, written in Berlin, there was no special corner in her heart for the sufferings of the ghetto. In her eyes the Bund, whatever its merits in heightening the class consciousness of Jewish workers, was guilty, like the Zionists, of seeking to perpetuate the ghetto, and hence its objectives had to be resolutely opposed.

#### NOTES

1. See A. Blick (Shauli), *Me-rosh tsurim. Metaknei hevra al taharat ha-kodesh shalshelet ha-yihusin shel avot ha-sotsialism* (Jerusalem 1972), 76-90 for Rosa Luxemburg's family tree and rabbinical ancestry on her mother's side.
2. Ibid. For some interesting observations on Luxemburg's Jewishness, see H. Arendt, "Rosa Luxemburg 1871-1919" in *Men in Dark Times* (London 1973), 39-61.
3. Blick, *Me-rosh tsurim*.
4. In December 1899, the SDKP (the self-styled vanguard of a virtually non-existent mass movement) was strengthened by the adhesion of the Union of Polish Workers in Lithuania founded by Stanisław Trusiewicz (Zalewski). Henceforth it became known as the SDKPiL (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania). Zalewski's influence was considerable and eventually drew the rank and file of the party away from the more dogmatic Luxemburgist position on the national problem. See also O. B. Schmidt, ed., *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy: materiały i dokumenty 1893-1904* (Moscow 1934), 1: 177-88, 195 ff.
5. Both Warski and Marchlewski had previously been active in the Union of Polish Workers which became defunct in 1892-1893. See Schmidt, *Socjaldemokracja* (note 5 above), vi-vii.
6. M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass. 1959), 23. "The very name was, to a certain extent, a political platform."
7. On the geographic and ethnic factors influencing the predominantly Lithuanian character of the Bund in its early history, see M. Mishkinsky, "Regional Factors in the Formation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Czarist Russia," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 14 (1969): 27-52.
8. There is an extensive literature on the early Jewish labor movement in Russia. It includes A. L. Patkin, *The Origins of the Russian-Jewish Labour Movement* (London and Melbourne 1947); M. Mishkinsky, "Yesodot leumiim be-hitpathutah shel tnuat ha-poalim ha-yehudim be-rusia" (unpl. Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1965); B. K. Johnpoll, *The Politics of Futility. The Jewish Workers Bund of Poland 1917-1943*

(New York 1967); E. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge 1970).

9. Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle*, 35, 40.
10. *Pervoe maia*, 1892. *Chetyre rechi evreiskikh* (Geneva 1893), re-edited with parallel texts in Russian and Hebrew under the title *Arba'at ha-neumim shel poalim yehudim* (Jerusalem 1967), with an introduction by M. Mishkinsky.
11. See L. Jogiches-Tyszki, “Nowi towarzysze,” in *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy. Materiały i Dokumenty*, ed. by H. Buczek and F. Tych, vol. 1 (1893-1903) (Warsaw 1957), 146-52. These passages from the Polish original, which I have translated, have not previously appeared in English.
12. Ibid., 148.
13. Ibid.; see also O. B. Schmidt, *Socjaldemokracja*, 1: 12-14.
14. Ibid., 157, From a report entitled “Święto I Maja 1892 Roku w Łodzi,” *Sprawa Robotnicza*, no. 38 (1894).
15. Ibid., 44, from “Korespondencje z kraju” (Warsaw), *Sprawa Robotnicza*, no. 16 (July/Aug. 1893).
16. Ibid., 149.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 150.
19. Ibid., 152.
20. See *Przedświt* (May 1893), where Piłsudski appealed to the “Jewish socialist comrades in the stolen Polish provinces,” by which he meant the region that once belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.
21. *Robotnik*, nos. 5-6 (1894).
22. J. Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora. Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Vienna 1975), 52.
23. *Yidishe Arbeter*, no. 8 (Dec. 1899). The article, entitled “Der Sozialismus in Polen” first appeared in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (December 1897). Its publication in a Bund newspaper did not of course signify that Rosa Luxemburg’s views on Polish independence were officially supported by the Bund leadership.
24. J. Mill, *Pioner un boyer* (New York 1946), 1: 116 ff.
25. “W. Kwestii żydowskiej” *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy: materiały i dokumenty*, (Warsaw 1961), 2: 85-90. See also *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, no. 3 (July 1902): 21-25.
26. The same omission was made by I. Ignatieff (pseud. of Alexander Israel Helphand-Parvus) in his article on the Vilna speeches, “Russisch-jüdische Arbeiter über die Judenfrage,” *Die Neue Zeit* 1 (1892-1893): 176 ff.

27. On Martov's role in the early history of the Bund, see his *Povorotnyi punkt v historii evreiskogo rabochego dvizhenia* (Geneva 1900), especially 17-19. Also I. Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography* (Cambridge 1967), and Robert S. Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky* (London and New York 1976).

28. See J. S. Hertz, "The Bund's Nationality Program and its Critics in the Russian, Polish and Austrian Socialist Movements," *YIVO Annual of Social Science* 14 (1969): 53-56.

29. The differences between the SDKPiL and the Bolsheviks over the question of national self-determination persisted even after the October Revolution. See Peter Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London 1966), 2: 699-700, 796-97, 851-59.

30. V. I. Lenin, "Does the Jewish Proletariat Need An 'Independent Political Party'?", *Iskra*, no. 34 (15 Feb. 1903).

31. R. Luxemburg, "Organisationsfragen der russischen Sozialdemokratie," *Die Neue Zeit* 2 (1903-1904): 484-92, 529-35.

32. On the Bund's attitude towards Polish independence, see M. G. Rafes, *Ocherki po istorii Bunda* (Moscow 1923), 45. N. A. Bukhbinder, *Istoriya evreiskogo rabochego dvizhenia v Rossii* (Leningrad 1925), 87. During the 1905 Revolution in Russia, the SDKPiL and the Bund did in fact collaborate closely and theoretical disputes were temporarily forgotten. In sharp contrast to the PPS, both parties stressed more than ever the need for unity with Russian social democracy.

33. See Rosa Luxemburg's review of the Bund pamphlet, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna o żydowskim ruchu robotniczym* (London 1903), which appeared under the heading "Krytyka i bibliografia" in *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, no. 4 (Apr. 1903): 159-63.

34. Ibid.

35. Adolf Wars[zaws]ki to Karl Kautsky, 20 May 1903 (unpubl. letter in the Kautsky Nachlass D XXIII, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam). I am the first scholar, to the best of my knowledge, to bring this letter to light.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. K. Kautsky, "Das Massaker von Mischineff und die Judenfrage," *Die Neue Zeit* 2 (1903): 303-309.

40. R. Luxemburg to Karl Kautsky, 6 June 1903, in *Briefe an Karl und Luise Kautsky* (Berlin 1923).

41. R. Luxemburg, "Dyskusja," *Młot*, no. 14 (5 Nov. 1910): 5-7. *Młot* (The hammer) was the organ of the SDKPiL in Warsaw for which Rosa Luxemburg wrote four unsigned articles during October-November 1910 sharply attacking the

"progressive" antisemitism of Andrzej Niemojewski and the free-thinking Polish intelligentsia.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

# The Strange Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum

Nathan Birnbaum, the founder of Austrian Zionism was born in Vienna in 1864 to parents from a religious background with roots in Galicia and Hungary. His father, the son of Polish hasidim, had arrived in Vienna from Krakow with the first wave of Jewish immigration from the Polish province. On his mother's side, Nathan was descended from an old and distinguished North Hungarian rabbinical family whose origins can be traced back to the great medieval scholar Rashi.<sup>1</sup> Educated in Viennese elementary and secondary schools, he soon became estranged from this Orthodox family background though he did not take the assimilationist path typical of most of his adolescent contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> Already at secondary school, in spite of the great influence of German culture, Birnbaum shocked his peers by expressing the conviction that Austrian Jews were not German. They belonged, so he insisted, to a *distinct* nation whose destiny must lead it to regain the land of Palestine.<sup>3</sup> Building on the early training in Jewish studies which he had received at home, Birnbaum steeped himself in Hebrew journals, especially Perez Smolenskin's *Hashahar* and avidly devoured literature about the Jewish national movement in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> The firm belief that Jews were an *ethnic* entity with a unique history and culture that tied them to Eretz Israel prompted the eighteen-year-old law student at the University of Vienna to found Kadimah (the first Jewish national student fraternity in Europe) together with Reuben Bierer from East Galicia and Moritz Schnirer who came from Bucharest.<sup>5</sup> Nothing could have been further removed from the assimilationist assumptions of Marxist internationalists like Rosa Luxemburg than the worldview espoused by the young Nathan Birnbaum.

In 1884, the twenty-year-old Birnbaum issued his first publication, a pamphlet provocatively entitled *Die Assimilationssucht. Ein Wort an die sogenannten Deutschen, Slaven, Magyaren etc. mosaischer Confession. Von einem Studenten jüdischer Nationalität* (The assimilation mania. A word to the so-called Germans, Slavs, Magyars, etc. of Mosaic faith. By a student of Jewish nationality). It was the beginning of a volatile career as publicist,



Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937), the  
first Austrian Zionist  
Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem

editor, and agitator which in its multiple metamorphoses spanned all the major ideological trends in fin-de-siècle Central European Jewish life. For nearly fifteen years Birnbaum was the leading Zionist ideologue in Austria-Hungary, as well as the founder and editor of the first Jewish nationalist publication in the German language, *Selbst-Emancipation!*. It was in this journal that he coined the term “Zionism” in 1890.<sup>6</sup> After disagreements with Herzl which a decade later caused him to leave the newly created World Zionist Organization, he briefly became a protagonist of “cultural” against “political” Zionism. After 1900 he turned increasingly to the autonomist philosophy of “Diaspora Nationalism.” His advocacy of the national autonomy principle eventually led him to develop a full-blown ideology of Yiddishism. In 1908, Birnbaum acted as the initiator and architect of the first Yiddish Language Conference at Czernowitz (Bukovina), where he lived for the next three years.<sup>7</sup> Finally, in the closing years before the First World War, he moved closer to Jewish religious tradition, eventually becoming a practicing Orthodox Jew. In 1919, Birnbaum was appointed the first General Secretary of the anti-Zionist *Agudat Israel* World Organization.<sup>8</sup>

This extraordinary personal odyssey, bewildering in its sharp intellectual turns, marked Birnbaum off from the bulk of his contemporaries. Like another prominent ideological nomad of his day, the Russian-Jewish revolutionary Chaim Zhitlovsky, Birnbaum seemed predestined by such apparent inconsistency to become a forgotten figure.<sup>9</sup> However his constant shifts, doubts, hesitations, and contradictions were in many ways a faithful

mirror of the cultural dilemmas confronting Central and East European Jewry. Furthermore, his originality and breadth of intellectual interests, the prophetic strain in his writings and the intensity of his commitment to Jewish life granted him a special position in the eyes of contemporaries which his difficult temperament and lack of political savoir-faire could not entirely erase.

Birnbaum was adamantly opposed to Jewish assimilation, especially to the mores of peoples whom he considered culturally inferior.<sup>10</sup> In *Die Assimilationssucht*, he denounced in ringing tones the “suicidal” policy of Jewish Germanization, Magyarization, and Slavicization which in his view was based on self-deception, self-abnegation, and the desire for self-dissolution.<sup>11</sup> This “mania for amalgamation” with surrounding peoples was perverse because it deliberately and voluntarily sought to erase the national character and special features of a 4000-year-old Jewish history.<sup>12</sup> According to Birnbaum it was a modern form of “Hellenization” in which the servile imitation of alien cultures assumed pathological proportions unwittingly encouraging the rise of political antisemitism in Central Europe.<sup>13</sup> Birnbaum believed that antisemites regarded such Jewish “mimicry” and self-dissolution as a sign of moral inferiority and an admission of weakness rather than an expression of the desire for integration.

For post-emancipation Jewry the only antidote against the antisemitic virus lay in reawakening national consciousness and in encouraging Zionist colonization in Eretz Israel. Jews must seek national equality as a group in order to regain their inner balance and the respect of other nations.<sup>14</sup> Beyond the issue of self-humiliation (implicit in a policy of assimilation to nations that rejected them) Jews should recognize that they had never merely been a “religious community” or an “amorphous mass of individuals.” Historically, they were a nation with a heroic past and sublime intellectual creations to its name. They had enjoyed the closest physical and spiritual ties with Eretz Israel for many generations. The return to Palestine had for 1,800 years been the focus of Jewish prayers and longings. But by the 1880s, the love of the Holy Land had assumed a more activist and consciously national character. It represented the only salvation for Jews, “a place of refuge for those weary of exile and a pillar in the moral and material sense for those who will remain in exile.”<sup>15</sup>

The young Birnbaum, as a convinced Zionist, naively believed that once the Jews had regained their ancient fatherland, contemporary Jew-hatred would finally disappear from the face of the earth. The whole of Jewry would

then breathe again after a long and fearful millennial nightmare.”<sup>16</sup> Already in 1884 he was pointing to the establishment of new Jewish settlements in Palestine, the growing number of Jewish national associations, clubs, and periodicals in the Diaspora and the revival of the Hebrew language in Eastern Europe as signs of imminent transformation.<sup>17</sup> What was still lacking, in his view, was the common national will to promote large-scale Jewish territorial concentration and agricultural settlement in the Holy Land.

Birnbaum would devote the next decade and much of his doctrinal and propagandist activity in Central and Eastern Europe to the promotion of this Zionist credo. Only a *territorial* center in Eretz Israel, he believed could cure Jewry of the sickness of exile and dispersion. This alone would provide a secure home for the “superfluous” Jews of Europe. A territorial center would not run counter to the social, economic and political interests of Diaspora Jewry. On the contrary, it would increase the loyalty of those who remained behind in their countries of domicile, reinforcing their self-confidence.

In an address delivered at a discussion evening sponsored by the *Admath Yeshurun* Association in Vienna on 23 January 1892, Birnbaum explained “The Principles of Zionism,” making a classic statement of intent:

We are a people without a land and a nation without a soil and that is our misfortune. Our best friends cannot help us when we are being thrashed somewhere, for there is no interfering in the internal affairs of another state. We ourselves are even more impotent and the most that we can do is to stand at the border of the state in question and await our persecuted and expelled brethren with old and new clothes, with soup, coffee and boat tickets to America. This cannot suffice forever. A territory must be found which is truly ours, even if it is under the most modest title of international law. This land must become the focal point of our people which is scattered all over the earth—a focal point and support. All of our fellow Jews (*Stammesgenossen*), whether they go to that country or not, should enjoy its protection; some will benefit from the material gain of a home for themselves, others from the moral gain of a homeland (*Heimat*) for the people as a whole. With a Jewish fatherland the position of Israel among the nations would at once become a normal and respected one, based on the principle of mutuality.<sup>18</sup>

In his concluding remarks, refuting charges constantly leveled by Jewish critics at Zionism, Birnbaum emphasized that the new movement was not “unpatriotic” any more than it was “reactionary,” “anti-religious,”

“dangerous,” or “impracticable.” Zionism would indeed reinforce feelings of local patriotism which Jews already felt for their adoptive fatherlands.

A person who sincerely loves his people has truer patriotic feelings (*Vaterlandsgefühl*) than an opportunist. He who can abandon his people lightheartedly is not reliable. The Zionist seeks a fatherland for the whole Israelite people (*das ganze israelitische Volk*) because the facts demand it but he also loves the fatherland in which he was born, because he lives in it and is more or less protected. The interests of his particular fatherland and of the longed-for fatherland of the Jewish nation do not collide in any way.<sup>19</sup>

Birnbaum’s Zionism in these early years found expression mainly through the Jewish nationalist student fraternity, Kadimah (based in Vienna), and through his editorship of *Selbst-Emancipation!*. This publication was the first Zionist journal in any West European language. It was officially dedicated to “the national, social and political interests of the Jewish people.”<sup>20</sup> Due to its modest means and hampered by a small circulation, the journal stopped publication after fifteen months. Revived in 1890, it continued for four more years in Vienna, before moving to Berlin for publication purposes under a new name (*Jüdische Volkszeitung*)—though it was still edited by Birnbaum—in Vienna. *Selbst-Emancipation!* took up most of Birnbaum’s energy. He served not only as editor but also as publisher, chief contributor, bookkeeper, typist, and office boy. During the first years it was published at his own expense and at one point his mother even sold her kitchenware shop to help cover the costs. Several times Nathan Birnbaum was on the point of bankruptcy and fellow-students would bring him bread to keep him from starving.<sup>21</sup> Poverty would continue to plague his existence. Though he had qualified as a lawyer from the University of Vienna in 1885, Birnbaum never succeeded in law practice, perhaps because his pronounced “Semitic” features discouraged clients in the increasingly anti-Jewish atmosphere of the Habsburg metropolis. Like Herzl, he soon abandoned a legal career, opting in the early 1890s for Zionist journalism and adopting the pen name Mathias Acher. It was a name that symbolized his radical break with religious tradition and also his advocacy of a new synthesis between European modernism, Jewish nationalism, and non-Marxist Socialism.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout its checkered existence, *Selbst-Emancipation!* would be devoted to the didactic propagation of the Jewish national renaissance. In early issues the focus would be on the challenge of antisemitism and on a war against all forms of assimilationism within the Jewish camp.<sup>23</sup> Birnbaum

vigorously contended that the efforts of liberalism to neutralize the “Jewish Question” and dilute the “national, social and religious opposition between the Jews and Europeans” were futile.<sup>24</sup> Not only a millennial Jewish history, but also the natural sciences and political economy, supported his belief in the existence of deeply-rooted *racial* differences.<sup>25</sup> For the young Birnbaum, race was an absolutely central concept of human existence which had produced the *Volksgeist* (folk-spirit) in all its national peculiarities. For example, just as the “Aryan” race-spirit created the *Nibelungenlied*, so in Birnbaum’s view the ancient Jewish *Volksgeist* had brought forth the Bible.<sup>26</sup>

Zionist race-thinking of this type was founded on biological concepts which had become fashionable in an age of positivism that favored ideologies based on the natural sciences. It sought to ground Jewish identity in predominantly secular and “scientific” concepts based neither on the Judaic religious heritage nor on the liberal Judaism of the emancipation era. The fact that antisemites exploited racial arguments did not deter early Zionists such as Moses Hess or Nathan Birnbaum from using similar ideas to refute their claims. Nor did it prevent liberal Jews from accusing Birnbaum of encouraging antisemitism. He turned this particular argument around, suggesting that it was the assimilationist refusal to recognize Jewish national individuality which incited and intensified *völkisch* antisemitism.<sup>27</sup> The undignified effort to *de-judaize* Jewry in order to achieve social acceptance exacerbated what was in any case an irresolvable national antipathy.<sup>28</sup> The attempt to suppress Jewish national and messianic hopes, to stifle Jewish self-criticism, and to reject antisemitism *tout court* (without considering that it might reflect certain realities of Jewish life in Europe in distorted form), was ultimately harmful.<sup>29</sup> Recalling his ambivalent feelings about antisemitism, Birnbaum made a revealing confession in 1902:

There was a time when I regarded Jew-hatred with a certain benevolence. I observed its activity with a kind of pleasure, I was almost happy with its successes and progress. If I did not always express these feelings freely, this was only out of a kind of tactical discretion which I had to impose upon myself so as not to offend too much those whom I wished to win over to Jewish national aspirations. How gladly I would have rather vexed them with the whole truth by calling out: the wicked antisemitic rascals are completely right, their insults you might prefer not to listen to and they are certainly inappropriate in their absolute form, yet they are but the stammering expressions of a very correct feeling that an unbridgeable gulf yawns

between Jews and non-Jews—that both have antithetical ideals of beauty and morality. They are right and we are right and it is good that they storm so. At least we now know where we are.<sup>30</sup>

From a Zionist standpoint, Birnbaum did see some justification in Central European antisemitism. Precisely because his early Zionism aimed at the physical and moral regeneration of the *Golusjude* (exiled Jew), it contained from the beginning a powerful element of self-criticism. This sometimes gave his polemics a degree of affinity to antisemitic argumentation beyond his self-confessed attraction to race-thinking. The dislike of Jewish “Mammonism,” of *parvenu* characteristics, *schnorring*, and vulgar mannerisms provided common ground with the antisemites, as did the critique of assimilation in general. Zionists, like Birnbaum, were however primarily concerned with *changing* these negative characteristics. They sought a more harmonious environment in which Jews would become productivized and recover both their moral and physical balance. Unlike the antisemites, Birnbaum and other Zionist thinkers in Central Europe rejected simplistic beliefs about the “eternity” of racial characteristics or a hierarchy of higher and lower races. Birnbaum certainly did not accept the notion of a permanent degeneration of the Jews. On the contrary, his Zionism was a doctrine of national self-help aiming at the total transformation of Diaspora Jewish life and thought. Zionism, so he believed, could provide a radical therapy for the sickness of *Galut*.

Nathan Birnbaum, in contrast to liberal and Marxist contemporaries, was nonetheless convinced that antisemitism would remain an irreducible historical phenomenon. Neither revolution, assimilation, conversion, reform nor enlightenment could uproot its tenacious persistence.<sup>31</sup> In spite of its undeniable socio-economic components, he emphasized that “Jew-hatred is not primarily an economic but a national phenomenon.” It was essentially a form of national friction and even of “pure racial antipathy,” exacerbated by the dispersion of the Jews and their fundamental powerlessness.<sup>32</sup> Hence the absurdity of efforts at *Abwehr* (self-defense) engaged in by Jewish communal leaders in Vienna, Berlin, and elsewhere in Europe. Their efforts to influence and change the emotional bias of the masses through rational argument and to counter the congenital “need to hate” by enlightened propaganda were doomed to failure.

*Abwehr* could only emerge in rationalist minds, among men who want to explain history armed solely with logic, and who overlook the strength of influences from the life of the instincts and emotions.... A movement which is

based on such pre-instinctual philosophical foundations cannot succeed and therefore it is understandable that *Abwehr* has suffered setback after setback....<sup>33</sup>

Birnbaum's open ridicule of Jewish self-defense against antisemitism was characteristic of early Zionist thinkers immersed in issues of national revival, emigration, and territorial concentration. In a letter of February 1885 Leo Pinsker advised Birnbaum to deal less with the antisemites and to focus more on the moral values, productivization, and national health of the Jewish people.<sup>34</sup> After its third issue, *Selbst-Emancipation!* appeared to be following this suggestion—including a section on Eretz Israel, its climate, conditions, and the development of agricultural settlements during the First Aliyah.<sup>35</sup> The journal began to place greater emphasis on the virtues of manual labor, the need to regenerate the Jewish masses, and the return to the soil as key concepts of Zionism. In his 1892 lecture to the *Admath Yeshurun* association, Birnbaum explained:

Land is the magic charm that arouses in nations a feeling of proud strength, guards them against unnaturalness and utter demoralization, and gives them physical and moral strength. Israel will have to cultivate its soil again; it will develop a peasantry that will enjoy its work and its life. The marrow of this class will rejuvenate the entire body of the Jewish people; the nervousness and distraction that are so frequently found in educated Jews will decrease and the idolatry of money will become less intense.<sup>36</sup>

Both *Selbst-Emancipation!* and its successor, the *Jüdische Volkszeitung*, stressed the need for Zionists to encourage the settlement of Palestine more actively. These journals praised the fertility of its soil and provided detailed information on the progress of the Jewish colonies.<sup>37</sup> Birnbaum himself set off in May 1892 for a lecture tour of Galicia and Bukovina, designed to promote a more energetic settlement program.<sup>38</sup> As part of this campaign *Selbst-Emancipation!* also fought vigorously against alternative colonization plans developed by Baron de Hirsch in Argentina and by other philanthropists who advocated Jewish settlement in the United States.<sup>39</sup> Promoting Zionism as a program of national redemption, Nathan Birnbaum underlined that the “emotions of a whole people are a force”—one which must be used to mobilize the masses.

The cry “Zion” arouses a world of such emotions in the hearts of our fellow Jews and brings out hosts of enthusiastic fighters, whereas the

cry of “America” (if, for instance, one wished to found the new home for Israel there), leaves the Jewish national soul (*die jüdische Volksseele*) cold.... It is also not easy to make a people of farmers (*ein Ackerbauvolk*). Only enthusiasm can overcome this Herculean task; it cannot be undertaken with business-like sobriety. The Jewish farmer will derive this enthusiasm from the soil of his ancestors, whereas the smallest failure will drive him from a foreign soil which means nothing to him.<sup>40</sup>

This quasi-mystical view of the link between land and people—tinged as it was with agrarian romanticism—also assumed that Palestine as a “Semitic country” located in the Orient was especially suited for Jewish settlement.

The Jews are an oriental people. This is where they will feel at home and be able to undertake a cultural mission which, in line with the entire course of their history, belongs to them and to them alone.... [T]hey are qualified to rouse the Orient from its lethargy, restore it to history, and do great work in the service of mankind.<sup>41</sup>

Birnbaum was convinced in the 1890s that only when the Jewish nation was reconnected to its “natural” surroundings in the Orient would its creative energies be fully released and radiate outwards throughout “Semitic” Asia, helping to bring its backward peoples into the orbit of Europe. The “civilizing mission” of the Jews was not, however merely to be an agent of Europeanism but rather to become a true mediator between East and West.<sup>42</sup> Birnbaum remained a sharp critic of the materialistic culture of Europe (which he believed was contrary to the idealism of the “Jewish spirit”). But by returning to Palestine, Jews would become the avant-garde of civilization in its most modern form. Zionism could provide the much desired East-West synthesis. The exodus of idealistic Jews from Europe would help to revive and purify the best of modern European culture through its encounter with the “Semitic” Orient.<sup>43</sup>

Birnbaum recognized that to achieve such a visionary goal, the Zionist movement would have to win the confidence of the Turkish government which then controlled Palestine. However in the 1890s, the Ottoman Turks showed no signs of accepting any large-scale Jewish settlement, let alone political independence for Jews in Palestine-Syria. The Turks would therefore have to be persuaded of the cultural, material and political benefits for the Ottoman Empire in encouraging Jewish colonization into the region. This was one of many insights in which Nathan Birnbaum preceded Herzl.

Not only would incoming Jewish settlers bring positive benefits to the Orient such as industry, prosperity, and education; they could also help Turkey to resist the constant humiliations which it incurred at the hands of the Western powers.<sup>44</sup> By helping the Jews, the Turkish Empire would gain the loyalty of a zealous defender of its leadership in the Orient as well as acquiring a financial bulwark against recurring European violations of its sovereignty.<sup>45</sup> The European Powers, for their part, would find the Jews to be ideal middlemen between themselves, Turkey and the Orient.<sup>46</sup>

Birnbaum's nationalist philosophy developed in Vienna in the early 1890s anticipated—as we have seen—many features of Herzl's Zionist program announced a few years later. Like Herzl, he held that a gradual process of Jewish emigration from Europe would bring the pressure of antisemitism on the remaining Jews to an end. Emigration would also moderate the relentless economic struggle for existence.<sup>47</sup> Three years before Herzl, he argued that the establishment of a Jewish *Heimat* in Palestine would “ennoble and civilize, strengthen and harden the Jews of the Diaspora,” normalizing their position and in the long run making possible far more effective protests on behalf of persecuted Jewry.<sup>48</sup> Once the Jews had their own *national* center, this new homeland would automatically become their advocate and defender in international affairs. Jews would no longer be despised outlaws or free game (*vogelfrei*), whose powerlessness constantly invited antisemitic persecution.<sup>49</sup>

Birnbaum believed, like Herzl, that Zionism was consonant with the universalist traditions of the Enlightenment. He was convinced that the purity of the Jewish national idea would enable Jews to make a much fuller contribution to human civilization, once they were freed from the bitter yoke imposed by antisemitism.<sup>50</sup> Jewish nationalism, he insisted, did not contradict the idea of humanity (*Menschheit*). It was devoid of the aggressive spirit of earlier European epochs and in harmony with the most advanced processes of social development.<sup>51</sup> Only in an independent Jewish homeland, would Jews finally be able to develop their distinctive social and ethical genius for the greater welfare and redemption of mankind.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike Herzl and most other leading “Western” Zionists of the period, Birnbaum had been markedly influenced in his youth by Socialist teachings. Indeed he devoted considerable attention to the challenge of Marxist Social Democracy, seeing it as a serious rival for the hearts and minds of Jewish youth.<sup>53</sup> Typically, in his seminal lecture on the “Principles of Zionism” (23 January 1892) Birnbaum criticized those Social Democrats who repeatedly

vilified Zionism as a narrow-minded, reactionary form of bourgeois nationalism:

The Zionists are Nationalists in that they want to help their people to engage in cultural competition with other nations on an equal footing. Nationalistic in this non-aggressive sense, a Zionist may even espouse Socialistic principles in the realm of economics, but he will never be able to accommodate himself with official Socialism which decrees that existing national differences and the consequent differences in morality and temperament should be disregarded and the social question should therefore be solved in a stereotyped way. This error of official Socialism becomes especially glaring with regard to the Jewish Question, which is supposed to be solved automatically along with the social question.<sup>54</sup>

Birnbaum firmly rejected the belief of the German Marxist leader August Bebel that the victory of Socialism was imminent. Nor, in his opinion, was there any sound basis to the universalist Marxian dogma that antisemitism was ultimately a function of the crisis in the capitalist system or that under Socialism it would simply evaporate. Birnbaum warned that this was an unwarranted utopian assumption:

It is not true because the peculiarities, weaknesses, whims, sympathies and antipathies of the nations will naturally persist even in a Socialist society, and thus Jew-hatred will not be buried either, for it is deeply ingrained in the psyche of the peoples. In fact, the Jews will be even worse off in a Socialist society unless their specific Jewish Question is solved first. Only the national rebirth of the Jewish people can prevent antisemitism from being dragged into the Socialist era, where it would be even more dangerous because of the omnipotence of the people's will as represented by public officials.<sup>55</sup>

In his lecture, *Die Jüdische Moderne* (7 May 1896) to the students of Kadimah in Vienna, Birnbaum elaborated on this theme at greater length. He acknowledged the importance of Karl Marx's historical materialism for understanding society, economics, and human evolution in general. But he suggested that Marxism ignored "the history of man as a racial being."<sup>56</sup> Nationality and race were no less potent historical factors than social and class conflicts. Birnbaum once again maintained that "the firm foundation of nationality is always and everywhere race, whether a pure or a mixed race (*einheitliche oder Mischrasse*)."<sup>57</sup> In the course of development, races

became “ennobled” and attained the level of a “nationality,” which had “nothing to do with the state or language.”<sup>58</sup> Hence, there was no validity in the Marxist denial of the Jewish national movement on the grounds that Jews lacked their own state, territory, or a unified national language. For the proof of the existence and reality of the Jewish people was rooted precisely in its “racial quality.”<sup>59</sup> Birnbaum even proclaimed that the Jews had “the strongest national feeling of all peoples, which is natural enough from the materialistic standpoint, since it is racially the most strongly distinct nationality.”<sup>60</sup> This distinctness guaranteed that antisemitism would survive, even in a new Socialist order. After all it was grounded not only in “Jewish character” but in national tensions, racial antipathies, and in the age-old dispersion of the Jews. Social Democracy could offer no practical solution to the “Jewish Question” except to wait for the promised revolution. But the Jews required a much more immediate remedy for their plight.

In the 1890s, Birnbaum nonetheless regarded himself as a quasi-Socialist within the Zionist movement, deeply concerned with the economic and social regeneration of the Jewish people. To a degree he shared the Socialist hostility toward feudal values, clericalism, laissez-faire liberalism, and the materialist ethos of bourgeois society. For Birnbaum it was self-evident that there should be no room for stock-exchange Jews, private enterprise, or “profiteering” in the settlement of Eretz Israel.<sup>61</sup> He identified with agrarocentric, anti-industrial, and Socialist theorists like Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, Henry George, or the German “Kathedersozialisten.” He also looked to Palestine as being much more than a refuge from antisemitism. It was also the only possible center in which to build up a class of free and independent Jewish farmers. The creation of a healthy peasant stock was indeed regarded by Birnbaum as indispensable for a solid and organic national development. The return to the Land would free Jewry from the curse of “Mammonism” and the commercial, speculative spirit that prevailed in so many quarters.<sup>62</sup> These assumptions had much in common with the German Socialist and first modern Zionist, Moses Hess, as well as with *völkisch* antisemites who were becoming more prominent in fin-de-siècle Germany and Austria.

Birnbaum’s critique of the assimilationist Jewish upper classes in Vienna whom he accused of vulgar materialism and parvenu lack of tact, reflected the anti-capitalist and anti-urban bias of German intellectuals in Central Europe.<sup>63</sup> But there was still a considerable gap between populist anti-Mammonism tinged with “Socialism” and the doctrine of class-war

advocated by the Marxist labor movement.<sup>64</sup> The gulf was still greater between the internationalism of Rosa Luxemburg and Birnbaum's conviction that ethnic differences were primordial. His own socialism, like that of Moses Hess, was firmly predicated on the primacy of national liberation. This led him to regard German and Austrian Social Democracy as dangerous rivals to the Zionist movement. Birnbaum was particularly aware of the charismatic appeal which revolutionary radicalism exercised on Jewish youth in Eastern Europe. Hence he sought to incorporate calls for social reform and greater economic equality into his Zionist credo while rejecting "cosmopolitanism" and violent confrontation with the capitalist system.<sup>65</sup> Birnbaum knew that the *Zukunftsmausik* of the Social Democrats (especially their promise of universalist redemption) had awakened a powerful echo in Jewish hearts attuned by centuries of suffering to messianic chords of hope. Birnbaum feared, not without reason, that the Marxist mirage might prove even more destructive than the liberal dream of assimilation.<sup>66</sup>

The inroads of Social Democratic propaganda among impoverished Jewish workers in Austro-Polish Galicia at the turn of the 20th century made this danger to the young Zionist movement more concrete. Polish Socialists led by Ignacy Daszyński, sought to encourage class-consciousness among the Galician Jewish proletariat as a step towards their eventual absorption into the Polish nation. Both Birnbaum and the Krakow-born Socialist Zionist, Saul Raphael Landau (1869-1946), opposed this campaign as detrimental to the national interests of Galician Jewry.<sup>67</sup> They maintained that Jews had bled long enough in the social and national liberation struggles of other peoples. It was an illusion to believe that such participation could ever lead to the elimination of antisemitism or could end social inequalities, economic exploitation, and mass poverty in general.<sup>68</sup>

Zionism, on the other hand, aspired to a synthesis of Jewish patriotic and religious traditions with those democratic ideals that would eventually overcome "the materialistic and egoistic mode of thinking of European society."<sup>69</sup> It sought the national redemption of *all classes of Jewry* in an independent homeland, an ideal for which Marxist Social Democrats like Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, or Victor Adler displayed no empathy at all. The strike of the *tallith* weavers in Polish Galicia during the summer of 1892 was a case in point.<sup>70</sup> The cause of the strikers, who worked fifteen hours a day in appalling conditions for wages of one to three gulden a week, was eagerly taken up by Austrian and Polish Socialists who organized collections on their behalf.<sup>71</sup> *Selbst-Emancipation!* acknowledged these efforts to better

the conditions of the Galician proletariat but pointed to the danger that Social Democracy might gain a firmer foothold among their co-religionists, unless Zionists provided a credible solution to the social problem.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, Birnbaum warned readers against the chimera of class-struggle emphasizing that as long as Jews remained in *Galut* (exile) they would continue to be “a dependent and unprotected minority.”<sup>73</sup>

Birnbaum was still skeptical at this stage of efforts by some Zionists to try and organize Jews as an independent political factor in Galicia.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless he realized that local Jewish political activity in a national framework might be a necessary and useful adjunct to colonization in Palestine.<sup>75</sup> The growth of the Zionist movement in Galicia and the claim of its leaders that the leadership in Vienna had no understanding of local conditions in the Polish province, led to a shift in his position. In the summer of 1892, Birnbaum traveled through many cities in Galicia and Bukovina, founding new Zionist clubs and promoting the idea of unifying *Hovevei-Zion* groups in one national organization.<sup>76</sup> Together with Abraham Salz, the chairman of the executive committee of the Galician Zionists, he convened a conference to defuse tensions, in Krakow on 1 November 1893.<sup>77</sup> The conference clarified the principles, the means of information, and methods of propaganda to be adopted by the “Organization of Austrian Zionists.”<sup>78</sup> The Austrian Zionist Party declared as its first basic principle, the striving “for the resurrection (*Wiedergeburt*) of the Jewish nation and ultimately the reconstruction of Jewish communal life (*Wiederherstellung des jüdischen Gemeinwesens*) in Palestine.” At the same time it also recognized the “duty of guarding the political, social and economic interests of the Jews of Austria.” Resolutions were also adopted calling for the “abolition of the present guild system in Austria,” proclaiming opposition to the *numerus clausus* and demanding the abolition of Sunday as an obligatory day of rest for Jews. The conference called for participation by Zionists in elections, the publication (in Yiddish) of a pamphlet to enlighten the masses about electoral reforms, and for the submission of a petition to the authorities to recognize “those individuals who read and write Hebrew,”<sup>79</sup> as being literate.

By 1892 Birnbaum had already crystallized a program of political Zionism which sought to combine legal guarantees for a Jewish home in Palestine with participation in Austrian politics.<sup>80</sup> Zionism had to be put on the *international agenda* in order to overcome the obstacles created by the Turkish government to any further Jewish settlement in Palestine. No less importantly, Zionism had to propagandize and organize itself among the

Jewish masses as a *political* movement. It had to become more involved in the Austrian electoral system without losing sight of the “final goal.”

Birnbaum firmly held that the fight of Austrian Jews for their collective rights, and for a national home in Palestine, were objectives attainable by political agitation.<sup>81</sup> The immediate goal of a centralized Zionist party organization was not simply to achieve external diplomatic successes but also to encourage self-education and enlightenment. In pursuing this purpose, Birnbaum regarded Vienna as the natural center for the Zionist movement:

Vienna lies on the frontier between East and West in Europe. It lies in the midst of a Jewish population numbering millions; it is the point where German and Russo-Polish, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewry meet and can best be united in common work; it is as if born to be the centre of Jewish national agitation—which for a long time will have to be the chief preoccupation of our movement. Vienna is moreover a German city, which is of the greatest significance for the winning over of the very important German-Jewish element in Austria and Germany. Finally, Vienna is the capital of a nationalities’ state, and hence incomparably more suitable for our movement than, for example, Berlin.<sup>82</sup>

In 1900, Vienna also seemed far better placed than London, New York, or Paris to be the bridge between Russian and Western Jewry, especially since its geo-political position gave it such close proximity to the heartland of the Jewish masses. It was irrelevant, Birnbaum insisted, that the bulk of Viennese Jewry did not support the movement. Zionism could never expect much sympathy from the millionaire stock-exchange Jews, the liberal rabbis (*Seelsorger*), or journalists of the *Neue Freie Presse*, who “hate every national movement of an oppressed people and grudgingly surrender only in the face of success.”<sup>83</sup> Nor did it matter that Vienna was not the center of international politics and lacked a tradition of encouraging movements for national self-determination such as had long existed in London or Paris. It was much more important for Zionism at this early stage to concentrate on education, internal consolidation and the centralization of its meager resources.<sup>84</sup>

Birnbaum emphasized that the assimilationist leaders of fin-de-siècle Viennese Jewry like the so-called liberal *Judenpresse* feared Zionism as a “danger” to their position. It was no less threatening to them than Socialism or anarchism. Though the Zionists in Vienna were still only a *Privatpartei*, limited to a relatively narrow circle, the Jewish leadership fulminated against

them as unwelcome disturbers of the “sweet tranquility and comfortable prosperity of Viennese Jewry.”<sup>85</sup> They were seen by the establishment as rebellious trouble-makers and upstarts whose aims, argumentation, and methods seemed to reinforce those of the nationalist and Catholic populist antisemites. Hence they were a threat to the hard-earned status of “Mosaic Germans.”<sup>86</sup> Against this noisy Zionist challenge, Jewish notables and press barons relied on the time-honored Viennese tactic of *totschweigen*—attempting to kill the movement by silence. Herzl was to experience a very similar response only five years later.

Birnbaum remained confident that this establishment strategy of silence would not succeed. In the Austrian provinces, above all in Galicia, the Zionist movement had encountered a fertile soil and relatively receptive public opinion which augured well for the future.<sup>87</sup> However, Vienna remained “the key to the Jewry of Austria,” for even in the more remote provinces of the Empire, the magic of its name exercised a remarkable spell over Jews on the periphery. Hence the crucial importance for the Zionist movement of increasing its strength in the Habsburg capital.<sup>88</sup> Viennese Zionists would therefore have to extend their appeal beyond student circles and reach out to all classes of Austrian Jewry. It was their task to counteract “the lack of idealism among Austrian Jews” and the indifference of the assimilationists to Jewish history and literature by energetically promoting associations whose goal was the cultivation of “Jewish science and consciousness.”<sup>89</sup> Along with the creation of *Colonisations-Vereine* that specifically encouraged the settlement of Palestine, Jewish cultural associations were a potentially important avenue for the spread of Jewish national feeling into broader strata of the population. So, too, were the religious organizations of the Jewish community. Zionists could not remain indifferent as a “national-social Party” within Jewry, to such key institutions as the Viennese *Kultusgemeinde*. Though the official Jewish community might be based on “the fairy-tale of a de-nationalised ‘Mosaic confession,’” such institutions still provided a nucleus for preserving national character and the residues of traditional solidarity within Jewry. Hence, the task of Zionism, Birnbaum contended, must be to transform “confessional communities” into new autonomous foci of Jewish national life, culture, and science, into working centers for “the future of our people.”<sup>90</sup>

The intensification of national conflicts in the Habsburg Empire, proposals for electoral reform, and the crisis of the parliamentary system also forced Austrian Zionists to reexamine questions of everyday politics.<sup>91</sup> In February

1891 Birnbaum had argued that Zionists could not remain indifferent to the outcome of *Reichsrat* elections. Though the final goals of their movement transcended issues concerning the reform of the Empire, Zionists—both as patriotic Austrian citizens and Jews—had to place the interests of the Habsburg State before those of “blind party fanaticism.”<sup>92</sup> As Jews they naturally preferred political parties which defended the cause of freedom and equality while repudiating antisemitism. In Vienna districts this meant backing Liberals against Jew-baiting candidates. It was evident to Austrian Zionists that they must favor the “democratic” camp rather than their rivals, who had turned to crude antisemitic demagogic. However in mixed nationality areas, Jews would have to decide in terms of their own national interests whether to back Germans or Czechs, Poles or Ukrainians, Italians or Slavs.

Birnbaum argued in the early 1890s that the Zionists themselves were far too disorganized and ill-prepared to engage in any intensive manner in Austrian electoral politics. Nevertheless having a few deputies in the *Reichsrat* would be useful for the cause even if electoral politics was no panacea for the ills of the exile, and no substitute for territorial concentration in a Jewish homeland.<sup>93</sup> Electoral participation would be a palliative to ease the sufferings of the *Galut* and a way to raise the national consciousness of the Jewish masses.<sup>94</sup> For all that, Birnbaum remained strongly opposed to the growing tendency (even among Liberal Jews) towards a “Jewish politics” based on self-defense against antisemitism. He observed that representatives of this trend had been forced by general political conditions to recognize the bankruptcy of Austro-liberalism, while remaining as hostile as ever to the Jewish national movement.<sup>95</sup>

By the mid-1890s Birnbaum had built up a small circle of disciples in Vienna, Berlin, and Galicia as well as establishing contacts with leaders of the fledgling *Hovevei Zion* movement in many European countries. A brilliant speaker and tireless worker for the Zionist cause, he had clearly emerged as its most prominent intellectual voice in Austria and Germany. His lecture in Vienna on *Die Jüdische Moderne* was widely considered to be an outstanding exposition of the Zionist cause. As always, he was critical of the failure of emancipated Jews to understand their real situation in Europe.

When we compare the so-called assimilated Jews with their surroundings, we find a similarity between them only in that circle of ideas and emotions common to all civilized European peoples (*Kulturyölker*)—but this similarity is almost completely absent when

it comes to the national peculiarities of individual nations. The assimilated Jew has more or less the same extensive needs, social conscience, political maturity, bold scientific outlook, refined epicureanism and purified artistic taste...of the cultured European. But he does not possess, or at least only to a very small degree, the robust defiance and formal pedantry of the German, the élan and frivolity of the Frenchman, the elemental simplicity and melancholy of the Slav.<sup>96</sup>

For Birnbaum, the Europeanization of the Jews had not led to genuine assimilation to any specific national culture. Instead, it had merely increased antisemitism and Jewish insecurity. Only through Zionism, he told his student audience, could Jews truly become integral and authentic *Kulturmenschen*. Birnbaum was especially preoccupied with the *cultural* and *spiritual* dimensions of the “Jewish problem” which he now considered more important than Palestinian colonization programs or party-political Zionism.<sup>97</sup> Despite this shift, he initially welcomed Theodor Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat*, sympathizing strongly with its clarion call for Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and its bold outline of the organizational means to achieve this goal. In particular, he identified with Herzl’s vision of the *international* dimensions of the “Jewish Question” and the need for a comprehensive, legal-political solution that would finally end the pariah status of the Jews, thereby normalizing their position.<sup>98</sup> Herzl’s watchword of economic and political independence for Jews in their own sovereign State seemed to complement and confirm exactly what Birnbaum had been saying for more than a decade.

At first, the two men did cooperate and Birnbaum was invited by Herzl to deliver an address on “Zionism as a Cultural Movement” at the First Zionist Congress in Basle (1897). In this speech, Birnbaum continued his critique of “abstract Europeanism” first expressed in *Die Jüdische Moderne*.<sup>99</sup> He envisaged Zionism as a synthetic movement of national renaissance which would breathe the spirit of Western progress into the ghetto Jewry of Eastern Europe and bring renewed life to the “dead Europeanism” of Western Jewry.<sup>100</sup> In this way, the “Europeanism” of Western Jews would become fruitful and the national culture of the *Ostjuden* could finally emerge from its stagnation.<sup>101</sup> Through possession of their own land Western Jews might free themselves from the curse of “ruthless Mammonism” and the *Ostjuden* would be rescued from the blight of endemic pauperism. This would enable the ghetto culture of the East to be transformed with the help of Western Jews into a secular national culture integrating the highest political, technical and

aesthetic achievements of Europe with Biblical teachings of social justice.<sup>102</sup> No other people were better prepared than the Jews, with their inherited oriental character and acquired European education, to act as *mediators* between East and West. There was no land more suitable for this role than Palestine, which, as Moses Hess had pointed out three decades earlier, stood at the confluence of three continents in close proximity to the Suez Canal.<sup>103</sup>

At the First Zionist Congress in 1897, Birnbaum was elected Secretary-General of the Zionist Organization. Yet within a year he had left the movement, after Herzl opposed his re-election. The friction between the two was as much personal as political, rooted in different social backgrounds, material circumstances, temperament, and outlook.<sup>104</sup> Birnbaum undoubtedly felt betrayed when members of Kadimah and other Zionist groups in Vienna pledged unconditional loyalty to Herzl, a newcomer to the cause and in many ways still a stranger to Jewish life. He came to see in Herzl nothing but a power-hungry tyrant and usurper who had seized the “crown of Zion” while propagating ideas that Birnbaum himself had been preaching for years.<sup>105</sup>

Birnbaum had no desire to play the role of a lieutenant rather than a leader of the movement he had done so much to initiate. His envy was aroused by the lightning speed with which Herzl succeeded in firing the enthusiasm of the Jewish masses and of Zionist youth in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>106</sup> Virtually all the Jewish national fraternities, beginning with Kadimah, Ivria, Gamalah, and Libanonia, fascinated as they were by Herzl’s personality and vision of a Jewish State, had quickly declared their support for his project. On 21 July 1897, Birnbaum acknowledged in a letter to his friend, Siegfried Werner, that it was impossible to counter Herzl’s influence by “open resistance” and that calm, patient work would be necessary to gain more support for an oppositional trend.<sup>107</sup> In the meantime he had declared his agreement to the calling of the First Zionist Congress as a historic step in transforming the Jewish community into a national entity with an organized will of its own.<sup>108</sup> During preparations for the Basle Congress, Birnbaum still identified himself with Herzl’s *étatisme* and rejection of gradual “infiltration” in Palestine.

Birnbaum did not immediately abandon hope for a common “socialist” front against Herzl at the First Congress. On 28 July 1897, Werner writing from Vienna to Birnbaum in Berlin quickly disabused him, pointing out that except for Saul Raphael Landau, the first Editor-in-Chief of *Die Welt*, there was no support among the Viennese Zionists for more radical positions.<sup>109</sup> In a subsequent letter from Vienna (dated 5 August 1897) Werner mentioned

Landau's plans to create a "Social-Zionist group" within the movement which would be centered around Birnbaum and the Swiss Socialist Zionist David Farbstein.<sup>110</sup> Landau, he observed, also hoped to win backing for his more leftist views from the Galician Zionists.<sup>111</sup> Birnbaum's own ambitions were, however, quickly dispelled as Werner came under Herzl's influence.<sup>112</sup> Replying to Werner on 15 August 1897 Birnbaum now described Herzl as "a real bourgeois and an opportunist despite his radical tendencies," who would soon turn to the Right.

This would drive us Leftists into open opposition and we would stand no chance for the time being. We can only make headway if people regard us as the closest allies of Herzl.<sup>113</sup>

In the same letter, Birnbaum declared that Zionism really had nothing to do with domestic politics "but Zionists, who after all are also human beings and Jews, should participate in political life—if possible, within a Jewish social *Volkspartei*...."<sup>114</sup> Like Landau, he emphasized the importance of the "social question" for Zionism and the need to free the Jewish proletariat from the degrading conditions imposed on it by the exile. He suggested that if Socialism was the wave of the future, it would also be adopted in the Jewish state. But he was obviously reluctant to lead a socio-political fraction at the First Zionist Congress in open opposition to Herzl. The same hesitancy was exhibited by Saul Raphael Landau, Isidor Schalit, David Farbstein, and Nachman Syrkin. They all opposed "bourgeois Zionism" but their allegiance to the movement as a whole proved greater than to any single faction within it.

Birnbaum's wretched material circumstances acted as a serious brake on any hopes of challenging Herzl's leadership. Unlike Herzl, who was able to finance the Zionist congress and *Die Welt* as well as the wages of his collaborators and most of his political work largely from his own pocket, Birnbaum was frequently unable even to buy food and medicine for his own children.<sup>115</sup> This discrepancy in their material position undoubtedly intensified his burning resentment of Herzl. He complained bitterly to Werner:

If Dr. Herzl—who with his strong character and capacity for enthusiasm possesses a very hard, un-Jewish heart—had to spend only one day as I have been living for the past years...I feel sure that he would sing a different tune. But then, he would not have become so famous....<sup>116</sup>

At the First Zionist Congress in Basle matters came to a head, with a motion proposed by Isidor Schalit that the Secretary-General (Birnbaum) be elected by the Congress and have a vote and seat on the *Aktionskommittee*.<sup>117</sup> The motion which implied that the Secretary-General, as trustee for the Congress, would in Herzl's words "counter-balance the other twenty-two members of the Executive Committee," was voted down.<sup>118</sup> Birnbaum was indeed elected to the top leadership, the Viennese *Aktionskommittee* (along with Herzl, Moritz Tobias Schnirer, Oskar [Oser] Kokesch, and Johann Kremenzky) but could not retain this position under Congress rules and at the same time remain Secretary-General. Birnbaum's forced resignation from the *Aktionskommittee* provoked a demonstration by his friends, one of whom publicly announced:

Dr. Birnbaum must have the mandate. We should not accept his resignation. Without Birnbaum there would be no Herzl, no Zionist movement in Austria.<sup>119</sup>

Clearly, given the prevailing antagonism, Herzl could not work for long with such a rival as his General Secretary. Within a year Birnbaum had left the movement. He no longer attended Zionist Congresses or contributed again under his own name to *Die Welt*, the new Zionist newspaper founded in Vienna by Herzl. Nevertheless, Birnbaum still saw himself as a Jewish Nationalist. Like Ahad Ha'am, the leading adversary of Herzl within Russian Zionism, and Bernard Lazare, the revolutionary French Zionist who broke with the movement in 1899, Birnbaum would continually stress the cultural goals of the Jewish national renaissance rather than *Realpolitik* and high diplomacy.<sup>120</sup> He began to take fundamental issue with the Zionist "negation of the Diaspora," proclaiming that *Israel geht vor Zion* (Israel comes before Zion)—the needs of the Jewish people must have precedence over the creation of a national centre in Palestine. The *Galut* should no longer be downgraded "simply as valuable cultural manure for just one potential culture in a soil which is not yet ours."<sup>121</sup> Jewish nationalism had to become more much concerned with the *here-and-now*, with an appreciation of the central core of the Diaspora experience—the lives of the impoverished masses of East European Jewry.

At the First Zionist Congress in 1897, Birnbaum had already acknowledged the "national individuality" and "unique culture of East European Jewry (at the time, three-fourths of the world Jewish population)—"expressed in costumes and language, literature and art, customs and traditions, in religious, social and legal life...."<sup>122</sup> But he was still highly

critical of its self-enclosed ghetto existence and pessimistic about its future. However, once he left the Zionist movement he adopted a Jewish Diasporic nationalism based on the centrality of the *Ostjuden* and their vibrant folk-culture.

When I found them [the *Ostjuden*] to be a people with all the signs of a live, separate nation, it became more and more clear to me that a nation that already exists does not have to be created again *de novo*; and that what is of principal importance is preserving its life. Thus I developed my *Golus* Nationalism. In Western Europe I stood up for Eastern European Jews, pointing out their lively folk-existence and I requested of the latter that they guard what they possess and especially that they should not destroy it for the sake of dreams of the future.<sup>123</sup>

Birnbaum's new theory of pan-Judaism (*Alljudentum*), worked out between 1902 and 1905, sought to embrace Jewish national and cultural life throughout the Diaspora. He now hoped for the recognition of World Jewry as a "nationality" by the Great Powers. Reversing his earlier views about the inevitability of Jewish assimilation outside Palestine, he argued that the demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and political factors leading to the dissolution of Jewish identity in the West did not apply to the *Ostjuden*. East European Jews still lived in compact masses, they were imbued with a strong national consciousness as well as Jewish folk traditions and their culture was undergoing a powerful literary renaissance.<sup>124</sup>

Nathan Birnbaum was well aware of the increasingly favorable climate towards autonomy in Austrian politics which coincided with his own embrace of East European Jewry. National autonomy, he wrote in an editorial in the *Neue Zeitung* on 9 August 1907, was an idea whose time had come; it had supporters in all Austrian political camps, among young and old, conservatives and revolutionaries, bourgeois and workers, Germans and Slavs.<sup>125</sup> The old dualistic system in Austria-Hungary and the centralist constitution were clearly bankrupt. As if echoing Adolf Fischof, he now argued that the Habsburg Monarchy could only survive if it abandoned its anachronistic feudal and bureaucratic structures in favor of more socially progressive, democratic, and autonomist principles. The prosperity of the Empire depended on its becoming a federation of nations bound together by common economic and cultural interests.<sup>126</sup> This democratic reshaping of the Habsburg State on the basis of cultural-national autonomy would have to include official recognition of the Jews as a nationality (and as a preliminary step towards this goal) a complete reorientation of Austrian Jewish politics.

The correct strategy would be to seek alliances with other ethnic groups who might be prepared to support Jewish aspirations.<sup>127</sup>

In 1906, as the electoral struggle heated up throughout the Austrian Empire, this policy was by no means utopian. For example, the Ukrainian leader, Romanczuk, in order to divert Jewish support away from the ruling Poles in Galicia, proposed that the Austrian Parliament recognize the Jews as a nationality with a parliamentary representation of their own.<sup>128</sup> Birnbaum, for his part, advocated an alliance with the Ukrainians (Ruthenians) against the powerful Polish landowners whom he regarded as feudal oppressors of both the Ukrainian and Jewish national minorities.<sup>129</sup> In the general elections of 1907, the first to be contested in Austria under conditions of male universal suffrage, three successful Jewish national candidates in Galicia were indeed elected thanks to an electoral agreement with the Ukrainians.<sup>130</sup> Birnbaum himself was unsuccessful in his attempt to become a member of the *Reichsrat* for East Galicia, despite obtaining Ukrainian support.<sup>131</sup> In Bukovina, too, where the energetic populist Benno Straucher was elected as representative of the Jewish National Party in Czernowitz, autonomism was taking root among a Jewish population living in a multi-national environment. After 1900, Bukovina Jews demanded linguistic rights and political representation as a distinct ethnic entity.<sup>132</sup>

Birnbaum began to recognize around 1905 the centrality of the Yiddish vernacular to the life of East European Jewry. Indeed, he actively promoted the Yiddish language, literature and drama, organizing “Yiddish evenings” in Vienna, establishing Yiddishe Kultur (a student organization to encourage Yiddish culture), and translating the works of outstanding Yiddish writers such as Sholem Aleichem, Scholem Asch, and Y. L. Peretz into German.<sup>133</sup> Not only did he conduct a veritable crusade to raise the prestige of Yiddish among Jews and non-Jews alike, but he worked hard to better master the language in order to effectively propagate the cause. Yiddish soon emerged as the spearhead of his *Golus* nationalism, the symbol of that pan-Judaist consciousness which he sought to instill in the Jewish masses throughout the Diaspora. Birnbaum now repudiated his earlier stigmatization of the bastardized, mongrel “Jargon” as a servile language of the *Galut*. Instead, he glowingly portrayed it as the mirror of a proud, creative tradition. Yiddish as the language of approximately nine million Jews dispersed throughout the civilized world, had henceforth to be considered a major factor of national cohesion.

Without Yiddish as a living *Umgangssprache*, the organic unity of Jewish *Volkstum* would rapidly disintegrate.<sup>134</sup> There could be no doubt, Birnbaum asserted, about its indispensable contribution to Jewish national life and consciousness. Yiddish was the vehicle of unique cultural values—its intimacy, elasticity, and hybrid character testifying both to the Jewish genius for adaptation and the tenacious resistance against assimilation displayed by Jewry throughout its long exile. Hence, those Jews who denounced Yiddish as a semi-barbaric “Jargon”—whether they were *Maskilim*, *Assimilanten*, Zionists, or revolutionary Marxists—merely demonstrated their estrangement from authentic Jewish life and the soul of the Jewish people.

Birnbaum’s radical break with Enlightenment stereotypes of Yiddish was part of his broader revision of prevailing Western myths concerning the *Ostjuden*. East European Jews had effectively become for him the yardstick of Jewish cultural integrity to be defended at all costs from the incursions of the West. By 1909 he was openly calling for the emancipation of the *Ostjuden* from the yoke of Western Jewry, even at the price of shattering the unity of the Jewish people.<sup>135</sup> This call for separation was motivated less by hatred of the West than by the feeling that only the insulation of the *Ostjuden* could preserve their organic culture and folk life from decomposition.<sup>136</sup>

In the context of pre-1914 Central European Jewry, Birnbaum’s defense of autonomy, Yiddish, and the *Ostjuden* had placed him in open opposition to two central warring blocks—the assimilationists and Zionists. Nevertheless, as Austrian Zionism itself began to adopt an autonomist program after 1905 and to engage more intensively in domestic politics (*Landespolitik*), the differences between various schools of Jewish nationalism were increasingly blurred. Zionists and Diaspora nationalists largely agreed on the right of the Jewish masses to develop their own autonomous institutions and to adapt traditional religious communities to modern needs. Both schools of thought espoused an independent national life and *Sozialpolitik* in the Diaspora; equally, they advocated that Jews use their own language freely and seek official recognition as a nationality (*Volksstamm*) in Austria.<sup>137</sup> The struggle for the acceptance of Yiddish as a national language to be used in schools, offices, and public life, had become a rallying-cry for many Jewish nationalists in the early 1900s. It was, however, a demand opposed by Habsburg officialdom, by the dominant national elites among Germans and Poles, and by the assimilated *Westjuden* in Austria. In Galicia, the pursuit of Jewish national politics aroused particularly vehement opposition from the

ruling Polish aristocracy and its assimilationist *Hausjuden*—objects of Birnbaum’s incessant barbs.<sup>138</sup>

Birnbaum firmly believed after 1905 that national autonomy provided the best hope of security and a creative cultural life for all of the eight million Jews living in Eastern Europe.<sup>139</sup> In 1907 he wrote that genuine national equality *without assimilation* was now feasible in Habsburg Austria. The full development of the cultural individuality of the Jewish people was a real possibility within a democratized, federal Austrian nationalities’ state based on universal suffrage. Such a solution would guarantee the renewal of Jewish *national* creativity which neither emancipation nor Zionism could hope to achieve in the existing political constellation. National autonomy in Austria based on Yiddish culture provided, so he believed, an optimal framework for Jewish ethnic revival.<sup>140</sup>

The path from secular Zionism through pan-Judaism and Yiddish culture to Torah Judaism was to be Birnbaum’s last metamorphosis—the return of the prodigal son to the religious roots of Jewish being.<sup>141</sup> All his life, Birnbaum had been preoccupied by the “essence of Judaism.” Indeed, he remained remarkably consistent in this stubborn search for an authentic Jewish identity in spite of apparent contradictions and incoherencies. Repelled in his youth by the liberal philistinism and hedonistic materialism of Viennese Jewry, his prophetic passions had been inflamed by the Jewish national idea whose torch he carried in Central Europe for more than twenty years. He had tried to become the cultural mediator between East and West in the Zionist movement until Herzl’s dramatic appearance on the stage drove him to the periphery. Gradually he would rediscover the national life and unique culture of the *Ostjuden* he had once despised.

Birnbaum was the first Central European intellectual to systematically transform the image of despised *Schacherjuden* and *Schnorrer* into a counter-myth of vibrant folk creativity. Like Martin Buber, another Viennese-born intellectual with Galician roots (who was influenced by his example), Birnbaum came to see in the *Ostjuden* the best hope for the regeneration of the Jewish nation. In his writings they became the incarnation of true *Geist* and *Kultur*. Their maligned Yiddish language metamorphosed into the embodiment of spiritual values and a new appreciation of the Jewish Diaspora, its grandeur and mystery. Abandoning the pagan idols of land and *Volk*—the resurgent temptations of all modern secular nationalisms—Birnbaum returned after 1914 to the Sinaitic revelation, the God of Israel, and

the “inner faith” of the eternal people.<sup>142</sup> It was to be the last station in a strange and colorful odyssey.

#### NOTES

1. Nathan Birnbaum, *The Bridge, Selected Essays* (London 1956), 11.
2. Nathan Birnbaum, “Gegen die Selbstverständlichkeit,” in *Festschrift zur Feier des 100. Semesters der akademischen Verbindung Kadimah*, ed. by Ludwig Rosenhek (Mödling 1933), 29; and “Iberblik über Mayn Lebn,” *Yubileum-Bukh* (Warsaw 1925), 10; also Julius H. Schoeps, “Modern Heirs of the Maccabees. The beginning of the Vienna Kadimah, 1882-1897,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 27 (1982): 155-70.
3. Birnbaum, “Gegen die Selbstverständlichkeit.” Writing on 19 April 1932, Birnbaum recalled that in his school days in Vienna it was unthinkable for any young Jew “not to consider himself part of the German nation.” According to this autobiographical account his nationalist revelation first came in 1879/1880 (in the fifth or sixth form). In a conversation with a friend he insisted that Jews should declare themselves as members of the Jewish nation with their own unique past and look to Palestine for their future.
4. Joseph Klausner, *Historiya shel hasifrut haivrit hahadasha* (Tel Aviv 1955), 5: 14-231; E. Silberschlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance* (New York 1973), 145ff. Emmanuel S. Goldsmith, “Nathan Birnbaum,” in *Architects of Yiddishism at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. A Study in Jewish Cultural History* (London-New York 1976), 100, suggests that “the various phases of Birnbaum’s ideological odyssey, including Diaspora Nationalism, may be traced to aspects of Smolenskin’s writings.” Goldsmith plausibly claims that Birnbaum was also influenced by Hebrew Socialist writers of the 1870s like Aron Lieberman (his periodical *Ha-emet* was published in Vienna in 1877), Morris Winchevsky, and Moses Leib Lilienblum, as well as Smolenskin and Pinsker. He does not mention Moses Hess.
5. Birnbaum, “Gegen die Selbstverständlichkeit,” 30. Birnbaum recalled how difficult it was in the early 1880s to win over the westernized Jews in Vienna to Kadimah since “they had no living *Volksjudentum*” to serve as their inspiration. The “Easterners,” on the other hand, came “from a living Jewish popular milieu...where a movement of self-emancipation or national renaissance already existed....”
6. G. Kressel, “Selbst-Emancipation,” *Shivat Zion*, 4 (1956): 58-62. The first issue of *Selbst-Emancipation!* appeared on the day Perez Smolenskin died, 1 February 1885, with an appeal to brother Jews (*Stammesgenossen*) that began: “The life force inhabiting the body of the Jewish people is immortal, indestructible! Neither the venomous expression of the wildest racial hatred, working from the outside towards

our destruction, nor the worm of national weariness of life devouring [us] from within will ever be capable of shaking the tough nature of our eternal people!" The second issue on 16 February 1885 carried a glowing tribute to Smolenskin which inter alia deplored the fact that "in Vienna itself, where the great man who passed away lived and published this newspaper, he was of course relatively less well known...." All translations by myself unless otherwise stated.

7. See "Eröffnungsrede auf der jüdischen Sprachkonferenz in Czernowitz," gehalten am 30 August 1908 (retranslated by Birnbaum himself from the original Yiddish version) in Nathan Birnbaum, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Jüdischen Frage* (Czernowitz 1910), 2: 41-45; see also "Der 'Jargon,'" *ibid.*, 46-51; and "Zum Sprachenstreit. Entgegnung an Achad Ha'am," *ibid.*, 52-74.

8. A. E. Kaplan and Max Landau, eds., *Vom Sinn des Judentums. Ein Sammelbuch zu Ehren Nathan Birnbaums* (Frankfurt aM. 1924), documents this final metamorphosis or "return" to Judaism. See especially Samuel Rappaport, "Der Gottsucher," *ibid.*, 34-43; and Joseph Carlebach, "Stil und Persönlichkeit," *ibid.*, 70f. The latter regards Birnbaum as the embodiment of "a grandiose battle against the new Jewish intellectualism, against the Jewish 'period of enlightenment' ...," *ibid.*, 70. Max Landau, "Nathan Birnbaum und das Jüdische Volk," *ibid.*, 83 also turns the later Birnbaum into a crusader against "the *maskilic* mentality of the Jewish people" and its scornful arrogance towards the true spiritual values of Judaism.

9. On Chaim Zhitlovsky, see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics. Russian Jews, Nationalism and Socialism 1881-1917* (Cambridge 1982), 258-87. Like Zhitlovsky, Birnbaum could be described as a man of transient mood who nonetheless remained loyal to certain key concepts (anti-assimilationism, belief in the eternal and indestructible character of the Jewish spirit, in the uniqueness of the Jewish nation, etc.) but applied them to reality in sharply different ways at different periods. However Birnbaum, unlike Zhitlovsky, was at no time a revolutionary populist despite his sympathy for certain Socialist teachings.

10. David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford 1975), 223.

11. Nathan Birnbaum, *Die Assimilationssucht* (Vienna 1882), 8-9. In his obituary for Perez Smolenskin, *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 1, no. 2 (16 Feb. 1885): 1, Birnbaum again attacked "the wretchedness of the assimilatory suicide theory," a formulation to which he was to return through countless variations.

12. *Die Assimilationssucht*, 6.

13. *Ibid.*, 9-11.

14. *Ibid.*, 14.

15. *Ibid.*; also N. Birnbaum, "Die Ziele der jüdisch-nationalen Bestrebungen," Pt. 2, *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 3, no. 4, (16 May 1890): 1-2.

16. *Die Assimilationssucht*, 15.

17. Ibid., Birnbaum already considered in 1884 that the diffusion of Hebrew was such in Eastern Europe, that “very little was required to achieve a complete national language and what was lacking would have to be completed by a territorial concentration. A revived Judea populated by Hebrews would also create a Hebrew language spoken by Jews.” This proved to be prophetic.

18. “Die Prinzipien des Zionismus,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 5, no. 5 (4 Mar. 1892):

53. Birnbaum’s important lecture was published in three issues on 1 Feb., 4 Mar. and 7 Apr. 1892.

19. Ibid., 58.

20. Kressel, “Selbst-Emancipation,” 79-89 for the history of the journal and its difficulties.

21. Josef Fraenkel, “Halifat Hamikhtavim Beyn Nathan Birnbaum leveyn Siegmund Werner,” *Shivat Zion* 2-3 (1953): 275; idem, “Mathias Acher’s Fight for the Crown of Zion,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Apr. 1954): 115-34.

22. Mathias Acher was the pseudonym taken by Birnbaum in 1891 at a Seder evening of the Kadmah students’ fraternity in Vienna where he made a speech denouncing the Yavneh tradition. If the name Mathias recalled the Hasmonean uprising against Hellenism, Acher was the Hebrew name meaning “a stranger” given by the rabbis to an admired sage and heretic in the Jewish tradition, Elisha ben Avuya, a second-century scholar who became an adherent of the gnostic dualism derived from Greek philosophy and who later renounced Judaism. This combination of zealotry, idealism, and heresy revealed in the choice of a pen-name indicates much about Birnbaum’s personality.

23. See “Antisemiten, Assimilanten, Nationaljuden,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 1, no. 5 (3 Apr. 1885): 2-3, with its sharp attack on the Pan-German Schönerer movement “that unclear, fanatically blind party,” for distorting the inextinguishable “racial differences between Jews and the Aryan peoples” in such a way as to defame an entire nation.

24. “Ist Wahrhaftigkeit Zugeständnis?,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 2, no. 5, (2 Mar. 1886): 1-2. See also other early articles by Birnbaum which relate to this theme: “Verjudung-Entjudung,” ibid., 1, no. 7 (1 May 1885); “Der Judenhass,” 2, no. 1 (1 Jan. 1886); “Antisemitismus und Nationaljudentum,” 3, no. 2 (16 Apr. 1890).

25. “Nationalität und Sprache,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 2, no. 4 (16 Feb. 1886). In this article Birnbaum claimed: “Due to racial differences the German or Slav also feels differently from the Jew.”

26. “Volkstum und Weltbürgertum,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 3, no. 2 (16 Apr. 1890): 1, where Birnbaum postulates an unbridgeable chasm between the Jewish and German *Volksgeist*.
27. Birnbaum, “Ist Wahrhaftigkeit Zugeständnis?,” 1-2.
28. “Erlösung-Erlösung,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 1, no. 1 (1 Feb. 1885): 2. “This instinctive disgust at the lack of moral autonomy of a tribe, beset by the strange mania of wishing to destroy itself, is at the core of modern antisemitism.”
29. “Unsere Mängel,” *ibid.*, 2-3.
30. Nathan Birnbaum in *Ost und West*, 2, no 8 (Aug. 1902): 517-18. Reproduced as “Einige Gedanken über den Antisemitismus,” in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Jüdischen Frage*, 1: 154.
31. See the remark of Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany 1870-1914* (Cincinnati 1980), 125 ff.
32. Nathan Birnbaum, *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes in seinem Lande* (Wien 1893), rprt. in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1: 41.
33. *Ibid.*, 26. From Birnbaum’s lecture entitled *Die Jüdische Moderne* (Wien 1896), delivered before the academic society Kadimah in 1896.
34. Kressel, “Selbstemanzipation,” 64-65.
35. See Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Colonisation Palästinas,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 2, no. 4 (16 Feb. 1886); “Colonisationspläne,” *ibid.*, 6, no. 10 (15 May 1892); “Organisation der Colonisationstätigkeit,” 6, no. 6 (18 May 1893).
36. Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Prinzipien des Zionismus,” *ibid.*, 5, no. 5 (4 Mar. 1892): 53.
37. “Osten oder Westen,” *ibid.*, 3, no. 14 (17 Oct. 1890): 1-3.
38. “Colonisationspläne,” *ibid.*, 6, no. 10 (15 May 1892); Kressel, “Selbstemanzipation, 91.
39. “Die wichtigste Frage,” *Jüdische Volkszeitung*, 7, no. 5 (30 Jan. 1894): 34-35; see also “So lange es Zeit ist!,” *ibid.*, 7, no. 14 (3 Apr. 1894): 2.
40. Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Prinzipien des Zionismus,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, (7 Apr. 1892).
41. *Ibid.* Birnbaum also saw an advantage in the fact that Palestine was “easily and quickly accessible from the major countries of the Jewish Diaspora” and that the Turkish government and people “are very favorably disposed to the Jews.”
42. Shmuel Almog, *Zionut ve-historia* (Jerusalem 1982), 1-5, 109.
43. “Die Heilung des jüdischen Volkes,” Vortrag von N. Birnbaum in *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 17 (1891), rprt. in annexe to *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes*, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1: 38-40.

44. Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Türkei und die Palästina-Colonisation,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 17 (1891), reproduced in the annexe to *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes*, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1: 38-40.

45. Ibid., 40; Birnbaum suggested that the instinct of self-preservation would oblige the Jews “to serve in a conciliatory spirit as a peaceful counterweight against the Arabs and always and everywhere to stand up for the Ottoman idea of a state.”

46. *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1: 18. Birnbaum, like Moses Hess before him, liked to quote from the futurist vision of the French Gentile Zionist, Ernest Laharanne, whose *La nouvelle Question d’Orient. Reconstitution de la Nation Juive* (Paris 1860), spoke of the great calling of the Jews “to be a living channel of communication between three continents”; Birnbaum’s notion of Jewry as mediators between Europe and the Orient probably owed something to Laharanne’s “Orientalist” vision and Hess’s secular Jewish messianism.

47. *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt* (1893), in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1: 9, where Birnbaum writes that once the percentage of Jews falls below the saturation point at which intolerance becomes manifest “this would naturally lead to a significant fall in antisemitic tension as well as moderating the struggle for existence of the Jewish (as well as the non-Jewish) masses.”

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 10. “A people without recognition under international law is free game. The more swiftly and thoroughly that the civilized world abolishes this pariah condition of the Jews, the quicker and more radically they will be liberated from Jew-hatred (*Judenhass*).”

50. Ibid., 15.

51. Ibid., 18-20.

52. Birnbaum struck a secular messianic note with his prophecy: “In its own homeland the Jewish nation will once again develop its immense ethical-social concerns and thus contribute to bring about the final social redemption of humanity; the Jewish genius liberated from its chains will shorten the road to the general happiness of humanity.” ibid., 20.

53. Robert S. Wistrich, “Austrian Social Democracy and the Problem of Galician Jewry 1890-1914,” in *LBI Year Book* 26 (1981): 89-124.

54. “Die Prinzipien des Zionismus,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 5, no. 5, (4 Mar. 1892): 54.

55. Ibid. For a similarly prophetic formulation, see *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Jüdischen Frage*, 1: 21. “Unless Zionism successfully strikes roots, the ‘Jewish Question’ will—after a seemingly total victory of the idea of equality—remain as an

unsolved residue and Jew-hatred will continue to be a fatal thorn in the flesh of the new society.”

56. Mathias Acher [pseud. Nathan Birnbaum], *Die Jüdische Moderne*, lecture held in the Akademische Verein Kadimah in Vienna (Leipzig 1896), 10. “The current materialistic view of history neglects the history of man as a racial being and considers only the history of man as a species being.” It should be emphasized that the term *Rasse* (race) was entirely respectable at that time in the natural and human sciences. It did not carry the negative connotations which it has subsequently assumed.

57. Ibid., 13.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., 13-14. “If the State and language are not rock-hard pillars of nationality, then there is no doubt concerning the present existence of the Jewish nationality. Its racial quality cannot be denied.”

60. Ibid., 24.

61. Birnbaum’s anti-capitalist vision led to differences of opinion with the Galician Zionist Abraham Salz who did not share his emotional affinities with Socialist thought. See A. Salz, “Sozialismus oder Colonisation Palästinas,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 4, no. 9 (1891): 2.

62. Birnbaum, “Die Ziele der jüdisch-nationalen Bestrebungen,” Pt. 2, 2. For Birnbaum, the epitome of the capitalist profiteering spirit was the United States. His opposition to Jewish settlement in America derived as much from “social” as it did from national considerations.

63. “Die Ziele der jüdisch-nationalen Bestrebungen,” Pt. 3, Ethischer Teil, *ibid.*, 3, no. 5 (2 June 1890).

64. There was a parallel between Nathan Birnbaum’s view of Socialism and that of Theodor Hertzka, editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*. See Birnbaum’s report on a lecture that Hertzka delivered before the Österreichische-Israelitische Union on 14 January 1893: “Arischer und semitischer Geist,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 3 (28 Feb. 1893): 2-4. Birnbaum remarked that “Dr. Hertzka spoke as a socialist—a word not to be confounded with the party term of social democrat—and as a Jew. He is a man who recognized the peculiar character of the Jewish essence and fully and consciously represents this character within himself.”

65. “Die Socialdemokratie und die Juden,” *ibid.*, 3, no. 6 (16 June 1890): 1-2.

66. Ibid., 1; see also the report on “Der internationale Arbeitercongress in Brüssel,” *ibid.*, 4, no. 17 (2 Sept. 1891): 3, which pointed to the ambivalence of the Socialist International on the “Jewish Question” and criticized the extreme assimilationist position adopted by the Austrian Socialist leader, Victor Adler.

67. Saul Raphael Landau, “Der Socialismus und die Juden in Galizien,” *ibid.*, 5, nos. 6-7 (7 Apr. 1892): 55-56.
68. *Ibid.*, 80.
69. Nathan Birnbaum, “Zum ersten Mal,” *ibid.*, 5, no. 9 (1 May 1882): 79-81.
70. Nathan Birnbaum, “Die Tallisweber von Kolomea,” *ibid.*, 5. nos. 16-17 (29 Aug. 1892): 166-67.
71. Der jüdische Weberstreit,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 5 Aug. 1892. Also “Zum Kolomaer Weberstreik,” *ibid.*, 16 Sept. 1892, and Max Zetterbaum, “Klassengegensätze bei den Juden,” *Die Neue Zeit*, 2 (1892-1893): 39.
72. “Die Tallisweber...,” 167. “The strike of the tallis weavers in Kolomea can offer Social Democracy the best opportunity to establish itself among Galician Jewry.”
73. *Ibid.*, “Jew hatred will not cease to exist even in a future socialist state, if Jews continue to be a dependent minority without protection.”
74. See Nathan Gelber, *Toldot Ha-Tenu'ah ha-Ziyyonit be-Galitsiah* (Tel Aviv 1956), 1: 15.
75. N. B., “Parteiprogramme,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 5, no. 12 (21 June 1892): 116; “Die zionistische Partei,” 5, no. 4 (23 Feb. 1892): 41.
76. The first conference of Jewish Nationalists had been convened on 23-25 April 1893 and was attended by representatives from all the existing Zionist societies in Galicia. Nathan Birnbaum, who represented the Austrian Zionists, was elected honorary chairman of the conference.
77. See *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 18 (15 Nov. 1893): 3-5.
78. “Corporationen and Versammlungen,” *ibid.*, 6, no. 20 (15 Dec. 1893): 7, for the change in the name of the organization to the Austrian Jewish National Party, which was proposed by Birnbaum.
79. *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 18 (15 Nov. 1893): 3-5. Also Kressel, “Selbst-Emancipation,” 90. At this stage in his career, Birnbaum (possibly influenced by the Hebrew writer Reuben Brainin, who had recently settled in Vienna), attached great importance to the role of the Hebrew language for Western Jews, in promoting the national renaissance. Yiddish on the other hand, he still regarded as the language of the ghetto and *Galut*, unfit for a civilized nation seeking auto-emancipation. Fifteen years later he would be one of the foremost spokesmen for the Yiddish language in Austria.
80. Nathan Birnbaum, “Politischer Zionismus,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 5, no. 23 (19 Dec. 1892); “Jüdische Politik,” *ibid.*, 6, no. 8 (15 June 1893); “Die Wahlreform und die Zionisten,” *ibid.*, 6, no. 16 (15 Oct. 1893); *ibid.*, no. 17 (1 Nov. 1893); also *Die Nationale Wiedergeburt des jüdischen Volkes*.

81. Nathan Birnbaum, “Der neue Cours (Ein Wort an alle Zionisten),” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 4, no. 21 (2 Nov. 1891): 1-2.
82. “Die zionistische Partei,” 40.
83. Ibid., 41. Birnbaum contrasted the bitter opposition of the *Neue Freie Presse* to the Slav and Irish national movements and the paper’s reluctant capitulation before Hungarian demands.
84. Ibid., “...the politics which we desire should be more internal than external, more [a matter of] self-education than of Diplomacy.”
85. “Der gegenwärtige Stand unserer Sache in Österreich,” ibid., 5, no. 21 (15 Nov. 1892): 1-2.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 1. Birnbaum acknowledged that outside Galicia, the situation was much less promising for Zionism. He blamed this primarily on the entanglement of Jews in the struggle between Germans and Slavs, which had led to “such a high level of estrangement from their own nationality.”
88. Ibid. “The word Vienna has a positive ring among Austrian Jews. Hence one must know how to present it to people.”
89. “Pflege der geistigen Güter unseres Volkes,” ibid., 6, no. 7 (1 June 1895): 1-2, for Birnbaum’s critique of “the materialistic aridity of Austrian Jewry,” which he compared unfavorably with the achievements of German Jewry in the domain of Jewish *Wissenschaft*.
90. “Das neue Statut der Wiener jüdischen Gemeinde,” ibid., 6, no. 17 (1 Nov. 1893): 1-2. Birnbaum was especially critical of the inadequacy of Hebrew language instruction in the educational program of the Viennese *Kultusgemeinde*.
91. Almog, *Zionut ve-historia*, 133.
92. “Zu den Reichsrathswahlen,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 4 (16 Feb. 1891): 2-3.
93. Ibid., 2. “Only the creation of a home for our people can remedy its misfortune; all other attempts are patchwork.” See also *Die Jüdische Moderne*, 26.
94. “Die Wahlreform und die Zionisten,” *Selbst-Emancipation!*, 6, no. 16 (15 Oct. 1893): 5, where Birnbaum remarked that “future elections will at least have to be used to counteract the *Todtschweigerei* [attempts to kill the movement by silence], practiced by the German language daily press towards our efforts which have considerably retarded our progress.”
95. Nathan Birnbaum, “Jüdische Politik,” ibid., 6, no. 8 (15 June 1893): 1-2.
96. *Die Jüdische Moderne*, 3.
97. Ibid., 31 for Birnbaum’s rejection of political “Partei-Zionismus” as a pure abstraction and his assessment of the inadequacy of small-scale colonization in Palestine in the face of Turkish resistance.

98. See his review of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in Hermann Bahr's periodical, *Die Zeit* (Wien), 6, no. 873 (22 Feb. 1896); also *Die Jüdische Moderne*, 31-38.
99. Mathias Acher [pseud. Nathan Birnbaum], *Zwei Vorträge über Zionismus* (Berlin 1898), 1-12. "Der Zionismus als Culturbewegung," lecture held at the Zionist Congress in Basle on 29 August 1897, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1.
100. Ibid., 5. Birnbaum stressed in this speech the indissoluble bond between Zionism, the future of the Jewish people, and European civilization. Zionism, he argued, could not have blossomed in the "ghetto": "The road to Zionism was paved only after a generation had arisen as a result of massive progress towards Europeanism in the West as in the East—a generation whose ambitions were derived from Western civilization with its great and active nations." Ibid., 5-6.
101. Ibid., 6.
102. Ibid., 9.
103. Ibid., 10-11.
104. Alex Bein, *Die Judenfrage. Biographie eines Weltproblems* (Stuttgart 1980), 2: 280.
105. Josef Fraenkel, *Mathias Achers Kampf um die "Zionskrone"* (Basel 1959), 10.
106. Ibid., 12-13.
107. Ibid., 22. "We cannot resist the course of events. We should work towards gaining positions and influence within the party. Then everything will come right."
108. See *Zion* (31 May 1897): 382. The Zionist monthly, founded in Berlin in 1895, was edited by Birnbaum with the help of collaborators like Oskar Kokesch, Hirsch Hildesheimer, Heinrich Loewe, and some other leading Berlin Zionists. Birnbaum, whose financial situation was desperate, temporarily left Vienna for Berlin to assume the editorship in 1896.
109. Josef Fraenkel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 31-36.
110. Ibid., 41-42.
111. Ibid., 46.
112. See Werner to Birnbaum, 13 Aug. 1897, 49 ff.
113. Ibid., 55.
114. Ibid., 56.
115. Ibid., 60-61. See also Birnbaum to Werner, 19 Aug. 1897, 66-67. "I have been living for years under the most dreadful conditions. That is also why I left Vienna. In Berlin things were even worse."
116. Ibid., 67. Birnbaum went on to describe the desperate situation of his family, with a chronically sick wife and his young children suffering from bronchitis: "Five

persons in one room, and my wife, with her lung trouble, doing the washing without any help...,” *ibid.*, 69.

117. Josef Fraenkel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 83.

118 *Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, 226-27 described the motion as “the only discordant note at the Congress; and instigated by Schalit, a young man whom I had overwhelmed by kindness.”

119. Fraenkel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 83-84.

120. Goldsmith, “Nathan Birnbaum,” 105.

121. *Ibid.*, 106.

122. Birnbaum, “Der Zionismus als Culturbewegung,” 70.

123. *Yubileum-Bukh*, 13. Goldsmith, “Nathan Birnbaum,” 107.

124. “Ostjüdische Aufgaben,” lecture before the academic association Zephira, Czernowitz, 8 July 1905, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 260-75; also “Etwas über Ost- und Westjuden,” *ibid.*, 276-82, first published in *Jüdische Volkskalender für das Jahr 5665* (1904-1905).

125. “Nationale Autonomie,” *Neue Zeitung*, 2, no. 9 (9 Aug. 1907), 1. Birnbaum had founded this weekly in 1906 to further his autonomist political objectives.

126. Hermann Kadisch, “Rück- und Ausblicke,” *ibid.*, 1, no. 11 (16 Nov. 1906): 1. “Every nation and every religion has the inalienable right to autonomy, but none can claim the right to rule all the others....”

127. *Ibid.*, “It is absolutely necessary to achieve a union of all Austrian Jews who stand on a social-national program and to arrive at an understanding with the national autonomists of other peoples who recognize the Jews as a nation with equal rights.”

128. Goldsmith, “Nathan Birnbaum,” 108.

129. “Jüdische Polen,” *Neue Zeitung*, 1, no. 7 (19 Oct. 1906): 2-3; “Juden und Ruthenen,” *ibid.*, 1, no. 4 (28 Sept. 1906): 2; also, “Unser Hass gegen das Polentum,” *ibid.*, 2, no. 2 (28 June 1907): 1.

130. “Galizische Wahlen,” *Arbeiterzeitung*, 11 June 1907, 1-3.

131. See “Wie eine strahlende Welt” (first published in *Die Welt*, 11, no. 23, [7 June 1907]) in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 2: 3-5. On the electoral chicanery, see *idem.*, “Die galizischen Raubwahlen,” *Neue Zeitung*, 2, no. 1 (12 June 1907): 1-2. Goldsmith, “Nathan Birnbaum,” 109, claims however that “many Jews declined to vote for him because they were afraid that if he were elected, his Jewish physiognomy would set off a new wave of anti-Semitic ridicule and slander.”

132. “Die Sprachenfrage in der Bukowina und die Juden,” *Neue Zeitung*, 2, no. 7 (26 July 1907): 1-2. On the Jewish national movement in Bukovina, see Gerald Stourzh, “Galten die Juden als Nationalität Altösterreichs?,” *Studia Judaica*

*Austriaca*, 10, *Prag-Czernowitz-Jerusalem* (Eisenstadt 1984), 73-98. On Birnbaum's role in this movement, *ibid.*, 80.

133. See "Für die jüdische Sprache," 29 Nov. 1907, and "Der 'Jargon,'" in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 2: 34-40, 46-51. Also Goldsmith, "Nathan Birnbaum," 109-18.

134. "Zum Sprachenstreit. Eine Entgegnung an Achad Ha'am," *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 2: 71.

135. "Die Emanzipation des Ostjudentums vom Westjudentum" (Herbst 1909), *ibid.*, 13-33.

136. *Ibid.*, 30, "It is not sympathies or antipathies, not preconceived ideas about the 'decadent West' and the 'healthy East' which underlie the hope and desire that East European Jewry prevail over its Western co-religionists, but rather the realization of the mortal danger that the entire Jewish people faces, if this should not occur."

137. Max Rosenfeld, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden in Österreich," *Der Jude*, 2, no. 3 (June 1917): 152-62 for the Zionist view.

138. Leila P. Everett, "The Rise of Jewish National Politics in Galicia 1905-1907," in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism. Essays on Austrian Galicia*, ed. by Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn (Harvard 1982), 149-77.

139. "Jüdische Autonomie," *Ost und West*, 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1906); *ibid.*, 146.

140. "Die Autonomiebestrebungen der Juden in Österreich," *ibid.*, 143. "The new autonomy will help us to create the new Jew, which our souls so desire."

141. *Vom Sinn des Judentums*, 9.

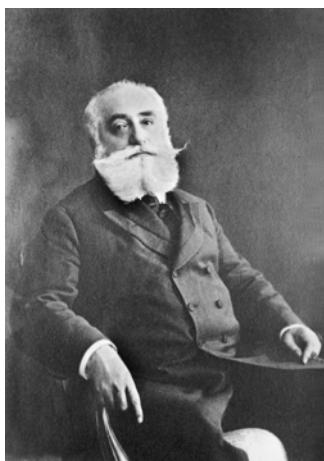
142. *Ibid.*, 41 ff.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Max Nordau: From “Degeneration” to “Muscular Judaism”**

Max Nordau (1849-1923), physician, journalist, playwright and littérateur, was the most prominent European man of letters to join the Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> Born in Budapest, he was deeply imbued, like many middle-class Hungarian Jews, with German culture. In 1871, after his father's death, he changed his name from Simha Maximilian Südfeld (meaning “southern field”) to the more “Aryan”-sounding Nordau or “northern meadow.” The name reversal was a testament to the powerful drive for assimilation which affected so many Central European Jews of his generation.<sup>2</sup> Even after his conversion to Zionism in 1895, Nordau remained a cosmopolitan European intellectual and an “enlightened” liberal, thoroughly “Germanized” (like Herzl) in his cultural orientation. Nordau’s German liberalism went together with an intolerant loathing for modern art, a Darwinist world-view, and a dogmatic allegiance to positivist science that led him to militant atheism. By the mid-1880s (a decade before he joined the Zionists) Nordau had already acquired a European reputation as a writer with his best-selling *The Conventional Lies of Civilization* (1883), followed by *Paradoxes* (1885), and his most important novel, *The Malady of the Century* (1887).

Having left Budapest in 1880 to settle in Paris, Max Nordau continued to write primarily in German, contributing regularly to Berlin’s *Vossische Zeitung* and the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna. He was widely seen in the 1880s as an uncompromising unmasker of the hypocrisies of contemporary European religious, political, and economic institutions. However, there were other observers who regarded him as the epitome of the humorless, pedantic German publicist. A British critic, for example, comparing him to Nietzsche, thought Nordau “too serious, too irritable, too German to write a thoroughly scientific book on modern ‘decadence.’ Who but a German, for example, could take Mr. Oscar Wilde’s delightful paradoxes so seriously.”<sup>3</sup> Wilde had once playfully written that London was in debt to French Impressionist



Max Nordau

Central Zionist Archives,  
Jerusalem

painters for “those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets” and the “lovely silver mists that brood over our river”; Nordau, completely failing to grasp the wit of this remark, indignantly retorted that to believe painters could bring about a change in the climate was “so silly as to require no refutation.”<sup>4</sup>

Such obtuseness was characteristic of Nordau’s intolerance of paradox (despite his preoccupation with the theme) and rejection of any middle ground in his judgments—especially regarding cultural phenomena.<sup>5</sup> For Nordau, paradoxes were simply antinomies that had to be resolved. For all his “scientific” skepticism, there was something doctrinaire about his medico-biological view of art, culture and society. This tendency to dogmatism comes out in his adaptation of theories about degeneration put forward by distinguished physicians and scientists of the era (like Cesare Lombroso or Jean Martin Charcot) concerning the pathology of fin-de-siècle European culture. Particularly ironic was the resemblance between the categories of deviance and abnormality he applied to the so-called “degenerates” of late 19th-century European society and the prevailing antisemitic stereotypes of the age.<sup>6</sup> His anti-modernism was remarkably similar in its deep structure to much of fin-de-siècle antisemitism, though Nordau scarcely mentioned Jews in this context.

In the opening chapter of his most seminal piece of polemical writing, *Degeneration* (1892)—a medically-oriented critique of the cultural production of the epoch—Max Nordau observed:

*Fin-de-siècle* is French, for it was in France that the mental state so entitled was first consciously realized. The word has flown from one hemisphere to the other, and found its way into all civilized languages.... The *fin-de-siècle* state of mind is today everywhere to be met with; nevertheless, it is in many cases a mere imitation of a foreign fashion gaining vogue, and not an organic evolution. It is in the land of its birth that it appears in its most genuine form, and Paris is the right place in which to observe its manifold expressions.”<sup>7</sup>

Nordau identified fin-de-siècle culture with a state of decadence, listlessness and creeping senility of which France presented the most advanced symptoms.<sup>8</sup> But the same sickness was equally apparent in Central Europe.

Nordau saw this cultural decadence as a “mental constitution” and disposition of the times; a compound of “feverish restlessness and blunted discouragement, fear and renunciation, confession and complaint. The fin-de-siècle feeling was about “imminent perdition and extinction,” the premonition that “mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world.”<sup>9</sup> But unlike the throbbing pulses of chiliastic despair of the year 1000, the modern *Götterdämmerung* (twilight of the idols) appeared more like the impotent despair of exhausted souls. Nordau highlighted examples drawn from French books and periodicals since 1890 whose common denominator was “contempt for traditional views of custom and morality”—the end of an established order based on discipline, logic, and classical standards of beauty. Artistic forms were losing their outlines and dissolving into a floating mist; dress and fashions had become bizarre, outlandish and high artificial exercises in historicism—like a “masked festival, where all are in disguises, and with heads too in character.”<sup>10</sup> The furnishings of the rich, educated snobs who set the tone of the fin-de-siècle showed the same dissonance and contradiction between form and purpose—everything in their houses aimed “at exciting the nerves and dazzling the senses.”<sup>11</sup> Music, too, had either to counterfeit religious devotion or agitate the mind in a tide of never-ending sound “ever more indefinite, ever more dissolving into a mist” as in Wagner’s operatic creations, which Nordau heartily detested. Worse still, was the “depravity” of contemporary literature for which “the filth of Zola’s art and of his disciples in literary canal-dredging” was a mere prelude. Normal relations between the sexes or mere sensuality were already considered too banal and excruciatingly dull. In Nordau’s words, “Vice looks to Sodom and Lesbos, to Bluebeard’s castle and the servants’ hall of the ‘divine’ Marquis de Sade’s ‘Justine,’ for its

embodiments.”<sup>12</sup> The popularity of hypnotism, telepathy, somnambulism; of magic, Kabbala, astrology and other white and black arts were further symptoms of a decadent age craving for ever more intense stimuli and continuous intoxication of the senses.

Max Nordau’s diagnosis of contemporary art and poetry was that of a practicing physician (specializing in nervous and mental illnesses) as well as a cultural critic. Borrowing from the concept of “degeneracy” analyzed by the French mental pathologist, B. A. Morel and from his close personal friend and co-religionist, the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, Nordau sought to apply their methods of investigation to the inaugurators of all the fin-de-siècle movements in art and literature.<sup>13</sup> He focused on the mental rather than physical physiognomy of these “degenerates” who dwelt on the borderlands between reason and madness. Nordau considered the absence of a sense of morality, of decency, respect for law, and modesty as thoroughly characteristic of “degenerates” in general. Driven by compulsive ideas, emotionalism, by their own excitability and unbounded egoism, deviants were able to commit crimes “with the greatest calmness and self-complacency.” In their self-pity, melancholia, fear of ruin, and damnation, “degenerates” shared in every detail the prevailing mood of apocalyptic despair.<sup>14</sup> This went together with an abhorrence of activity and a paralysis of the will, often rationalized by a Quietist philosophy of renunciation à la Schopenhauer or the embrace of Buddhism with its concept of Nirvana. “Degenerates” displayed a marked predilection for inane reverie, mysticism, and nebulously blurred ideas as well as a transparent lack of self-discipline.

In contrast to Cesare Lombroso, who thought that highly-gifted degenerates were an active force in human progress, Max Nordau’s verdict was much harsher. Their influence might well be a deep one, but it was always harmful and could only lead into the abyss. His list of “deviants” was a particularly long one, including some of the most innovative poets, painters, musicians, playwrights, writers, and thinkers of the 19th century. Among them were Ruskin, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wagner, Ibsen, Zola, and Leo Tolstoy. The French impressionists, for example, were depicted by Nordau as “hysterical” painters suffering from defective eyesight and a mixture of neurasthenia, depression, or exhaustion.<sup>15</sup> The Symbolist poets did not come off much better. Indeed *Degeneration* as a whole must be considered one of the most impassioned assaults ever made against artistic modernism in general and the European fin-de-siècle culture in particular.<sup>16</sup> Nordau was probably the first influential

cultural critic to denounce modernist art as an unadulterated expression of mental debility and “moral insanity.”

In this context, a comparison of Nordau’s views on “degeneration” with those of Friedrich Nietzsche is instructive. Today, Nordau is remembered, if at all, as a political Zionist who was the most prominent early orator of the movement, alongside Theodor Herzl. Yet in 1892, the prolific Nordau was more of a household name than Nietzsche, whose European reputation was only beginning to be established. In his book, Nordau described Nietzsche as the epitome of delirium. He insisted on the fact of his insanity from birth (Nietzsche had mentally collapsed only in 1889) “because he has become the means of raising a mental pestilence, and the only hope of checking its propagation lies in placing Nietzsche’s insanity in the clearest light, and in branding his disciples...as hysterical and imbecile.”<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche and the Nietzscheans were condemned as egomaniacs, incapable of seeing things as they were, of understanding the empirical world, or coming to terms with reality. The reader of Nietzsche confronted an “endless stream of phrases,” “constantly reiterated delirious ideas,” imperious assertions having their source in “illusions of sense and diseased organic processes.” It was like hearing a mad man, “with flashing eyes, wild gestures, and foaming mouth, spouting forth deafening bombast.”<sup>18</sup>

Nietzsche’s assault on objective knowable reality, his emphasis on subjective consciousness, and fundamental questioning of ideas like “truth” and “progress” were anathema to a positivist like Max Nordau. His own concept of rationality and ethics was completely antithetical to Nietzsche’s Dionysian universe, which asserted the primacy of the aesthetic, the ecstatic, and the cult of the “Will.” Nevertheless, in their different ways, both thinkers had a common preoccupation with degeneracy and eugenics, as well as vindicating so-called “natural” values.<sup>19</sup> Both feared the prospect of an imminent collapse of civilization and sought ways to regenerate humanity from its decadence. In Nordau’s case—despite his cultural anti-modernism—he remained faithful to a hard-headed, disciplined, “muscular” version of 19th-century liberalism. In this perspective, Nietzsche (like Wagner before him) was presented by Nordau as a prime example of the “degenerate” assault of irrationality, anarchy and nihilism against liberal concepts of truth and social morality.

Nordau declared himself a sworn enemy of the indefinite and obscure, of any attempt to blur the boundaries between dream and reality, the conscious and unconscious mind, primary and secondary sensations, abstract and

concrete ideas. Hence his intense opposition to Wagner, whose personality embodied the poisonously intoxicating effects of graphomania, megalomania, hysteria, and paranoid antisemitism. Wagnerianism, too, was a decadent symptom of the “Kunst der Nerven” and the modernist nervousness of metropolitan urban life. Nordau had always loathed large towns, which produced an increase in the number of “degenerates” of all kinds, as well as encouraging hysteria and neurasthenia. He blamed city life for widespread fatigue, the growing cases of madness and suicide, as well as the birth of enfeebled children. Nordau saw much evidence of mental disease and hysteria in France, which being already “nervously strained and predestined to morbid derangement” had also suffered the humiliating catastrophe of 1870.<sup>20</sup> It was no surprise, therefore, that in France “the craziest fashions in art and literature would necessarily arise and that it is precisely there that the morbid exhaustion of which we have spoken became for the first time sufficiently distinct...to allow a special name...the designation of *fin-de-siècle*.<sup>21</sup> A contemporary historian like Eugen Weber echoed this verdict not so long ago when he observed: “Doom loomed more clear in fin-de-siècle France than almost anywhere else at the time.”<sup>22</sup> German and Austrian critics—especially the Francophobes among them—liked to link this decadence to loose morals.

Examining the French fin-de-siècle, Weber noted in passing that “extravagance and high spirits were taken for signs of degeneration.”<sup>23</sup> The great paradox was that unprecedented material and technological progress coincided with a sense of spiritual dejection and cultural decay. It was the decade of telegraph and telephones, typewriters and elevators; mass public transport, the bicycle and electric lamps. At the same time came pollution, crowding, noise, nerves, and drugs; the noxious effects of press, publicity, and advertising; and “a rising tide of transgressions threatening law and order.” Thus, in Paris, modernity also meant “uncertainty, and a certain insecurity, and eventually a certain decline of standards.”<sup>24</sup> Nordau’s view of the period as a mix of moral anarchy and physical degeneration was by no means unusual. It was shared by other critics concerned at the low birth-rate, social decrepitude, emotional lassitude, intellectual, physical, and political impotence. The notion that neurasthenia was the “*maladie du siècle*” and that neuroses (supposedly the product of accumulating ancestral defects) were debilitating the race, was commonplace. So, too, was the belief that venereal disease as well as alcohol were sapping the ruling classes and brutalizing the lower orders. Nordau’s observations about the pervasiveness of sexual

psychopathology of every kind, was widely echoed in the literature of the decade, which constantly deplored the end of modesty and restraint between the sexes.<sup>25</sup>

Many critics from across the spectrum would have agreed with Nordau's view that industrialism and urban living had led to a veritable sewer of material and moral corruption. A similar diagnosis was provided in France by such diverse voices as Hippolyte Taine, the Goncourts, Huysmans, Henri Rochefort, Gustave Le Bon, and Paul Bourget. Zola's famous saga of the "Rougon-Macquart" was inspired by the belief in hereditary degeneracy. French intellectuals like Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, and Georges Sorel, obsessed by the decay of national energy, will, and coherence would look to radical solutions like the integral nationalism of the *Action Française* movement or revolutionary syndicalism.<sup>26</sup> Others, like Pierre de Coubertin, responded to the fear of physical and moral degeneracy by advocating the introduction of gymnastics and Anglo-Saxon sports into France.<sup>27</sup> Coubertin's initiatives would soon lead to the holding of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896—the same year that Herzl published *Der Judenstaat* and that Max Nordau officially joined the Zionist movement.

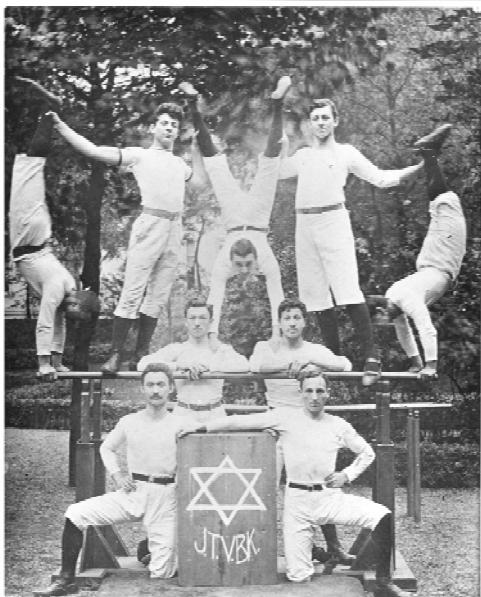
It has to be admitted that Nordau's literary judgments, despite his reputation, were often crude, while his unconditional faith in positivist science seems curiously naïve a century later.<sup>28</sup> Yet it was this faith which enabled Nordau to maintain his confidence that humanity could yet disprove the prophecies of doom. One reason for his optimism was Nordau's belief that "degenerates, hysterics, and neurasthenics are not capable of adaptation. Therefore they are fated to disappear."<sup>29</sup> Living like a parasite on the labor of past generations, the "degenerate" would inevitably lose out in "the struggle for existence" against the "normal" man, with his clear mind, logical thought, sound judgment, and strong will.

Let us imagine the driveling Zoroaster of Nietzsche with his cardboard lions, eagles, and serpents, from a toyshop, or the noctambulist Des Esseintes of the Decadents, sniffing and licking his lips, or Ibsen's "solitary powerful" Stockmann, and his Rosner lusting for suicide—let us imagine these beings in competition with men who rise early, and are not weary before sunset, who have clear heads, solid stomachs and hard muscles: the comparison will provoke our laughter.<sup>30</sup>

In Nordau's world-view, "degenerates" would inevitably succumb in their battle with the healthy and sane. Human beings would recover from fin-de-siècle fatigue and eventually adapt to civilizational advances. In his

projections for the end of the 20th century, Nordau rather accurately predicted a generation constantly on the telephone, in railway carriages or “flying machines,” thinking simultaneously on all five continents, and at ease in the great metropolitan cities.<sup>31</sup> In other words, he believed that the recovery of the “cultivated classes from the present derangement of their nervous system” was more than possible. It depended, however, on a resolute stand being taken against the mystics, ego-maniacs, and other “degenerates,” whom he defined as “enemies of society,” opposed to the “natural organic form of humanity.” Indeed, whoever regarded civilization as worth protecting and saving, “must mercilessly crush under his thumb the anti-social vermin.”<sup>32</sup> Hence Nordau advocated hounding remorselessly those (like Nietzsche) who were allegedly enthusiastic over the “lusting beast of prey.” No pity should be extended, either, to the “filth-loving herd of swine, the professional pornographists” whose incitement to lasciviousness could, in Nordau’s opinion, cause grave injury to bodily and mental health. It was axiomatic that any society without self-control, discipline and shame was marching towards its certain ruin. “The pornographist poisons the springs whence flows the life of future generations. No task of civilization has been so painfully laborious as the subjugation of lasciviousness. The pornographist would take from us the fruit of this, the hardest struggle of humanity. To him we must show no mercy.”<sup>33</sup>

Pornography was a special bête noire for Nordau. It was not an issue of freedom of expression or individual rights, let alone a question for public prosecutors or criminal judges. Rather it should be “voluntary guardians of the people’s morality” who would appropriately brand pornographers with the stigma of infamy. These guardians would be men of intelligence and integrity. They should be free from any trace of religious preaching, prudishness and cant. They must be individuals who could credibly expose and inspire the boycott of obscene works.<sup>34</sup> Nordau called on medical specialists (psychiatrists in particular) to play their part as well, in exposing immorality and “degenerate art,” so that many healthy spirits would be prevented from corruption by these decadent trends. Thus, he advocated the pitiless “characterization of the leading degenerates as mentally diseased; unmasking and stigmatizing of their imitators as enemies to society; cautioning the public against the lies of these parasites.”<sup>35</sup> Nordau’s war against degeneracy was, in his own eyes at least, a struggle of scientific enlightenment against superstition, of the conscious mind against unconscious urges, of judgment against appetite, the defense of an altruistic



Bar Kochba Club Members,  
Leipzig, 1902  
Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem

ethic of neighborly love and self-sacrifice against those who idolatrously worshipped their own egos and sought to release the beast in man.

Some aspects of Nordau's psychopathological analysis as expressed in *Degeneration* would be carried over into his Zionist speeches and writings after 1896. His sensitivity to the physical aspects of decadence is particularly evident in his call for the urgent regeneration the *Ostjuden* from their stunted, unhealthy existence.<sup>36</sup> The ghetto Jews had degenerated into *Luftmenschen* (detached from earthly existence).<sup>37</sup> Their lives had to be made cultured and productive again by freeing them from the stultifying influence of a petrified religion, poverty, and unemployment. Only order, discipline, hard work, and the creation of a "normal" economy could produce normal, healthy bodies. Consistent with this outlook, Nordau developed his conception of *Muskeljudentum* (muscular Jewry), reflected in the organization of Jewish national athletic clubs and gymnastic associations (*Turnvereine*) in Central and Western Europe at the end of the 19th century.<sup>38</sup> At the same time he emphasized the need to raise the masses of *Ostjuden* to the level of physical fitness of Western Jews. At the Zionist Congress of 1901 he drew a sharp contrast between the emaciated, cough-racked frames of the East European ghetto Jews and the "stately horsemen, these first-class fighters, these stylish dancers, these prize-winning gymnasts and swimmers" who came from

wealthier Western Jewish families.<sup>39</sup> Nordau was convinced that Zionism could bring about the closing of this gap and the physical transformation of the *Ostjuden*. For Nordau, *Gymnastik* in particular (rather than sport) was ideally suited to perfecting the human body, the muscles, the willpower, and self-confidence of the modern Jew. It was essential for the construction of a new masculine Jewish identity, one that could overcome the legacy of the ghetto with its submissiveness, passivity, exaggerated intellectualism, and unproductive spirit.<sup>40</sup> The new Jew who combined muscular force and vigorous mental activity with a supple, athletic body represented Nordau’s ideal (based as it was on ancient Greek models) of authentic virility. The muscular Jew would develop the manly virtues of courage, loyalty, endurance, and willpower, which were the essential prerequisite for national liberation.

Nordau’s world-view was indeed the antithesis of that projected by more “spiritual” Zionists like Nathan Birnbaum or Ahad Ha’am. His emphasis was on the “high road of vigorous action” and decisiveness which Zionism must take.<sup>41</sup> He vigorously defended Jewry against the antisemitic charge of physical cowardice by pointing to various examples of Jewish valor in the past; from David’s victory over Goliath, through the Hasmoneans to Bar Kochba’s desperate war against the Roman Empire.<sup>42</sup> The cult of national heroism which Nordau sought to awaken, was clearly designed to reverse the fearful demoralization of nearly two millennia by recreating the “lost muscular Jewry” of the past.<sup>43</sup>

Nordau looked to the “return of Zion” to “normalize” the Jewish connection to nature and physical labor. This return to the land would cure not only the pathology of the *Luftvolk* in Eastern Europe but also the modern urban crisis of nervous exhaustion which he had analyzed in *Degeneration*. Jews as ultra-sophisticated urban intellectuals in Central and Western Europe were particularly exposed to nervous disorders like the “degenerate” artists and writers described in Nordau’s earlier work. To put an end to this danger of degeneration, to regain Jewish dignity and reconstruct a healthy Jew out of the ruins of the Diaspora, Nordau postulated a new type who would be clear-sighted, well-built, and endowed with a broad, powerful chest.<sup>44</sup> Such emphasis on physical robustness, energy, will-power, and discipline was by no means unique to Nordau. It was characteristic of many nationalist thinkers preoccupied with the “decadence” of modern industrial Europe at the end of the 19th century.

Nordau's vision of the "new Jew" corresponded to the aesthetic and moral ideals of the German, Czech, and Austrian gymnastic movements in Central Europe though it was less obviously militaristic and not directed against external or internal enemies.<sup>45</sup> Nordau did not in fact see any contradiction between his rationalist liberalism (with its reliance on science and the Darwinian theory of evolution), the cultural critique which he offered in *Degeneration*, and his Zionist commitment to the reconquest of Jewish dignity. It was self-evident for him that the Jews had to acquire a land of their own which would normalize their condition, stabilize their character and root them in the soil, while providing a refuge from growing antisemitic persecution. Zion would be indispensable for regenerating both the impoverished *Ostjuden* from their ghetto legacy and the *Kaffeehausjuden* of the West from their decadent, unhealthy life-style. The Zionist ideal would also provide a new moral and existential basis for recovering the solidarity and altruism sorely lacking in Jewish as much as in European society.<sup>46</sup>

This analysis did not in itself entail explicit rejection of the Enlightenment heritage of individualism, despite Nordau's sharp critique of the French revolutionary ideology of Jewish emancipation.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, for all his Germanic emphasis on masculinity and physical robustness, Nordau's "new Jew" was still integrated in a *liberal* rather than a tribal nationalist or proto-fascist framework, though the differences between them could easily become blurred.<sup>48</sup>

There is another interesting paradox. More than most Central European Zionists, Nordau had a highly ambivalent attitude to Europe and its historic legacy. *Degeneration* had expressed his deeply pessimistic vision regarding the decadence of European culture. Nevertheless, he strongly identified with the westernized and Enlightenment form of "Europeanism" within the Zionist movement.<sup>49</sup> Despite the deterioration of morals and the poisonous growth of racist antisemitism around 1900, Europe even in its morbid condition, represented to Nordau a higher civilization and the only possible model for Zionism. A resolutely *Western*, political Zionist, he had nothing but disdain for the "backward" religious or secular culture of East European Jewry—which he dismissed as "*wildes Asientum*" (wild Asiaticism) in a polemic against Ahad Ha'am.<sup>50</sup> His attitude to the romantic idealization of *Ostjuden* by other cultural Zionists like Nathan Birnbaum or Martin Buber was equally dismissive.

What especially angered Nordau was their questioning of the *European* character of the future Jewish State and its need to transplant the best of

Western culture to the Eastern Mediterranean. Not for a moment could Nordau, the great critic of European decadence, envisage an “orientalization” of the Zionist project. Modern antisemitism might have transformed Jews into “Orientals” or “Asiatic” strangers in Europe, but in the Middle East, they were expected by Nordau to be fully-fledged Europeans.<sup>51</sup> Their task was to push forward the *moral* frontiers of Europe to the Euphrates. In this Eurocentric colonial vision, Zionism would be performing a “civilizing mission” in Asia Minor, similar to that of the British in India.<sup>52</sup> However, Nordau insisted that Zionism, unlike European imperialism, was not motivated by profit but driven by the need to find an answer to antisemitic persecution.<sup>53</sup> This claim did not prevent Nordau, after 1917, from presenting Zionism as the best guarantor of the interests of the British Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean; or from emphasizing the “natural” superiority of Jews over Arabs in education and culture as a sufficient justification for the Zionist project. Nordau firmly rejected the existence of either an Arab or a Palestinian nation. But he did insist on respect for Arab civil rights and human dignity within a Jewish state—a position more fully developed by the Russian-born founder of “revisionist” Zionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky.

Nordau’s perspective, whether in the context of relations between the West and the Middle East, Zionism and Arab nationalism, or between Jews and Palestinian Arabs, remained unshakably centered on continued European domination of the non-Western world. At the same time, it was European antisemitism which had brought Nordau to Zionism, much more than his earlier critique of “degenerate” modernism.<sup>54</sup> It was the German antisemites who proved to him that he would never ultimately be accepted, even as a “cultural” German.<sup>55</sup> In March 1893, two years before his conversion to Zionism, Nordau wrote in despair to a Prussian conservative friend, Herr von Jagow, correspondent of the *Kreuzzeitung* in Paris, about the terrible humiliation he had recently suffered in Germany. According to his account, local antisemites had administered the deepest emotional shock to Nordau of his entire existence, gravely insulting his personal honor while he was holidaying in a Baltic resort. He did not go into all the details but emphasized with unmistakable bitterness that the offense came from “educated circles” of German society. He felt it all the more acutely since he had always regarded himself as a “German writer,” patriotically seeking to extend “the fame of German letters.”<sup>56</sup>

Nordau’s personal involvement in the Dreyfus case which began in 1894 and his encounter with Herzl was to reinforce his sentiment that the social

assimilation of German and European Jews was an illusion.<sup>57</sup> Both Herzl and Nordau agreed that it was modern European antisemitism which had transformed them into Zionists.<sup>58</sup> Both of these Budapest-born Central European Jews who became fashionable writers of the German and Austrian fin-de-siècle, had witnessed Dreyfus's degradation in Paris in January 1895. They had seen the rise of a new kind of political Jew-hatred in Germany, France, and Austria, no longer primarily grounded in religious prejudices; and they were all too aware that Jewish emancipation under modern conditions was full of ambiguities and contradictions.

Before he became a fully-fledged Zionist, Herzl expressed this anguish in his play, *Das neue Ghetto* (1894). Nordau's own play *Dr. Kohn*, subtitled "Ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel aus der Gegenwart" (1899), written some years after his own conversion to Zionism, diagnoses the tragedy of Jewish assimilation (and conversion) in German society, even more acutely.<sup>59</sup> In both cases, questions of Jewish honor, of dueling and *Satisfaktionsfähigkeit* in the face of social discrimination are paramount.<sup>60</sup> Both plays reflect the pessimistic view that antisemitism is an inevitable and permanent feature of Jewish existence in the Diaspora. Both sharply reject conversion to Christianity as a solution to the Jewish dilemma, regarding Jewish identity primarily from a *national* standpoint. Nordau, in particular, employed the racial perspective to underline the failure of mixed marriage, the impossibility of expunging antisemitism, and the indelible aspects of Jewish identity—making assimilation appear virtually impossible in European society. In this respect, Nordau was echoing the conclusions of the young Nathan Birnbaum, at least a decade earlier.

In his pre-Zionist writings, it is true that Nordau (like Herzl) had paid little public attention to antisemitism and the "Jewish question." He considered Jewry essentially as a religious group, criticizing its separatism and attachment to outdated customs and "superstitious" rituals. In *Die konventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* (1883) Nordau had still related to antisemitism primarily as a pretext or mask for diffuse passions of envy and resentment felt by the poor and ignorant towards the rich and powerful.<sup>61</sup> At the same time he was well aware of the political manipulation of Jew-hatred by Prussian Junkers in Germany and the dominant feudal classes in Russia and Austria-Hungary. Nordau preferred, however, to treat the "Jewish question" as an epiphenomenon, marginal to the sickly condition of the civilized world. This was still the case in *Degeneration* where Nordau avoided discussion of racial antisemitism, despite its striking relevance as a

symptom of the crisis of European civilization. A rare exception was his passing reference to the self-destructive pathology linked to the antisemitism in Wagner's work, along with another casual remark describing this hatred as a specifically *German* hysteria. Nordau observed that German antisemitism was driven by a compulsive persecution-mania which was able to transform the alleged victims of persecution (i.e., the Germans) into savage oppressors capable of almost any crime.<sup>62</sup> His astute comments on Wagnerism and German antisemitism, owed not a little to Friedrich Nietzsche, making his vicious attack on the “insane” philosopher even more insipid.

The marginalization of antisemitism in Nordau's earlier work changed dramatically with the Dreyfus Affair and his involvement in the Zionist movement. Henceforth, the “Jewish question” was no longer separable from the crisis of Western civilization. The more that Nordau came to define Jewish emancipation as a hollow reality, the more critical his stance towards the abstract rationalism of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The emancipation of the Jews, he emphasized, had not taken place organically, “from an inner necessity” or as an act of genuine fraternity. It happened solely because logic demanded it. “Popular sentiment rebelled, but the philosophy of the Revolution decreed that principles must be higher than sentiments. The men of 1792 emancipated us only for the sake of principle.”<sup>63</sup>

A hundred years after the French Revolution, it was clear to Max Nordau that, except for England (where emancipation had “already been completed in the heart before legislation expressly confirmed it”), Jews were not at all accepted in the European consciousness as equal citizens. Emancipation had proved to be nothing but a thin façade following the rise of modern racial antisemitism, which above all focused its attack against educated and assimilated Jews. They were especially vulnerable since they had too swiftly given up those elements of national identity, solidarity, and communal life which enabled Jewry to overcome medieval persecutions and Christian bigotry in the past. Nordau's brilliant address at the First Zionist Congress in 1897, incisively dissected the tragic identity problem of the “new Marranos”—as he called the emancipated Jews of Western Europe:

He has given up his specifically Jewish character; but the peoples let him feel that he has not acquired their special characteristics. He has lost the home of the ghetto; but the land of his birth is denied to him. His countrymen repel him when he wishes to associate with them. He has no ground under his feet and he has not community to which he

belongs as a full member.... With his Jewish countrymen he has lost touch: necessarily he feels that the world hates him and he sees no place he can find warmth when he seeks for it. This is the moral Jewish misery which is more bitter than the physical, because it befalls men who are differently situated, prouder and possess the finer feelings....<sup>64</sup>

Nordau's acute portrayal of the predicament of the modern, emancipated Jew was the direct outgrowth of his own personal odyssey, his intense involvement in the world of German letters, his familiarity with France and with the wider European cultural sphere. Even more clearly than Herzl and Bernard Lazare (the two Zionist thinkers who most resembled him), Nordau grasped how European racism had trapped the free-thinking Jew into an enforced identity. He believed that there was no way out of this cultural bind except through Zionism—understood as the recovery of a collective, public Jewish identity reformulated in modern, secular terms. Although his earlier work was not explicitly political and had marginalized the “Jewish question,” there is nonetheless an underlying connection between his cultural critique and the Zionist vision of the regenerated “new Jew” which he now advocated. It was Max Nordau, the Central European *littérateur* who suppressed his own Jewish identity for decades, who first diagnosed in his *Degeneration* the looming disaster of a culturally deracinated, atomized, and morally dissolute European society. The pathology which he detected in the art and literature of his own time had no direct reference-point that related to Jews. Yet, at the core of Nordau’s analysis of the Jewish condition lay an unmistakably pessimistic vision of the atomized self, the alienation and the psychological deracination of Jewry in the West.<sup>65</sup> His sharp critique of the physical, as well as the moral degeneration of the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe similarly reflected a psycho-pathological approach to society and politics.

European culture, as Nordau saw it, was threatened by rapid urbanization, modernization, and social change as well as by a rampant nihilistic individualism in the arts. For the Jews, too, “decadence” constituted a severe challenge in all its material, moral, and psychological dimensions. By the mid-1890s, the seemingly irresistible rise of the new racist antisemitism provided the trigger which linked the two crises together. Nordau did not abandon his liberal framework of thought, his rationalism or faith in science as a critical method, as he faced these challenges. But he did become convinced that only a Jewish variant of Central European nationalism—

which would root Jewry once more in its native soil—could provide a viable and honorable solution to the crisis of the age.

For Max Nordau, the central goal of Zionism remained the transformation of Jewry into robust, healthy, and virile individuals, capable of rebuilding themselves and revitalizing the Jewish people in Zion. This required extirpating everything that was effeminate, weak, cowardly, sickly, unhygienic, alienated from nature, and desexualized. The Yiddish language, traditional Jewish piety, over-intellectualism, cynicism, and resignation had to be fought against in the name of the new code of honor and chivalry. Nordau explained this ideal in a speech of June 1903 to a Zionist gymnastic club, which called for the creation of *Muskeljudentum* (“a Jewry of muscle”). In this speech, Nordau appeared to internalize part of the antisemitic diagnosis of the Jewish condition, even as he sought to bolster the sense of Jewish pride, ethnic solidarity, and self-awareness. Jews, he insisted, had been deprived by their ghetto history of “light and air, water and earth.” In the narrow Jewish street, they had become accustomed to gloom, darkness, fear, and “nervous blinking.” Only an empowered, heroic Zionism could counteract this debilitating legacy. This was a grim (and in its way distorted) vision of the *Ostjuden*. It could not have been more different from the idealization of East European Jewish culture and spirituality proposed by Nathan Birnbaum or Martin Buber, who had exaggerated in the opposite direction. Nordau evoked Bar Kochba, “the last embodiment of a battle-hardened and bellicose Jewry.” He looked to gymnastics to “straighten us in body and character,” to give Jews a new sense of self-confidence, so that once more they would become “deep-chested, tightly muscled, courageous men.” The new *Muskeljuden* (muscle-Jews) had not yet had their chance to match the heroism of their forefathers. But they already surpassed them in one particular—by openly and freely professing their nationality, rather than covering up the signs of their circumcision, as did the ancient Jewish circus-fighters.<sup>66</sup>

Nordau’s Zionist cult of masculinity was closely linked to the values and aesthetic of the European fin-de-siècle. It represented the other face of his fierce critique of cultural modernism. This was not a vision free of dogma, prejudice, contradictions, and paradoxes. At the same time, it was often perceptive in its diagnosis of Jewish “pathologies” and identity conflicts in the fin-de-siècle. Nordau himself remains something of an enigma. He was both a radical anti-clerical and a cultural conservative, a cosmopolitan humanist and an unalloyed political Zionist, a free-thinking liberal and a

committed Darwinian. He called for a merciless struggle against “degenerate” art while speaking in the name of “enlightened” middle-class values. Like other political Zionists, Nordau continued to believe in the superiority of Europe while fiercely denouncing its racist antisemitism. He remained a modern anti-modernist and a rationalist anti-intellectual. Max Nordau was himself the quintessential embodiment of that crisis of values which he pungently diagnosed—both master and victim of the Central European cultural discourse to which he so ardently adhered.

#### NOTES

1. For an overview of his oeuvre, see *Max Nordau (1849-1923)*, ed. by Delphine Bechtel, Dominique Bourel, and Jacques Le Rider (Paris 1996); Hans-Peter Söder, “Disease and Health as Contexts of Modernity: Max Nordau as a Critic of Fin-de-siècle Modernism,” *German Studies Review* (1991): 474-87. The best biography is by Christoph Schulte, *Psychopathologie des Fin de Siècle. Der Kulturkritiker, Arzt und Zionist. Max Nordau* (Frankfurt a.M. 1997).
2. For Nordau’s early view of the “Jewish question,” see the suggestive treatment by Jay Geller, “Un Avenir sans Juifs. Les Ecrits Présionistes de Nordau,” in *Max Nordau*, 225-43; Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle. Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley, Calif. 2001), 19-73.
3. Ernest Newman, “Friedrich Nietzsche,” *Free Review* (May 1896): 114; Israel Zangwill, “Without Prejudice” *Pall Mall Magazine* (June 1894): 345, who caricatured Nordau as a German with style, bent on “improving the prose of the Fatherland, and who can get a sentence into a Page octavo.”
4. For this episode, see Hans-Peter Söder, “Captain Dreyfus in German? Max Nordau’s Dr. Kohn as a ‘Bourgeois Tragedy,’” *Modern Judaism* 15 (1995): 37; see also Schulte, *Psychopathologie*, 288-90.
5. Söder, “Captain Dreyfus,” 36-38.
6. George L. Mosse, “Max Nordau. Le Libéralisme et Le ‘Nouveau Juif,’” in *Max Nordau* (above, n. 1), 17.
7. Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, transl. from the 2nd ed. of the German work (London 1895), 1.
8. For Nordau’s overall view of France and the French, see Robert S. Wistrich, “Max Nordau and the Dreyfus Affair,” *Journal of Israeli History* 16 (1995): 1-19.
9. Nordau, *Degeneration*, 2.
10. Ibid., 9.
11. Ibid., 11.

12. Ibid.

13. See B. A. Morel, *Traité des Dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'Espèce humaine et des Causes qui produisent ces Variétés maladiques* (Paris 1857), p.s., who defined degeneracy as “a morbid deviation from an original type.” Cesare Lombroso, *L’Uomo delinquente in rapporto all’Antropologia, Giurisprudenza e alle Discipline carcerarie* (Turin 1884), 147ff., for the definition of “stigmata” or brandmarks of degeneracy in a person’s physical characteristics—an idea which Nordau borrowed from Lombroso (to whom he dedicated the book) and extended beyond the category of “born criminals.”

14. Nordau, *Degeneration*, 20.

15. These comments on the impressionists (like Nordau’s clinical assumptions concerning “degenerate” artists) uncannily anticipate Nazi views on the subject. See the essay by Jan Tabor, “Der Irrweg eines wahnsinnigen Wortes: Entwicklung und Anwendung des Begriffes Entartung,” in *Kunst und Diktatur*, ed. by Jan Tabor (Baden 1994), 1: 90-97; and Robert S. Wistrich, *Weekend in Munich. Art, Propaganda and Terror in the Third Reich* (London 1995), 45-55. The similarities do not, of course, make Nordau into a protofascist but they reveal some common ground between late 19th-century liberal middle-class philistinism, conservative aesthetics and the Nazi backlash against modernism in the arts which began during the Weimar Republic.

16. The only artists exempt from Nordau’s assault belonged to the early modern or classical Enlightenment period, like Shakespeare, Goethe, and Beethoven; see Meir Ben-Horin, *Max Nordau* (New York 1956), 21. For a comment on Nordau’s view of art, see P. M. Baldwin, “Liberalism, Nationalism and Degeneration: The Case of Max Nordau,” *Central European History* 12 (1980): 102.

17. Nordau, *Degeneration*, 453; see also George L. Mosse, “Introduction” to the American edition (New York 1968).

18. Ibid., 416; see also Schulte, *Psychopathologie*, 205ff. for Nordau’s critique of “degeneration.”

19. Steven E. Aschheim, “Max Nordau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Degeneration,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1993): 643-57 for a comparison.

20. Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895), 42.

21. Ibid., 43.

22. Eugene Weber, *France. Fin de Siècle* (London 1987), 12.

23. Ibid., 4.

24. Ibid., 10.

25. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895), 538-39. Nordau relied on the research of Professor Richard von Krafft-Ebing (the famous academic psychologist at the University of Vienna) rather than on Freud.

26. Weber, *France*, 25; see also Zeev Sternhell, ed., *The Intellectual Revolt against Liberal Democracy 1870-1945* (Jerusalem 1996).
27. See Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, *Pierre de Coubertin* (Paris 1966).
28. For a fascinating pan-European perspective on the last fin-de-siècle which includes a discussion of Nordau, see Walter Laqueur, “Fin-de-siècle: Once More with Feeling,” *History* 31 (1996): 5-47.
29. Nordau, *Degeneration*, 540.
30. Ibid., 541.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 556.
33. Ibid., 557.
34. Ibid., 559.
35. Ibid., 560.
36. See Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jews in German and German Jewish Consciousness 1800-1923* (Madison, Wisc. 1982), 87; Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 74-97.
37. See his “Kongressrede” (1901), in Max Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften* (Cologne 1909), 117ff.
38. Ibid., 379-81.
39. Max Nordau, “Rede am 5ten Zionisten-Congress,” *Die Welt*, 3 Jan. 1902, 8.
40. Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History* (New York 1987), 108; Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 88-93.
41. Ibid., 56; see Max Nordau’s “Discours sur l’éducation du people juif,” *L’Echo Sioniste*, 15 July 1903, 128.
42. “Judeus Conference de M. Max Nordau sur le soldat juif,” *Zion* (partie française) (Berlin), 31 May 1897, 29; see also “Muskeljudentum” in *Zionistische Schriften*, 379-81.
43. Max Nordau, “Rede am 2. Zionisten-Congress,” *Die Welt*, 2 Sept. 1898, 11.
44. Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 380.
45. Mosse, *Max Nordau*, 19.
46. Ibid., 24, 25.
47. See Robert S. Wistrich, “Max Nordau, l’Antisémitisme et l’Affaire Dreyfus,” in *Max Nordau*, 56-57; Schulte, *Psychopathologie*, 265-95.
48. Mosse, *Max Nordau*, 26-27, points to an element of conformity inherent in the Zionist creation of the “new Jew,” as in other nationalisms. Nordau nonetheless regarded nationalism as a process leading from barbarism to altruism and to a greater love of humanity. His Jewish nationalism remained sober, rational, and bourgeois, devoid of historical exclusivism, myth, or religious mysticism.

49. For some of the wider issues, see Yaakov Shavit, “The ‘Glorious Century’ or the ‘Cursed Century’: Fin-de-siècle Europe and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Nationalism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 553-74.
50. Max Nordau, “Achad Ha’am über Altneuland,” *Die Welt*, 13 Mar. 1903.
51. See Alain Dieckhoff, “Max Nordau, L’Occident et La ‘Question Arabe,’” in *Max Nordau* (1996): 285ff.
52. “VIII. Kongressrede,” *Zionistische Schriften*, 175.
53. “Zionismus und Antisemitismus” (1899), *ibid.*, 300.
54. Christoph Schulte, “Dégénérescence et Sionisme,” in *Max Nordau* (1996), 348-49. Schulte rejects the idea that the diagnosis of degeneration was the source of Nordau’s Zionism as claimed by Moshe Halevi, *Max Nordau: Haguto hatzionit upoalo batenua hatzionit* (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv, 1988). In my view there is a connection between these two phases in Nordau’s life.
55. Nordau’s personal confrontation with German antisemitism came during a holiday stay in Borkum and is described in the letter to Eugen von Jagow dated 22 Sept. 1893. The target of anonymous antisemitic correspondence, which was sent to him through the hotel post, Nordau’s sense of shock was a major factor in bringing him to Zionism. The letter is quoted in full (in the German original and in a French translation) by Christoph Schulte, “Quatres Lettres Clefs Inédites de Max Nordau,” in *Max Nordau*, 362-64.
56. *Ibid.*, 363.
57. Nordau rapidly emerged as one of the leading defenders of Dreyfus in the German and Austrian press. See Anna Nordau, “Zionismus und Dreyfus-Prozess,” in *Erinnerungen, Erzählt von Ihm selbst und der Gefährtin seines Lebens*, by Max Nordau (Leipzig and Vienna 1928), 198-216; and Robert S. Wistrich, “Max Nordau, ‘l’Antisémitisme et l’Affaire Dreyfus,” in *Max Nordau*, 51-68.
58. Alex Bein, *Theodor Herzl. Briefe und Tagebücher*, (Frankfurt a. M. 1983-1990), 1: 210 (letter of 6 July 1895)
59. See the remarks by Hans-Peter Söder, “Les Juifs sous le Kaiser. ‘Dr. Kohn,’ une tragédie bourgeoise, de Max Nordau,” in *Max Nordau*, 246-58.
60. Mark H. Gelber, “La ‘Satisfaktionsfähigkeit’ Juive dans ‘Das Neue Ghetto’ de Herzl et ‘Doktor Kohn’ de Nordau. Une Etude sur la Réception,” in *ibid.*, 201-24.
61. Max Nordau, *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* (Leipzig 1884), 2.
62. Max Nordau, *Entartung*, (Berlin 1892), 1: 372.
63. Max Nordau, “Speech to the First Zionist Congress, Basle 1897,” in *The Zionist Idea. A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. by Arthur Herzberg (New York 1973), 236. Schulte, *Psychopathologie*, 291-95.

64. *Ibid.*, 240.

65. This point is briefly sketched in the chapter on Nordau in Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York 1981), 101-11; see also Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca, N.Y. 2004) for a more comprehensive view.

66. “Muskeljudentum,” in *Zionistische Schriften*, 379-81; Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 92-93.

## CHAPTER 7

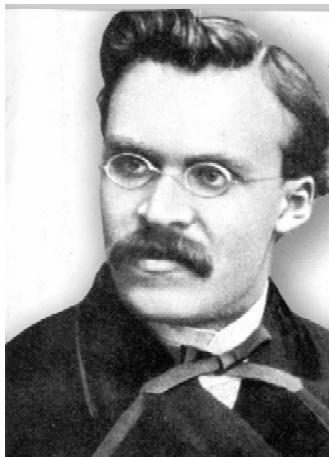
### Friedrich Nietzsche, Germany, and the Jewish “Superman”

Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the great intellectual iconoclasts of the 19th century. In some respects more radical than even Marx or Freud, this descendant of generations of German Protestant pastors became perhaps the most implacable foe of Christianity in modern times. His narrative voice was often deliberately prophetic in tone, his writings were at times even apocalyptic in their resonance (e.g., *The Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*), with all of the puzzling strands of obscurity, enigma and paradox that frequently accompany such dramatic modes of utterance. In *Ecce Homo*—written in 1888—the last and the most productive year of his intellectual life (shortly before the onset of insanity)—it seemed as if he had a frantic premonition of his fate: “The memory of something dreadful will be linked with my name, of an unparalleled crisis.... I am no man; I am dynamite.” In the same text, Nietzsche envisages terrible political convulsions and disasters, cryptically warning his readers, “There will be wars such as never were on earth. Only after me will there be high politics on earth.”

On 18 October 1888 he wrote to his friend Franz Overbeck from Turin that he was now

moving against the Germans on all fronts; you’ll have no cause to complain about ambiguity. This irresponsible race, which has on its conscience all of our civilization’s great disasters, and which at every decisive moment of history had “something else in mind”—today has in mind “The Reich”.... [T]here has never been a more crucial moment in history—but who’d be expected to know that?<sup>1</sup>

Yet, despite Nietzsche’s revulsion from the national vanities and bombastic pomposity of a newly united Germany, after his death in 1900 he would be rapidly converted by some of his right-wing disciples into an advocate of German imperialism, militarism, and great power politics.<sup>2</sup> To some extent, as we shall see, this was a shameless manipulation of his legacy.



Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900),  
German philosopher and cultural  
critic.

At the same time, there was clearly something elusive in Nietzsche's fragmented, diffuse, and lyrical oeuvre—experimental in method, aphoristic in style, and anti-systematic in nature—that laid itself open to such uses and abuses, to multiple and opposed interpretations, not to say misappropriations; so much so, that it often seemed difficult to ascertain who the “real” Nietzsche was or if such a person actually existed. His life and work appears in retrospect like a battlefield of contending polarities—suspended between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, between and beyond good and evil, or the “master” and “slave” moralities—antitheses he harbored within his soul until the twilight of madness descended upon him in 1889, leaving the final verdict to the care of posterity. For some, he will be primarily remembered as the atheistic philosopher of nihilism, who first pronounced that “God is dead” (by which he meant the 19th-century “Christian God”); or the Antichrist who came to reevaluate all values (the notorious *Umwertung aller Werte*); for others, he is more like the first moralist of what has been called a post-God society. Among his contemporaries there were those, like Max Nordau, who caricatured his thought, damning it as the diseased reflection of a decadent Europe, disconnected from its ethical moorings; yet others, regarded this lyrical apostle of existentialism with his relativistic, perspectival search for truth, as a great liberator; as a truly “free spirit” (Stefan Zweig) who broke the yoke of sham certainties, moral absolutes, and fixed truths, teaching humankind the harder, more courageous path of self-overcoming.

The Nietzschean message of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “I am that which must always overcome itself,” certainly breathed a fresh music into European philosophy—that of Dionysian laughter, the will to power and a pagan affirmation of life in all its suffering and tragedy. Yet the individualistic philosopher of the *Übermensch* who passionately strove for self-transcendence and appealed to human beings to rise above their mundane limitations, was nonetheless interpreted, as if he were the prophet of a Germanic *Herrenvolk* (master race) seeking to dominate the world. This process of creeping annexation began shortly after Nietzsche’s mental collapse, with his own sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche—who would in later years foster an image of his work as “proto-Nazi” in spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Already at the age of twenty, in 1864, the young Friedrich Nietzsche had written the following revealing words to Elisabeth: “If you want to find peace of mind and happiness, then believe. If you want to be a disciple of truth, then search.”<sup>4</sup> By then, he had repudiated the Protestant Christian faith bequeathed to him by his country clergyman father from Saxony (who died from brain disease when Friedrich was only five) and his fanatically pious mother. Elisabeth Nietzsche would, however, combine her strict allegiance to Christianity with a belief in Aryan racial supremacy, and in the 1920s, with loyalty to Hitler. This development was already prefigured by her marriage in 1885 to a leading Berlin antisemitic agitator and high school teacher, Bernhard Förster, who had instigated the notorious 1881 national petition to limit Jewish immigration and participation in German public life. Elisabeth’s marriage to Förster outraged Nietzsche, leading to a break with his sister, with whom he had previously enjoyed a remarkably close relationship.<sup>5</sup> Now, as he confided to a friend, there could be no question of reconciliation “with a vengeful antisemitic goose.”

To make matters worse, the Förster couple married on Wagner’s birthday—seven years after Nietzsche’s final break with the illustrious German composer. A year later, in 1886, the Försters embarked on an extraordinary utopian settlement project—bringing blond-haired, blue-eyed German families to the jungles of Paraguay to establish Nueva Germania—a breeding colony devoted to the ideals of Aryan racial purity, free of Jewish capitalist influence.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after Förster’s suicide in 1890, Elisabeth returned to Germany to take care of her mentally paralyzed brother until his death in 1900. She would be responsible for compiling Nietzsche’s posthumous *The Will to Power* (1901) presenting her own tendentious editing of this unfinished work as his last great “synthesis.” From 1892 onward, she

edited and censored Nietzsche's unpublished works, forging, altering, or destroying documents, especially those concerning herself, their split over Christianity and antisemitism, or negative remarks about Wagner. Elisabeth's school of falsification would be continued by the Nazis when they decided thirty-five years later to place Nietzsche in the service of their own racist ideology. Indeed, the official philosopher of National Socialism, Alfred Rosenberg, did not hesitate to mendaciously distort citations and alter Nietzsche's remarks, especially on Judaism and the Jews, even inventing quotes when it suited his purpose.<sup>7</sup> More sophisticated Nazi philosophers like Alfred Bäumler took greater care to qualify their statements by phrases suggesting that certain words "could have been spoken by Nietzsche" or sounded as if they came from one of his works.<sup>8</sup>

This tradition of historical falsification had begun in Nietzsche's own lifetime. In a letter to his close friend, Franz Overbeck (Professor of Church History at the University of Basel) in 1886, he ruefully observed that his *Zarathustra* book "has charmed the antisemites." Nietzsche also mentioned that in the *Antisemitic Correspondence* published by the insatiable racist demagogue Theodor Fritsch, his name was "mentioned almost in every issue." He subsequently reproached Elisabeth with some bitterness for her complicity with the antisemites:

One of the greatest stupidities you have committed—for yourself and for me! Your association with an antisemitic chief expresses a foreignness to my whole way of life which fills me ever again with ire or melancholy. It is a matter of honor to me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal regarding antisemitism, namely *opposed*, as I am in my writings. I have been persecuted in recent times with letters and *Antisemitic Correspondence* sheets; my disgust with this party (which would like all too well the advantage of my name!) is as *outspoken* as possible, but the relation to Förster, as well as the after-effect of my former antisemitic publisher Schmeitzner, always brings the adherents of this disagreeable party back to the idea that I must after all belong to them.<sup>9</sup>

Nietzsche had been warned some time earlier by an Austrian Jewish admirer, Dr. Josef Paneth, that such associations could only damage his credibility.<sup>10</sup> He now informed his sister that every time *Zarathustra* was mentioned in Fritsch's antisemitic rag sheet, he became almost physically sick.<sup>11</sup> A year later, in his last book, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche expressed his unqualified horror that the right-wing, antisemitic Junker newspaper

*Kronenzeitung*, cited him with approval as if he embraced its own blinkered nationalist philosophy. He was becoming literally obsessed with the need to “expel the antisemitic screamers out of the country.”<sup>12</sup> In the margin of his last letter (January 1889) to his colleague, the great Swiss historian of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt, Nietzsche scrawled, “Abolished [Kaiser] Wilhelm, Bismarck and all antisemites”—while a final note to Overbeck concludes, “Just now I am having all antisemites shot.”<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche’s last words to Fräulein von Salis were no less graphic: “I have just taken possession of my kingdom, am casting the Pope into prison, and am having Wilhelm, Bismarck and Stöcker shot.” Adolf Stöcker, the Protestant *Hofprediger* (court-preacher) and founder of the Christian Social party in Berlin, along with the Prussian nationalist historian von Treitschke, symbolized in Nietzsche’s eyes everything he hated about the new German Reich.<sup>14</sup>

Nietzsche’s antipathy to German nationalism and to overblown Teutonic rhetoric also comes out clearly in many other texts, standing as an important argument against tainting him with the swastika. In *Ecce Homo* he notes disapprovingly that “Germany” has become an argument, “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,” a principle: the Teutons supposedly represent the “moral world-order...” There is now a historiography that is *reichdeutsch*; there is, even I fear, an antisemitic one...and Herr von Treitschke is not ashamed.”<sup>15</sup>

Nietzsche had no time at all for the new myths of Aryan racial superiority (though on occasion, terms like “Aryan” humanity occur in his writings) and sharply rejected popular concepts of “pure blood.” These categories, which he examined in his “Law of Manu” observations dealing with outcasts, struck him as far from harmless. He feared that they might someday be invoked to justify the oppression of non-Aryans. He also observed in the notes of *The Will to Power* that “the Aryan influence has corrupted all the world”—a characteristic Nietzschean way of counteracting the arguments of contemporary German racists against so-called “Semites.” Significantly, too, in a passage of *On the Genealogy of Morals* that discusses the “blond beast,” Nietzsche insisted that “between the old Germanic tribes and the Germans there exists scarcely a conceptual relation, not to speak of a blood relation.”

Nietzsche manifestly did not share Richard Wagner’s enthusiasm for primordial Germanic myths and despised contemporary German culture. This was noted by at least one Nazi writer, Curt von Westernhagen, who announced in his book *Nietzsche, Juden, Antijuden* (1936) that the time had

come to expose the “defective personality of Nietzsche whose inordinate tributes for, and espousal of, Jews had caused him to depart from the Germanic principles enunciated by Meister Richard Wagner.”<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche’s relationship with Wagner had begun in 1868, when at the age of twenty-four he first came under the maestro’s spell in Tribschen (Switzerland). A year later, Wagner republished his malevolent work of antisemitic incitement *Das Judentum in der Musik*, denouncing the “Judaization” of German art. Nietzsche did not comment on this inflammatory work. But his correspondence with Richard and Cosima Wagner before 1878 betrays a tendency to slide at times into mundane and stereotypical anti-Jewish remarks. In a notebook entry of January 1874, Nietzsche remarks with seeming detachment that Wagner “insults Jews who in present-day Germany possess the most money and own the press. At first, he had no vocational reasons, later his insults were acts of revenge.”<sup>17</sup>

The young Nietzsche initially was bowled over by the “fabulously lively and fiery” Wagner. Not only was the composer witty, entertaining, and a musical genius but also a father figure to venerate and to fear. No doubt, when he aped the anti-Jewish slurs of the Wagners (Cosima was at times more virulent than her husband), Nietzsche may have genuinely believed that the “Jewish press” had been persecuting his much-admired mentor. But by the time of their break, Nietzsche would better understand the raw emotions (especially the psychology of envy) behind Wagner’s antisemitism. Nietzsche remarks at one point that “Wagner is Schopenhauerian in his hatred of the Jews to whose greatest deed he is not able to do justice: Christianity! After all, the Jews are the inventors of Christianity.”<sup>18</sup> Increasingly, however, he saw Wagner as a decadent antisemite to be vigorously opposed. Nor could he stomach Wagner’s growing German chauvinism, Francophobe abusiveness, and evolution toward Christian religious piety in his final opera, *Parsifal*. It was no accident that Nietzsche would positively invoke Jews like Jacques Offenbach and Heinrich Heine (with his “divine sarcasm”) whom the Wagnerian antisemites vilified as destroyers of “German values.” In 1884, Nietzsche observed,

Offenbach has even more right to the title of “genius” than Wagner. Wagner is heavy, ponderous: nothing is more alien to him than moments of exuberant perfection achieved by this buffoon [Hanswurst] Offenbach.<sup>19</sup>

In 1887, Nietzsche would call Offenbach “that most sophisticated and exuberant satyr, who keeps to the great tradition as a musician”—a real relief

from the sentimental and “at bottom the *degenerate [entarteten]* composers of German romanticism.” Nietzsche thereby turned Wagner’s own term of “degenerate” against its originator; to execrate the man whom he had once hailed in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), as a redeemer-prophet of Germanic rebirth.<sup>20</sup> But ever since seeing the *Ring* at Bayreuth in 1874, Nietzsche had become increasingly allergic to the “brutal Teutonisms” of Wagner’s operas. He could no longer bear the mean-spirited antisemitism or xenophobic Germanness of the master’s propaganda organ, the *Bayreuther Blätter*.<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche’s admiration for Bizet’s *Carmen*—given the Spanish-Jewish ancestry of the composer—was another ostentatious turning of his back on the Wagnerian “sickness.”<sup>22</sup> Bizet clearly exemplified the revised Dionysian principle of Nietzschean aesthetics—that whatever is divine “moves on light dancing feet.”

In his *Human, All Too Human* (1878), Nietzsche unequivocally concluded that Wagner was nothing but a lamentable *decadent* ready to crawl on his knees before the Cross, while pathetically clinging to his dark Teutonic gods. It was the beginning of a long grueling vendetta that would culminate in 1888, five years after the composer’s death, with *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. But already in 1878, much to the Wagner’s fury, Nietzsche referred admiringly to the accumulation of capital, spirit, and will by the European Jews. More ominously, he observed that this was an acquisition “so huge that it had to incur envy and hate-filled measures in the form of literary indecencies in almost all our nations...making Jews scapegoats for all conceivable public and private misfortunes and leading them to the slaughter house.”<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche deplored the narrow nationalism that was already then seeking to exclude the Jews—an outlook that stood in sharp conflict with his own “good Europeanism.” The Germans, he insisted, must accept the Jews (as the English and the French had already done), thereby benefiting from their high intelligence and economic abilities.

At this time [in 1876] Nietzsche also told his Austro-Polish Jewish admirer Siegfried Lipiner of his “very great expectations” concerning young people of Jewish origin.<sup>24</sup> It was the same decade during which he enjoyed an intimate friendship with a highly assimilated, self-effacing, and alienated Jewish intellectual, Dr. Paul Réé, whom he valued highly for his acute insights into human behavior. Both his sister and the Wagnerians in Bayreuth predictably blamed this cool, cerebral, “Israelite” for the rift between Nietzsche and Wagner.<sup>25</sup> But it would be more accurate to say that

Nietzsche's emancipation from Wagner's influence opened the door to novel insights into Judaism, Christianity, antisemitism, and modern culture.

By the late 1870s, Nietzsche had voluntarily exiled himself from the new German Reich. He led a life of continual wandering in Southern France, Italy, and the Swiss Engadine Mountains seeking more conducive climes for his mental and physical health. He had little regard for the Prusso-German cult of the authoritarian state (that "coldest of all cold monsters") and openly mocked the obscurantism that he came to detect in German Christian antisemitism.<sup>26</sup> In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche commented that he had not met a German "who was favorably disposed towards Jews." This was not intended as a compliment. His remarks about Germans as a national group, throughout the 1880s, became more acerbic, at times even openly offensive. He deplored their obtuseness, "the blond head, the blue eye, the lack of "esprit," on their faces, language and bearing," above all "the hideous excitation brought on by alcoholism"; the endemic German cultural and political provincialism, and especially the Förster-Wagner-Dühring morass of racist antisemitism. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche savaged that

apostle of revenge in Berlin, Eugen Dühring, who in the Germany of today employs the most indecent and repulsive moralistic trash; he is the prime moral big mouth in existence, even among like-minded antisemites. All of them are people of *ressentiment* (II:11).<sup>27</sup>

Nietzsche's contempt for these "latest speculators in idealism—the antisemites," rolling their eyes heavenward in the "Christian-Aryan petty-bourgeois mode" knew no bounds. Behind the gathering drumbeat of antisemitic German nationalism, he detected "worm-eaten physiological mishaps" and pathological self-haters infecting the happiness of the healthy with their own sense of misery. As Nietzsche put it in 1888, antisemite was another name for the "socially lowest people," the losers, the misfits, the bungled, botched, and so-called underprivileged—the *Schlechtweggekommene*.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the comparison between Germans and Jews in Nietzsche's writings of this period invariably rebounds to the detriment of the former. Thus in *The Gay Science*, the Germans are described as a lamentable, unreasoning race into whose thick heads sense literally needs to be knocked by force.<sup>29</sup> Jews, on the other hand, have always had to rely on logic and persuasion:

Everywhere that Jews have come into prominence, they have taught more keen decision-making, sharper analysing, and more precise writing: it was always their task to bring reason [*raison*] to a nation.”<sup>30</sup>

Such statements did not stop Nazi academic propagandists like Heinrich Härtle from claiming that “never has anyone attacked Jews more sharply than Nietzsche”—a comment whose self-serving cynicism it would be difficult to equal.<sup>31</sup> But Nietzsche’s confessional “autobiography,” *Ecce Homo*, gives the lie to such assertions, reminding his readers that to be “a good German” one must first “de-Germanize” oneself (*entdeutschen*), unless one is of Jewish descent: “Jews among Germans are always the higher race—more refined, spiritual, kind. “*L’Adorable Heine*,” they say in Paris.”<sup>32</sup>

It is worth recalling in this context that it was the Danish literary critic Georg Brandes (Morris Cohen), an exemplar of Jewish *délicatesse* and a model “good European,” who first “discovered” Nietzsche for the world of academia in 1887. Brandes admired what he called the “aristocratic radicalism” of the German philosopher—a label that Nietzsche happily accepted.<sup>33</sup> There were, however, no Germans of whom he could say as much—indeed, apart from a few artists (Wagner above all), he claimed to have never enjoyed “a single good hour with Germans.”<sup>34</sup> On 15 October 1888, his forty-fourth birthday, he summed it all up by declaring, “What a blessing it is to find a Jew among the German horned cattle!” At least Jews, unlike the typical German professors, appreciated him. In a letter to Theodor Fritsch of 23 March 1887, he scolded the antisemitic propagandist (a true “proto-Nazi”), telling him that the most valuable contribution he could make to the history of German culture would be to publish a lengthy list of German scholars, artists, poets, writers, actors, and virtuosos of Jewish descent! Jews, he told Fritsch, were much more interesting than Germans.<sup>35</sup> Antisemitism had evidently become a contributing factor to his great estrangement from the prevailing German spirit epitomized by “the books of the puffed-up and sentimental blockhead named Paul de Lagarde!” (De Lagarde was a leading German academic orientalist and a rabid antisemite, highly appreciated by the Nazis).<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in his unpublished notes of 1887, we find Nietzsche raging against the “damnable Germans” and the poisonous *névrose nationale*” of antisemitism that had so ruinously intruded into his own personal life.<sup>37</sup> He was, for example, aghast at the thought that his epic *Zarathustra* had entered the world as “*indecent* literature” since its publisher, Ernst Schmeitzner, “was an antisemite.”<sup>38</sup> And then, there were the ubiquitous Wagnerians—“a hair-raising company!” “Not a single abortion is missing

among them, not even the antisemite. Poor Wagner! Where had he landed!—If he had at least entered into swine! But to descend among Germans!”<sup>39</sup>

In *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche definitively closed the account:

Wagner’s stage requires but one thing: Germans! The definition of a German: an obedient person with long legs.... There is a deep significance in the fact that the rise of Wagner should have coincided with the rise of the “Empire”: both phenomena are proof of one and the same thing—obedience and long legs—never have people been more obedient, never have they been so well ordered about.”<sup>40</sup>

“*Wagner est une névrose*”—this Nietzschean denunciation exposed his narcotic art as diseased, morbid, hysterical, and brutal. Wagner was “a great corrupter of music”—the opiate of the Second German Reich—a master of hypnotic trickery, an incomparable histrionic personality, a tyrant with an actor’s genius. To me, this reads like an uncanny anticipatory description of Wagner’s political alter ego, Adolf Hitler. Can we really doubt, then, where Nietzsche would have stood with regard to the politics of the Nazis? Could the man who saw with such clairvoyance through the original Bayreuth circle (a key link in the German ideology that led to National Socialism) have been taken in by its plebeian offspring? This is hardly likely. Yet through the efforts of his sister, Elisabeth, and the German *völkisch* Right, before and after 1914, Nietzsche—the great anti-dogmatist, anti-antisemite, and unmasker of Wagnerian *Kitsch*—could still be mythified into a war-mongering Jew-baiter and ultimately into a philosophical alibi for Adolf Hitler.

Clearly, there must have been some intellectual ingredients that made such a distortion possible. For instance, Nietzsche does at times seem to accept the biological discourse of his contemporaries depicting the battle of races and castes as the verifiable stuff of history. He appears to condone the aesthetic justification for elitist rule and even for slavery, as in the case of classical antiquity. Moreover, he did envisage a new “master race” for Europe (though one of mixed blood, which would include the Jews)—a ruling caste whose model was ultimately taken from the ancient Greeks.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche accepted a Lamarckian view about the inheritance of acquired characteristics. He believed in the degeneracy of half-breeds and consistently abhorred the “herd mentality” as well as the egalitarian doctrines of democrats, anarchists, and socialists. Above all, he declared a war to the death against Christianity—one that had important implications for his view of Judaism, since the two were, as he put it, “racially related.” Nietzsche insisted that Christianity was “to be understood entirely in terms of the soil from which it

grew—it is *not* a countermovement to the Jewish instinct; it is the successor itself, a further step in its frightening logic.”<sup>42</sup> At the same time, he denounced in *Daybreak* “the attempt to pull away the Old Testament from under the feet of the Jews—with the claim that it...belongs to the Christians as the *true* Israel, while the Jews had merely usurped it.” This, he vehemently rejected as a philological farce fraudulently practiced by Christian theology throughout the ages.

Although he was strongly opposed to Christian antisemitism, Nietzsche nonetheless blamed the Jews for the “denaturalization [*Entnaturlichung*] of natural values” implemented by Christianity. The Jews, he wrote in the *Antichrist*, had “made humanity into something so false that, still today, a Christian can feel antisemitic without understanding himself as the last stage of Judaism.” Nietzsche’s unfavorable contrast of the “holy unnaturalness” of the Judaic features in Christianity with Greek *naturalness* and pagan nature-worship is a recurring and significant refrain. So, too, is his hatred of “the Jewish fanaticism of a St. Paul”—the “greatest of all apostles of revenge”—responsible in his eyes for the most fateful and catastrophic revaluation (*Umwertung*) of values in world history.<sup>43</sup> Paul had brought with him from Judaism an enmity to everything noble, proud, and privileged—in short, precisely that disastrous subversion of the reigning order that produced the downfall of the Roman Empire and destroyed the values of the classical world. There can be no doubt that Nietzsche detested the “priestly” Judaism of the Second Temple period for being the parent of Christianity, “the one immortal blemish of mankind.” The Jewish priests had spread wholly spurious ideas of a “moral world order,” sin guilt, punishment, repentance, pity, and the love of neighbor. According to this debasing gospel, the wretched, the poor, the lowly, the humble, the meek, the sick, and the weak are those who truly deserve salvation—not the strong, the healthy, the brave, and the beautiful. Worse still, according to *The Antichrist*, Judeo-Christian doctrines of mercy were full of malice and *ressentiment* against the powerful and self-assured; they were nothing but the vengeance of “slaves” against their “masters.” The so-called “slave revolt in morals,”—an event of world historical importance—had been invented by priestly Judaism (synonymous for Nietzsche with the early Christians) as a form of self-affirmation and ascetic will to power.<sup>44</sup> This “slave revolt” had then been propagated and expanded by official Christianity throughout the world. In its modern secularized forms such as liberalism, scientific rationalism, or socialism, the

“slave revolt” had emerged as the prime source of Western decadence against which Nietzsche fought so fiercely.

*Ressentiment*, according to Nietzsche, had first succeeded in becoming a revolutionary force in ancient priestly Judaism. It was an agent of change that had indeed created *new values* (abhorrent though they might be) subsequently to be transformed by Christianity into a powerful universal religion. Nietzsche’s attack on this value system in *The Genealogy of Morals* is, of course, uncompromising. Judeo-Christianity is the petty, rancorous gaze of the slave at what *he* is not—the very opposite of a noble, life-affirming ethic. According to Nietzsche, the Jewish revolution in ethics triumphed in Pauline Christianity as a victory of *ressentiment*, one through which the Jews took vengeance on a hostile Gentile world.<sup>45</sup> “Jewish hatred” was the trunk of that tree of revenge that had created new ideals and values, beginning with Christian love, which was not the antithesis of its parent but rather its fulfilment.<sup>46</sup> Thus Nietzsche could claim that it was “the Jews who with awe-inspiring consistency dared to invert the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God) and to hang on to this ‘inversion’ with all their strength.”<sup>47</sup>

In these and other texts Nietzsche interprets priestly Judaism as being identical with early Christianity. Thus, when he refers to the Apocalypse of John (a quintessentially Christian book), he treats it as a purely Jewish text that expresses Jewish hatred of Rome.<sup>48</sup> In the deadly confrontation between two opposing value systems, aristocratic Roman values had been totally vanquished by Judeo-Christianity. Under the sign of the Cross, Israel had in fact achieved the ultimate “revaluation of all values.” To provoke the Christian antisemites and illustrate the historical triumph of Judea over Rome, Nietzsche wrote in the *Genealogy* (1:16),

Consider to whom one bows down in Rome itself today, as if they were the epitome of all the highest values—and not only in Rome but over almost half the earth...: *three Jews*, as is known, and *one Jewess*.”

Who are the members of this Christian holy quartet? Jesus of Nazareth, the fisherman Peter, the tentmaker Paul, and Mary, the mother of the aforementioned Jesus—all of them Jews! This was a useful rhetorical device with which to bash Christians, but it also had a nasty sting against Jews. For if antisemites traditionally indict Jews as Christ-killers, Nietzsche finds them guilty for having begotten him! Was the “Redeemer” not a “seduction and a by-path to precisely those *Jewish values*” (i.e., victory of the poor, the sick,

and the sinners!)? “Did Israel not attain the ultimate goal of its sublime vengefulness through the by-path of this ‘Redeemer,’ the ostensible opponent and disintegrator of Israel?” This is an astonishingly Machiavellian scenario. The Jews crucified the man Jesus as an enticing bait for the world to swallow—to create the ghastly paradox of a “God on the Cross,” the awesome image of “an unimaginable ultimate cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the salvation of man.” Through the “Redeemer,” and the intoxicating power of the symbol of the “Holy Cross,” Jewish ideals had triumphed over Rome. The Jews had created Christianity—a religion in which they did not themselves believe—in order to sap and weaken their Roman conquerors.

One can see how such statements might easily be manipulated by antisemites. After all, Nietzsche tells us that the Jews had always known how “to place themselves at the head of all movements of decadence.” Yet, they themselves were “the antithesis of all decadents,” a people who used the power of these instincts of decadence as a strategy for their own survival and self-preservation.<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche certainly detested the content of Judeo-Christianity for its denigration of the world, “unnatural” and anti-life character—but he also admired the tough vital energy that the Jews had retained throughout their history. This heroism was especially visible in the early biblical period, before the fall of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile. The Israelites of that era are very positively portrayed by Nietzsche as a proud, sovereign people of high spirit, courage and unconquerable will. In the *Antichrist* he writes:

At the time of the kings, Israel also stood in the right, that is, the natural relationship to all things. Its Yaweh was the expression of a consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself: through him victory and welfare were expected, through him nature was trusted to give what the people needed—above all, rain. Yaweh is the god of Israel and therefore the god of justice.

Biblical Judaism as recounted in the stories of the Patriarchs and of Moses, Joshua, Samson, Samuel, David, and Solomon—expressed the people’s own self-affirmation and flowing power. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche glowingly contrasts this vitality with the “rococo taste” of the New Testament.

In the Jewish “Old-Testament,” the book of divine justice, there are human beings, things and speeches in so grand a style that Greek and Indian literature have nothing to compare with it. With terror and

reverence one stands before these tremendous remnants of what man once was.

There is here, perhaps an echo of Heine's confession: "I see now that the Greeks were only beautiful youths; the Jews, however, were always men...martyrs who gave the world a god and a morality and fought and suffered on all the battlefields of thought."

To have glued Old and New Testament together as *one* book, as the "Bible"—the book par excellence—was for Nietzsche a "sin against the spirit."<sup>50</sup> In the *Genealogy of Morals* the dichotomy is even more graphic. In the Old Testament one can find

Great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable *naiveté* of the strong heart; what is more, I find people. In the new one, on the other hand, I find nothing but petty sectarianism, mere rococo of the soul, mere involution, nooks, queer things...a garrulous swell of feeling that almost stupefies; impassioned vehemence, not passion; embarrassing gesticulation.

Nietzsche, in one stroke, reverses almost two millennia of Christian dogma—Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox. The movement from biblical Judaism to Christianity is *not* a progress but a *regression*; a path from Dionysian values of grandeur, nobility, and sublimity to decline, degeneration, and enfeeblement. In *The Antichrist* he specifically mocks "the simplicity of Christian theologians" who insist on the positive development from the "God of Israel," the god of the people, to the Christian God"—supposedly, "the quintessence of everything good." On the contrary, the priestly culture of Judaism that produced Christianity had "accomplished a miracle of falsification" and "denaturation" of natural values. Happiness was now a reward, unhappiness a "punishment for disobeying God"—all the "natural concepts of cause and effect were turned upside down once and for all. The history of Israel itself was reinterpreted as "a stupid salvation mechanism before Yahweh," in which the priest and "the Law" alone can redeem men from their sins. It was on this false soil that Christianity had grown up as a revolt against the natural instincts, expressing a disgust for reality and fabricating the illusions of the kingdom of Heaven. In Nietzsche's feverish indictment, as set out in the *Antichrist*, Christianity had turned every value into "an unvalue," every truth into a lie and "every integrity into a vileness of the soul."

It has been suggested that Nietzsche’s demonization of Christianity was in essence *antisemitic*, since the Jews were its originators and therefore they bore ultimate responsibility for this supreme evil. This is, I believe, misleading. Nietzsche did lay the axe to the (Judeo-) Christian branches but did not seek to cut off the ancient Jewish roots of the tree, since he hoped to integrate the descendants of the Jews into a new society. He consistently distinguished between the grandeur and decadence of Judaism—something he did not allow for Christianity. Even priestly Judaism, in its perversity, was regarded as superior to Christianity, since it had at least created *new* values. Moreover, despite his hostility to rabbinical Judaism, Nietzsche expressed a complex admiration for Diaspora Jews (especially for his contemporaries)—convinced that they were specially suited to act as a catalyst in delivering Europe from the culture of decadence. He hoped that he would find in Jewry allies for his Dionysian culture war against a bankrupt, life-negating Christian morality and the detested imagery of a “God on the Cross.”

Through their long history of suffering (*Leidensschule*) Jews had after all acquired unique mental qualities of intelligence and shrewdness, wit (*Geist*), intellect (*Geistigkeit*), and adaptability (*Anpassungskunst*) to add to their “moral genius” (*Genialität*), their money, and their patience.<sup>51</sup> Adversity and profound suffering had turned them into the strongest, toughest, purest race in Europe (“*stärkste, zähste und reinste Rasse*”—not in the sense of brute force (*Kraft*) but of positive spiritual power (*Macht*).<sup>52</sup> Hence, Nietzsche saw the Jews as very much a part of the new elite of the future that would rule over the West—an “aristocracy of the spirit,” whose creative assimilation would help revive modern post-Christian Europe by giving it new norms and values. This does not mean that Nietzsche was an unqualified philosemite. He recognized that every nation possessed “unpleasant, indeed dangerous qualities” and in *Human, All Too Human* he summarily referred to the youthful stock-exchange Jews as perhaps “the most repulsive invention of the entire human race.” But in the same text he also blamed Christian Europe for the grief-laden history of the Jews, who had given humanity “the noblest human being (Christ), the purest sage (Spinoza), the mightiest book and the most efficacious moral code in the world.”

Moreover, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche asserted that in the darkest periods of the Middle Ages, Jewish freethinkers, scholars, and physicians held the banner of intellectual independence aloft and encouraged the humanist enlightenment that derived from Graeco-Roman antiquity. In a remarkable reversal of conventional Western Christian opinion, he added, “If

Christianity has done everything to orientalize the occident, Judaism has always played an essential part in occidentalizing it again.”<sup>53</sup>

Nietzsche never concealed his high opinion of Jewish thinkers from Spinoza to Heine; he especially admired the German-Jewish poet, with whom he felt a great stylistic affinity:

I seek in vain in all the realms of thousands of years for an equally sweet and passionate music. He possessed that divine sarcasm (*Bösheit*) without which I cannot imagine perfection.... And how he handles his German! It will be said one day that Heine and I have been by far the foremost artists of the German language—at an incalculable distance from everything mere Germans have done with it.<sup>54</sup>

Nietzsche greatly valued the resilience and affirmation of life in the face of adversity that writers like Heine exhibited. The Jewish ability to survive as Christianity’s “Other” in the harsh discipline of the Diaspora, fortified by the hatred of the Gentiles, was a strong point in their favor. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche’s evaluation of Jewish “psychological and spiritual resources” attains to a crescendo of praise. They were the “least liable to resort to drink or suicide in order to escape from some profound dilemma”; they [the Jews] possessed in their history “a great fund of examples of the coldest self-possession and endurance in fearful situations...their courage beneath the cloak of miserable submissions, their heroism...surpasses the virtues of all the saints.”

The Jews had successfully overcome two millennia of the Christian “teaching of contempt” and “never ceased to believe themselves called to the highest things.” Barred from all honors, they had put to effective use the occupations left to them yet still retained a “liberality of soul” as a result of their extraordinarily diverse experiences of human society. Nietzsche also praised the way in which “they honor their fathers and children, the rationality of their marriages and marriage customs” which “distinguished them among all Europeans.” True, they had not yet developed chivalrous or noble sentiments, but Nietzsche predicted that within a hundred years as a result of intermarriage “with the best aristocracy of Europe” they would acquire these virtues, too, and be willingly accepted as “masters.” Hence, the coming 20th century would mark a fateful decision concerning the destiny of European Jewry—whether they would become “the masters of Europe” or “lose Europe as they once a long time ago lost Egypt, where they placed themselves before a similar either-or.” Nietzsche somehow forgot to mention

that in Jewish tradition the “loss” of Egypt became the exodus from servitude that led to the Promised Land of Israel.

The Jews themselves, according to Nietzsche, knew that the old continent might fall into their hands like a ripe fruit, once they had achieved the first rank in every domain of European distinction. Indeed, he welcomed the prospect of a future Jewish leadership in which they would become “the inventors and signposts of the nations of Europe,” producing great men and great works that would make the ancient Jewish God “*rejoice in himself, his creation and his chosen people—and let us all, all of us, rejoice with him!*”<sup>55</sup>

But how should we read Nietzsche’s rather startling warning in *Daybreak* that the Jews must either master or “lose” Europe? By mastery, Nietzsche surely meant that Jews had the power to transform European values in depth, as they had already done before, through the medium of Christianity. “Losing” Europe may well have been a pointer to the antisemitic storm clouds on the horizon, suggesting deeply unpleasant possibilities of emigration or expulsion. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche tried to clarify the point:

[T]he Jews, if they wanted it—or if they were forced into it, which seems to be what the antisemites want—could even now have preponderance, indeed quite literally mastery over Europe, that is certain. Meanwhile they want and wish rather, even with some importunity, to be absorbed and assimilated by Europe; they long to be fixed, permitted, respected somewhere at long last, putting an end to the nomad’s life, to the “Wandering Jew”, and this bent and impulse (which may even express an attenuation of the Jewish instincts) should be noted well and accommodated.<sup>56</sup>

In these and other passages it is apparent that Nietzsche grants remarkable centrality and potency to the Jews as a people with a world historical mission. Was this belief merely a kind of the paranoid concept of the Jews as a world power developed by antisemites and Nazis? This seems unlikely. There is no evidence that Nietzsche shared the Christian myth of the Jews as dangerously powerful and secretly striving for domination.<sup>57</sup> While Nietzsche seems to be playing a dangerous dialectical game with antisemitism by invoking the Jews’ ability to become Europe’s masters, his intentions are clearly not those of the antisemites. He wants to see Jews fully integrated into modern society, so that they can be a blessing for it. To that end, he favors the secularization and creative assimilation of Jews *as Jews* into the new Europe.<sup>58</sup> Precisely for that reason, he adds, that “it might be useful and fair to expel the antisemitic

screamers from the country.” Nothing could be more remote from the Nazi vision of a regenerated *Judenrein* Europe based on Aryan-German racial supremacy! Indeed, as Yirmiyahu Yovel tellingly formulated it, “If the Nazis considered the Jews as *Untermenschen*, for Nietzsche they were a possible catalyst of the *Übermensch*.<sup>59</sup>

No doubt this exceptionally positive evaluation of their historic role was one reason for the attraction of many Central European Jewish intellectuals to Nietzsche’s work.<sup>60</sup> His influence on young Zionists like Martin Buber, who enthusiastically responded around 1900 to the Nietzschean call for a “transvaluation of all aspects of the life of the people,” is well known. So, too, is Nietzsche’s impact on Micha Josef Berdyczewski and the East European Zionists who sought to radically reconstitute a secularized Jewish national culture from the very foundations.<sup>61</sup> It was indeed this radicalism that prompted Ahad Ha’am’s fear that Nietzscheanism might dangerously threaten the ethical and spiritual continuity of Jewish values. The Nietzschean influence was, however, strong, precisely because it coincided with a Jewish artistic and national renaissance seeking liberation from the spiritual desiccation of the Diaspora.<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche’s assault on conventional morality and the spiritual discontents of bourgeois civilization appealed to many Zionists of this generation of 1900, who were looking for a life-affirming philosophy and an aesthetically oriented national rebirth. Nietzsche also attracted a broad array of “marginal Jews”—artists and intellectuals in Central Europe who had already lost their moorings in Jewish tradition without being fully absorbed by German or Austrian society. They included such diverse personalities as Arthur Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud, Stefan Zweig, Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Karl Kraus, Kurt Tucholsky, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Lessing.<sup>63</sup> To this galaxy of talents one could also add a long list of prominent non-Jewish authors from Rilke and Thomas Mann to Stefan George, Gottfried Benn, and George Bernard Shaw, not to mention philosophers, historians, and military men such as Max Scheler, Ludwig Klages, Oswald Spengler, or Count von Stauffenberg, who planted the bomb that nearly killed Hitler in 1944. Gottfried Benn, the leading German expressionist poet of the 1920s, looking back fifty years after the philosopher’s death, was not exaggerating greatly when he recalled that Nietzsche had found and *exhausted* all the definitive formulations for the next generation—“the rest was exegesis.”<sup>64</sup>

Nietzsche’s hybrid status as a philosopher-artist, his critique of all established thinking, his creative use of the dynamic of incessant self-

contradiction, and his refusal of the closure entailed by an internally consistent systematic worldview, help to account for the diversity and range of his influence. Nazi and fascist readings of his work were indeed only one among many examples of the possible outcomes of his philosophy, though they proved disastrous for his subsequent reputation. The “fascist” Nietzsche of the 1930s was considered to be a heroic irrationalist and vitalist who had glorified war and violence, inspiring the anti-Marxist revolutions of the interwar period.<sup>65</sup> According to the French fascist Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, it was the Nietzschean emphasis on the Will that inspired the voluntarism and political activism of his comrades.<sup>66</sup> Such one-dimensional readings were vehemently rejected by another French writer, the anarchist George Bataille, who in the 1930s sought to establish the “radical incompatibility” between Nietzsche (as a thinker who abhorred mass politics) and the “Fascist reactionaries.” He argued that nothing was more alien to Nietzsche than the pan-Germanism, racism, militarism, and antisemitism of the Nazis, into whose service the German philosopher had been posthumously pressed.<sup>67</sup> Bataille was one of the few intellectuals (one might add the names of Thomas Mann, Jaspers, and Camus) who in the 1930s and 1940s tried to rescue Nietzsche’s reputation from the rising fascist tide.<sup>68</sup> In Nazi Germany, at that time, pamphlets of Nazified Nietzschean *dicta* were indeed being produced, presenting him as an Aryan racial supremacist and ferocious antisemite.<sup>69</sup> What did it matter that in his own lifetime he had sharply opposed virtually every prominent antisemite including the Wagners, Dühring, de Lagarde, Stöcker, Förster, Gobineau, Renan, Wellhausen, and his own sister? What counted for the Nazis was their desire to politicize and militarize the Nietzschean concept of the will to power and to manipulate Nietzsche’s onslaught against Judeo-Christianity for the benefit of the new German *Herrenvolk*.

Nietzsche’s diatribes against the evil genius of “rabbi” Paul and the New Testament (which represented the depraved “priestly” element in Judaism) were naturally grist to the Nazi mill. So, too, were ranting passages like the following, in *The Antichrist*:

One does well to put on gloves when reading the New Testament. One is almost forced to do so by the proximity of so much uncleanness. We would no more choose to associate with the “first Christians” than we would with Polish Jews: not that one would need raise a single objection [*Einwand*] to them.... They both do not smell good.

Having yielded to crude German prejudices against Polish Jews, Nietzsche further aggravated this lapse by approvingly depicting Pontius Pilate as a “noble Roman” who could not persuade himself “to take Jew-dealings [*Judenhandel*] seriously.

The Nietzschean image of Judeo-Christianity as “the vampire of the *Imperium Romanum*,” was another stereotype that found more than an echo in the Christophobia of leading Nazis like Hitler, Bormann, Rosenberg, Ley, and Himmler. Though there is no proof that Hitler ever seriously read Nietzsche, in his wartime *Table Talk* there are references to Rome, Judea, and early Christianity that do sound like a crude and vulgarised version of Nietzschean ideas.<sup>70</sup> For instance, on 11-12 July, 1941, shortly after the invasion of the USSR, Hitler called the coming of Christianity “the heaviest blow that had ever struck humanity,” since it had supposedly destroyed the Roman Empire and 1500 years of civilization. Like Bolshevism, Christianity had been invented by the Jews—so Hitler asserted—to subvert and destroy the foundations of culture. Like Nietzsche, the Nazi Führer was obsessed with the apostle Paul, whom he crassly described as the “first man to take advantage of using a religion as a means of propaganda.” In decadent Rome, Paul had found the ideal terrain for his egalitarianism, his “crypto-Marxist” theories, and the “insane idea” of a universal god, who stood above the state. For Hitler, this decadent Judeo-Christian monotheistic creed was part of a diabolical conspiracy to undermine the natural order, where the strong must always prevail over the weak and power alone can guarantee right. Hitler liked to denounce Judeo-Christian morality as antithetical to the life-force and the instinct of self-preservation. He, too, praised the healthy pagan values of classical Antiquity. At such moments, he seemed to come uncomfortably close to echoing Nietzsche without ever quoting him.<sup>71</sup>

By the same token, Hitler’s diatribes against the barbarism, credulity, ignorance, and “poverty of spirit” encouraged by the Christian churches also contain crude echoes of 18th-century rationalists like Gibbon and Voltaire—whom nobody has ever suspected of proto-Nazism. Even if Nietzsche’s anti-Christian animus (inadvertently) paved the way for some of the Christophobic *Judenhass* exhibited by the Nazi leaders, he can hardly be said to have caused it. Similarly, to radically question such sacred taboos of Western culture as liberal democracy or Christianity does not make one into a fascist antisemite.

It is important to remember that Nietzsche sharply condemned anti-Christian antisemites like Eugen Dühring in his own day, no less fiercely

than he mocked the attitudes of Christian anti-Judaism. He ridiculed Dühring's stance that the Germans should turn their backs on the Old Testament for racial reasons or the popular *völkisch* notion that Christ was an “Aryan” and antisemite—positions that came close to official policy under the Third Reich. Similarly, Nietzsche blasted the German-Christian-Aryan antisemitism of the Wagnerites, whose input into Nazi ideology and myth-making was much greater than his own. Above all, his hatred for German nationalists and his growing empathy for contemporary Jews, suggests how little Nietzsche and his philosophy were ultimately compatible with Nazism. He was after all a “good European,” who believed in the value of “mixed races” and “mixed cultures.”

At the same time, Nietzsche's ferocious critique of the idea of equality, as exemplified in democracy and socialism, is a reminder that this free-thinking “philosemite” could all too easily be annexed for authoritarian and fascist philosophies. His vision of a new European order transcended nationalism and decadent “particularism”—even including an honored place for Jews in its ranks—but it nonetheless contained a dangerously seductive sting that in certain circumstances could become deadly.

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* (Albany, N.Y. 1994), 115.
2. Steven E. Aschheim, “Nietzsche and the German Radical Right 1914-1933,” in *The Intellectual Revolt against Liberal Democracy 1870-1945*, ed. by Zeev Sternhell (Jerusalem 1996), 159-76.
3. On these falsifications, see H. F. Peters, *Zarathustra's Sister: The Case of Elisabeth and Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York 1985).
4. In Walter Kaufman, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche* (1954; rpt. New York 1976), 30. Here, as in other places, I have somewhat modified the translation in accordance with my reading of the complete critical German edition, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtansgabe* (henceforth, *KSA*), ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzimo Montinari (Berlin and New York 1982).
5. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed., (Princeton, N.J. 1974), 42-45. On antisemitism as “the cause of the break between myself and my sister....” and his alienation from Wagner, see Nietzsche to Franz Overbeck, 2 Apr. 1884, quoted in Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche: The “Last Anti-Political German”* (Bloomington, Ind. 1987), 157; Weaver Santaniello, “A Post-

Holocaust Re-examination of Nietzsche and the Jews: Vis-à-vis Christendom and Nazism,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. by Jacob Golomb (London and New York 1997), 20-25.

6. See Ben MacIntyre, *Beyond the Fatherland: The Search for Elisabeth Nietzsche* (New York 1992).

7. See Alfred Rosenberg, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944) and Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge 1993), 232-33. Santaniello, “A Post-Holocaust Re-examination,” 42, suggests that when Rosenberg placed a wreath on Nietzsche’s grave, dedicated “to the great fighter,” it was a sinister way of silencing his true views rather than a genuine tribute from the leading ideologue of Nazism.

8. See Alfred Bäumler, *Nietzsche als Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig 1931), 157, which dismisses Nietzsche’s philosemitic responses. See also Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* (Cambridge 1998), 127-29. In a letter of 29 Mar. 1887, Nietzsche attacked the antisemitic views of Dühring, Wagner, Drumont, and de Lagarde. Caustically, he asked Fritsch, “Finally, what do you think I feel when Zarathustra’s name is borne in the mouths of antisemites?”

9. Nietzsche to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 456-57.

10. See Siegfried Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews. Exaltation and Denigration* (New York 1998), 188f.

11. *Portable Nietzsche*, 456-57.

12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Marianne Cowan (Chicago 1965), § 251, p. 187. I have modified the translation.

13. Letters to Burckhardt and Overbeck, in *Portable Nietzsche*, 687. I have slightly changed the translation.

14. For Nietzsche’s view of Stöcker, see Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 172-73.

15. Quoted in ibid, 163; from *Ecce Homo* (EH), “The Case of Wagner,” 2.

16. Von Westerhagen (whose book was published by Alexander Duncker in Weimar, 1936) was a convinced Nazi but one who could see the difference between Nietzsche and Gobineau. See Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews*, S. 13; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 267, n. 6.

17. Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews*, 288, deals at some length with the more offensive earlier characterizations of “Judaization,” “Jewish money-bags,” etc., in Nietzsche’s work.

18. Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God and the Jews*, 163, n. 78. This is, of course, a double-edged tribute.

19. See *Die Nachgelassenen Fragmente. Eine Auswahl* (Stuttgart 1996), S. 277.

20. Sebastian Hausmann (“Eine Erinnerung an Nietzsche” [1922]) believed that the deepest reason for his break with Wagner was personal rather than an issue of their respective worldviews. Nietzsche was “far too conscious of his own intellectual importance to submit to being used as a mere instrument in the hands of a supposedly greater genius.” Quoted in Sander L. Gilman, ed., *Conversations with Nietzsche. A Life in the Words of his Contemporaries* (New York 1991), S. 138.

21. On the rupture between Wagner and Nietzsche, see also Robert Gutman, *Richard Wagner* (1968; San Diego 1990), 358-60; David Large “Wagner’s Bayreuth Disciples,” in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large and William Weber (Ithaca, N.Y. 1984); Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews*, 112.

22. For the electrifying effect on Bizet’s music on Nietzsche, see the remarks of Resa von Schirnhofer in *Conversations with Nietzsche*, 150.

23. From *Human, All to Human*, in *Portable Nietzsche*, 62; I have modified some of Kaufmann’s translation.

24. On Lipiner, see William McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven 1974).

25. Cosima Wagner wrote to a friend, that in the end “Israel took over in the shape of a Dr. Rée, very slick, very cool...representing the relationship of Judea and Germania.... It is the victory of evil over good.” See Erich Heller’s introduction to *Human, All Too Human*, transl. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, U.K. 1986).

26. See *Portable Nietzsche*, 160; the expression comes from Z, I, “On the New Idol.”

27. Compare also Ernst Nolte, *Nietzsche und der Nietzscheanismus* (Frankfurt a.M. 1990), 104-106.

28. Nietzsche made it plain that he regarded antisemitism as a deliberate effort to try and “rouse up all the horned-beast elements in the people by a brazen abuse of the cheapest of all agitators’ tricks, moral attitudinizing.” That such a “swindle” could succeed in Germany was “connected with the undeniable stagnation of the German spirit”—the exclusive diet of “newspapers, politics, beer and Wagnerian music” and the “strong but narrow principle *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles.*” This was a prescient, not to say prophetic, insight.

29. Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews*, 226.

30. Ibid., 228.

31. Heinrich Härtle, *Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939). Härtle was nonetheless aware that there were discrepancies between Nietzsche’s thought and National Socialism—especially in his “inadequate” attention to biological facts and belief in the virtues of racial mixing. See Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis*, 84-85.

32. Kaufman, *Nietzsche*, 376-78; see Sander Gilman, “Nietzsche, Heine and the Idea of the Jew,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. Jacob Golomb (London 1997), 76-100, for the Heine connection.

33. For the Brandes-Nietzsche correspondence, see Georg Brandes, *Friedrich Nietzsche: An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism* (1889; London 1914).

34. In “Why I am so clever,” 5, he emphasized that his relation with Wagner had been the most intimate and profound of his whole life but that he felt only contempt for the Wagnerians.

35. Quoted in Yovel, *Dark Riddle*, 127.

36. With regard to de Lagarde, it is interesting to read Richard Reuter’s testimony, first published in 1895, which states that Lagarde’s *Deutsche Schriften* had a considerable impact on Nietzsche in the summer of 1876. De Lagarde’s critique of conditions in the German Empire, his devastating judgment on Protestant Christianity, and his sharply polemical style impressed the younger Nietzsche—though he was later led to diametrically opposite conclusions. See Gilman, *Conversations with Nietzsche*, 81-82.

37. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, transl. by Walter Kaufmann (New York 1968); Appendix, 798.

38. Ibid.

39. From *EH*, “Human, All Too Human,” 2, cited in Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews*, 245.

40. For other polemics in this vein, see Friedrich Nietzsche, “What the Germans Lack,” in *Twilight of the Idols*, transl. and ed. by R. J. Hollingdale (London 1968), 60-66.

41. See Hubert Cancik, “Mongols, Semites and the Pure-Bred Greeks: Nietzsche’s Handling of the Racial Doctrines of His Time,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 55-75.

42. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, transl. and ed. R. J. Hollingdale (London 1968), 44, 157-59. In this section, Nietzsche wildly fulminates against Judeo-Christian megalomania and the “*arrogance of the elect*.”

43. Ibid. The Jews are even described by Nietzsche as the “*most catastrophic* people of world history,” for having radically falsified natural values—a process that reached in culmination in Paul.

44. Ibid. Nietzsche recalls here his arguments in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where the historic significance of the Jewish people is identified with “the beginning of the *slave revolt in morality*.”

45. *The Antichrist*. For Nietzsche, this was the “*most fundamental of all declarations of war*,” but in the course of two millennia, it had proven victorious.

46. *Genealogy of Morals*, 1:8. Jesus, with his gospel of love, was in Nietzsche’s eyes the ultimate consummation and triumph of Jewish hatred and “sublime vengefulness”—the victory of the grand politics of revenge.

47. Ibid., 1:7. This inversion was for Nietzsche the demonstration that the Jews embodied “the most deeply repressed priestly vengefulness.” This was perhaps the most flawed and potentially pernicious of his claims about Judaism.

48. Ibid., 1:16. Nietzsche presents ancient Judea as an “antipodal monstrosity,” a symbol of “anti-nature itself” in Roman eyes, while the Jewish hostility to Rome is misleadingly represented as a wanton hatred—a notion that all too easily provided grist to the antisemitic mill. Ironically, the Gospel of John is the most *anti-Jewish* book of the New Testament—something that Nietzsche failed to address.

49. *The Antichrist*, 135.

50. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 52. Indeed, for Nietzsche, this was “possibly the greatest recklessness...that literary Europe has on its conscience.”

51. These positive characterizations are mainly from *Daybreak*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Gay Science*. See, for example, *Daybreak*, § 205, p. 206.

52. For a detailed distinction between *Kraft* and *Macht*, see Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche’s Enticing Psychology of Power* (Ames, Iowa 1989), 179-221.

53. Ibid. Nietzsche credits the Jews with enabling Europe to reconnect to its Greek heritage and embrace a “more rational and certainly unmythical explanation of the world.”

54. *Ecce Homo*, “How One Becomes What One Is,” in *Portable Nietzsche*, 660, my revised translation.

55. Ibid.; see also Yovel, *Dark Riddle*, 172-77.

56. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 251. In this same passage, Nietzsche observes that “a thinker with the future of Europe on his conscience, will count on the Jews” (and the Russians) and he advises a policy similar to that of the British aristocracy—to meet the Jews halfway, though with caution and selectivity.

57. Hyam Macoby, “Nietzsche’s love-hate affair. Are life-affirming Jews nearer to Superman than decadent Christians?,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1999, 14-15.

58. Yirmiyahu Yovel, “Nietzsche and the Jews. The Structure of an Ambivalence,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 158-92.

59 Yovel, *Dark Riddle*, 176.

60. Jacob Golomb, “Nietzsche and the Marginal Jews,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 158-92.

61. See David Ohana, “Zarathustra in Jerusalem: Nietzsche and the ‘New Hebrews,’” in *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma*, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich and David Ohana (London 1995), 38-60.

62. Paul Mendès-Flohr, “Zarathustra’s Apostle: Martin Buber and the Jewish Renaissance,” in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 233-43.

63. Jacob Golomb, “Nietzsche and the Marginal Jews,” 162-73. Golomb emphasizes the attraction that Nietzschean concepts of personal authenticity, self-overcoming, and the “transfiguration of all values” exercised on the fin-de-siècle generation of secular, marginalized Jewish intellectuals in Central Europe.

64. Quoted in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 412.

65. See, for example, Gilbert Merlio, “The Critique of Liberal Democracy in the Works of Oswald Spengler,” in *The Intellectual Revolt*, 177-89, who points to the “vulgarized Nietzscheanism” that became common ground between the conservative *völkisch* and fascist Right. Left-wing critics like George Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* (London 1962), fully embraced the Nazi image of Nietzsche as a *true* reflection of his thought. For Lukács, Hitler was “the executor of Nietzsche’s spiritual testament”—the link being the philosopher’s “irrationalism,” his hatred of egalitarian doctrines and loathing for socialism. More extreme still was George Lichtheim’s claim that Nietzsche provided inspiration to the SS program of mass murder in Eastern Europe. See his *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1972), 186.

66. Drieu La Rochelle was a convinced Nietzschean and “socialist” fascist opposed to the historical materialism and determinism of the Marxists. In his *Journal 1939-1945* (Paris 1992), 147, there is, however, a perceptive remark, dated 7 August 1944: “Nietzsche aurait vomi le Nazisme comme Weimar et Guillaume II. Mais n’empêche que le monde du XXe siècle ressemble à son ombre, qu’il en est le prophète. D’ailleurs, avec beaucoup de finesse il en a prévu toutes les rudesses et les grossièretés.”

67. Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche* (London 1992; French ed. 1945), 169-73; also idem, “Sur Nietzsche,” *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 4 (Paris 1970). In the second issue of *Acéphale* (Jan. 1937), Bataille sought to rescue Nietzsche from the fascists in the name of a left-wing existentialist interpretation. Elisabeth Roudinesco’s biography, *Jacques Lacan* (New York 1997), 131-33 for the details.

68. The most ambivalent and interesting of Nietzsche’s defenders was Thomas Mann, who in the 1930s had been upset by Nazi efforts to mobilize the philosopher for their own goals. In 1947, Mann suggested that it was fascism that created Nietzsche, rather than the reverse. Yet his philosophy had “presaged the dawning imperialism and as a quivering floatstick indicated the fascist era of the West.” See

Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany. 1890-1990* (Berkeley, Calif. 1992), 319.

69. Ibid., 232-71; Aschheim failed to point out the massive distortions of Nietzsche's thought that were required to give some plausibility to this operation.

70. See Adolf Hitler, *Table Talk 1941-1944* (London 1953), 720-22.

71. Robert Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse. Jews and the Nazi Legacy* (London 1985), 145-53.



PART II

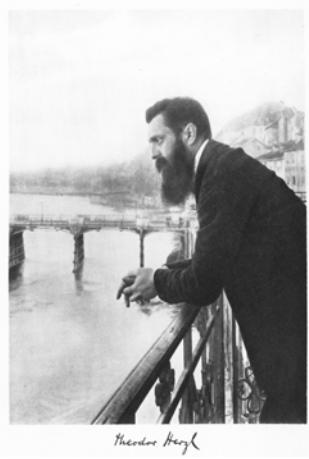
**From Herzl to Hitler**



## CHAPTER 8

### **Theodor Herzl: Artist, Politician, and Social Utopian**

Following the First Zionist Congress in Basle in August 1897, its initiator, Theodor Herzl, was convinced that he had “founded the Jewish State.” Herzl knew, of course, that such a claim if made public could only expose him to ridicule as an irresponsible demagogue. Yet despite the difficulties and the strength of opposition to his ideas, Herzl was supremely confident in the validity of his prophecy. This confidence did not arise out of a mystical religious faith but rather from his profoundly intuitive understanding of the Jewish condition and the role of myth in politics. More than any other Zionist leader of his time, Herzl was attuned to the importance of myth and symbolism as a vital driving-force in modern national movements and mass politics. From an early age, he displayed poetic and dramatic inclinations, attention to outward appearance and deportment as well as an instinctive feel for stage management. Not for nothing did he insist on formal black dress and white ties at the First Zionist Congress to help ensure the requisite aura of dignity and solemnity. In organizing the Zionist movement, Herzl’s sensitivity to imagery, design, and dramatic spectacle were essential to its transformation from a literary debating club into a factor of international politics. Under his leadership, Zionist assemblies and gatherings acquired a quasi-sacred aura of shared experience, producing a new sense of solidarity, elation, and strength. Herzl was only too aware of just how important such emotions could be in forging imagined pasts that provided the raw material for the birth or rebirth of modern nations. Though not a religious believer or a traditionalist himself, he understood that to cement a Zionist national consciousness he would have to find new ways to fuse modernity and Jewish tradition. The methods of organization, agitation, and propaganda employed by the movement he created might be modern but their emotional appeal relied on more ancient, even archaic, symbols like the “Promised Land,” the Covenant, or the “faith of the fathers.” This tradition would have to be tapped



Theodor Herzl gazing out over the Rhine in Basel (Switzerland) during the First Zionist Congress  
Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem

into, resurrected and reinterpreted in the light of current political needs if the demoralized Jewish masses were ever to be redeemed.

Herzl was convinced that his aim of national renaissance could never be achieved without recourse to those “imponderable,” unconscious factors in the lives of individuals, groups, and whole nations which make them ready to die for a cause. Not for nothing was Herzl a contemporary of Sigmund Freud and the Frenchman, Gustave Le Bon—each of whose pioneering works on hysteria and *Crowd Psychology* appeared in 1895, the year Herzl invented political Zionism. From his own observation of populist movements in the 1890s, Herzl could see just how important the appeal to raw emotion and ancient tradition had become in modern mass politics.

Indeed Herzl himself was to become one of the most potent myths of the Zionist movement which he had forged. In his outward appearance and bearing, he exuded the strength, pride, nobility, and physical beauty which Zionism offered to its followers as a counterweight to the “degeneration,” the ugliness and misery of ghetto life. If Zionism proposed to create a new muscular Jewry (as Herzl’s leading lieutenant, Max Nordau, insisted) and a new Jewish man—upright, virile, honorable, and dignified—then Herzl perfectly fitted the role. His physiognomy contained the core of the Zionist program. The manly figure, the handsome face, the *gravitas*, and the impressive beard (recalling the prophets of Israel) as well as the penetrating, melancholy eyes, embodied the Zionist promise of regeneration for many of his followers.

The Zionist iconography that developed around his person, especially after his untimely death in 1904, reinforced the power of Herzl's legend. His picture now adorned virtually every Zionist meeting hall, office, or reading room just as it gazed out over his followers at future Congresses of the movement. It could be found on trademarks of Jewish ceremonial objects, household articles, canned milk, or cigarette boxes. Herzl's portrait would still be there in May 1948 behind David Ben-Gurion as he read Israel's historic declaration of independence. To this day he silently presides over debates in the Israeli parliament. This iconization of Herzl has been a useful and unifying force for Zionism, transcending the gulf between Right and Left, liberals and conservatives, secular and religious Jews. There is potentially something for everyone in the life and personality of Herzl. For some he represents a modern secular vision of enlightened liberalism, and for others he is the model of statist *Realpolitik*. Even post-Zionists have found inspiration in his ideas.

But it is less the content of Herzl's program than his image, which captured the imagination of the Jewish people a little over a century ago. Zionism in its bold aim to radically transform Jewish consciousness and the external conditions of Jewish life, desperately needed a hero and a founding myth. The hero had to symbolize manliness and vigor, especially for a people that had been stunted by centuries of ghetto life, divorce from the soil, and alienation from nature. The hero must radiate authority in order to mobilize a fragmented, dispersed, and demoralized people towards a common end. He had to be a man of high culture and of the wider world, if he was to command the respect of Jews and non-Jews alike. Herzl fitted these criteria and more, for he was driven by a quasi-messianic sense of personal mission and was ready to sacrifice his own comfort and security for a greater cause. The fact that he underwent a kind of personal "martyrdom" in the service of Zionism could only add to the enveloping aura of the mythical hero.

For the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, with their own messianic longings for social redemption and national liberation, Herzl's image was even more potent. After all, he was a "Westerner" who had already scaled the peaks of German culture. Moreover, he was used to dealing with princes, politicians, and priests. His regal bearing echoed distant memories of ancient Jewish kings; the full beard seemed a reassuring link with Jewish tradition, the elegant, flowing prose was the mark of those Central European Jews who had successfully conquered "the ordeal of civility." Outwardly, at least, he was the embodiment of Austro-Hungarian panache allied to German *Bildung*.

The only son of a middle-class merchant family in Budapest, Herzl grew up in a social milieu which cultivated a deep love of German language and literature while retaining an emotional loyalty to Jewish values and tradition that is often underestimated. In a short autobiographical sketch, written in January 1898 for the London *Jewish Chronicle*, Herzl recalled:

I was born in 1860 in Budapest in a house next to the synagogue where lately the rabbi denounced me from the pulpit in very sharp terms because, forsooth, I am trying to obtain for the Jews more honor and greater freedom than they enjoy at present. On the front door of the house in the Tabakgasse where I first saw the light of this world, 20 years hence a “notice” will be posted up with the words—“This house is to let.”<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1870, Theodor joined the Realschule, a secondary school which emphasized the sciences and modern languages rather than classical studies. His marks in mathematical and technical subjects were disappointing (ending his dream of becoming an engineer like his boyhood hero, Ferdinand de Lesseps), and in religion they were lower than average. Nevertheless Herzl appears to have had a “Moses-complex” already in his earliest years.<sup>2</sup> While this did not lead to religious observance it did affect his self-image and sense of being chosen for a higher role.<sup>3</sup>

The adolescent Herzl was increasingly passionate about literature, writing essays in fluent Hungarian (as well as in German) on subjects as diverse as Napoleon, Savonarola, Muhammad, Hungarian patriots and poets, Greek mythology, religion, and heroism. There were also short stories, sketches, literary criticism, and speeches on topics like “The Achievements of Modern Civilization.”<sup>4</sup> The essays reveal that Herzl was certainly conversant with modern Magyar and German literature. They include sympathetic reviews of the works of Hungarian poets like János Arany (1817-1882), author of the great national epic, *Toldi*; and of Mikhály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), author of the Hungarian national anthem.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Herzl was also aware of the fact that even in post-emancipation Hungary, discrimination had not disappeared and it was difficult for Jews to obtain jobs in government service.<sup>6</sup> In 1875, the same year that he left the Technical High School and transferred to the Evangelical Gymnasium (attached to Budapest’s main Protestant Church), political antisemitism had surfaced with Gyöző Istóczy’s inflammatory speech in the Hungarian Parliament. Istóczy claimed that the Jews were an aggressive, socially exclusive, and cosmopolitan caste which had stubbornly resisted assimilation for nearly 4,500 years. Jewish

“liberalism” was merely a cunning fraud to deceive the Gentiles. The true aim of these nomadic alien invaders was world domination.<sup>7</sup>

Three years later Istóczy gave an extraordinary address (on 24 June 1878) in the Hungarian Diet, favoring the restoration of a Jewish State in Palestine. This happened at the very time that the eighteen-year-old Herzl was sitting his final exams in Budapest. Istóczy’s “Zionist” speech claimed that there was already a state of national emergency in Hungary, provoked by Jewish economic domination of the country. The situation was desperate.

It may very well be that in no other land in Europe does the Jewish Question necessitate a more urgently radical solution than in our monarchy [i.e., empire] and especially in Hungary.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately, in the Middle East, so Istóczy maintained, political conditions were ripe for a return of the Jews to Palestine and the restoration of the state “from which they have remained expelled for 1800 years.” Istóczy argued that this was an *international* problem which required the concerted efforts and vision of European statesmen and politicians like Benjamin Disraeli, Léon Gambetta, Eduard Lasker, Julius Glaser, and Joseph Unger (“the twin souls of the Austrian Cabinet”—all of whom he described as being Jews by “race.” Only through diplomatic action could the “Jewish Question” be solved in the interests of public unity and welfare.<sup>9</sup> Istóczy appealed therefore to “Jewish patriots” to begin rebuilding their ancestral home, while demanding of their more cosmopolitan brethren that they cease to form a “state within a state.” Jews who preferred to remain in exile, must assimilate fully with non-Jews and make “an honest peace with Christian civilization.” There is no definite proof of that Istóczy’s speech influenced Herzl. However his own arguments for Zionism nearly two decades later were remarkably similar on certain points.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Herzl was certainly aware of the Hungarian deputy’s central role in the Tisza-Eszlar blood libel of 1882 and of the pogromist atmosphere this had aroused in his native land.

These events might partly explain Herzl’s rejection of Hungarian culture or the scarcity of his references to Hungary after his parents moved to Vienna in 1878. But the repression of his Magyar background was probably shaped far more by a desire to integrate into the German student milieu of Vienna. Herzl’s passionate interest in German literature, history, and politics made this transition easier than it might otherwise have been. From his Germanophile mother (*née* Jeannette Diamant), he had acquired since childhood a fervent admiration of German *Kultur*, typical of many middle-class Budapest Jews.<sup>11</sup>

Herzl was initially drawn towards a Germanocentric nationalism during his university years. As a Hungarian Jewish student in Vienna, his *Deutschstum* was in many respects more pro-Prussian than Austrian.<sup>12</sup> This ostentatious identification with the German *Reich* was perhaps a way of overcoming his social marginality and self-alienation in Vienna—a city which despite its cosmopolitanism could be hostile and xenophobic to strangers.

Though Herzl rapidly shed any residue of Magyar patriotism during his Vienna years, he probably owed more to his Hungarian background than he admitted. Like his co-religionists from Budapest, Adolf Fischof, Theodor Hertzka, and Max Nordau, Herzl was far more politically activist than most native Viennese intellectuals.<sup>13</sup> A heroic style, the gift for improvisation and readiness to gamble, the mixture of utopian imagination and the flair for the diplomatic *beau geste* seem more obviously Hungarian than Austrian characteristics. It was perhaps from Hungary that Herzl first have derived his awareness of *national* identity, even if German rather than Magyar nationalism provided his best model for the Zionist movement.<sup>14</sup>

Herzl was only one generation removed from the Jewish religious orthodoxy of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. His paternal grandfather, Simon Loeb Herzl (1805-1879), who lived in Semlin, a small Austro-Hungarian frontier town near Belgrade, was a pious, strictly Orthodox Jew.<sup>15</sup> The son of a rabbi, he sometimes led the religious services in the small congregation in his home town. He had been a follower of one of the pioneers of religious Zionism, the rabbi of Semlin, Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878), who as early as 1834 had proposed the establishment of Jewish settlements in Eretz Israel.<sup>16</sup> Simon Loeb Herzl, who annually visited his family in Budapest, spoke reverently of Alkalai's ideas and this may have been his grandson's first exposure to the existence of Palestinian Jewish colonies.

The frequent portrayal of Herzl as a completely deracinated, “non-Jewish” Jew from an overwhelmingly assimilated background is therefore the stuff of legend. Indeed, it is seriously misleading. Herzl's father, Jacob, a successful bank director and timber merchant, had spent his first seventeen years in Semlin. He, too, had been a pupil of Rabbi Alkalai and later in Budapest, Jacob Herzl became a supporter of the Hungarian proto-Zionist rabbi, Joseph Natonek (1813-1892).<sup>17</sup> Significantly, Herzl's father provided strong moral and financial support for his son's efforts to maintain the momentum of the new Zionist movement after its foundation.<sup>18</sup> His strong-willed possessive

mother, Jeanette, was equally supportive of Herzl's Zionist activity. Her love of the German classics and espousal of middle-class values by no means conflicted with loyalty to Jewish family and national traditions. It was from this handsome, self-willed woman that Herzl inherited his strong sense of aesthetic form, sartorial elegance, social etiquette, and deportment.<sup>19</sup> His extraordinarily close attachment to his mother would exercise a strong grip on his whole personality.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it clearly affected his already shaky marriage, strengthened his de-sensualized view of women and perhaps even influenced his conversion to Zionism as a means of redeeming the lost motherland.<sup>21</sup>

During Herzl's early years in Vienna, he studied law, and in his own words, "took part in all the stupid student's farces, including the wearing of a colored cap of a *Verbindung*, until this association one fine morning passed a resolution that no more Jews should be received as members."<sup>22</sup> This humiliating episode, with its bitter taste of social rejection, was highly significant in Herzl's personal development. In the first place, his allegiance to the semi-feudal values and the German nationalism of the Austrian *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) had hitherto been intense.<sup>23</sup> Herzl evidently enjoyed the romantic ritual of Teutonic student fraternities, the sporting of glamorous swords, colored caps and ribbons. He sympathized with the ardent pro-Prussian and Germanocentric nationalism of his fellow students and their generational revolt against the older rationalist pieties of Austrian liberal-bourgeois culture.<sup>24</sup> The dramatist Arthur Schnitzler recalled in his memoirs:

One of the Jewish students who belonged to a German-national fraternity before the changes just mentioned, was Theodor Herzl. I can remember seeing him with his blue student's cap and black walking-stick with the ivory handle and the F.V.C. (*Floriat Vivat Crescat*) engraved on it, parading in step with his fraternity brothers. That they eventually expelled him, or, as the students called it, "bounced" him, was undoubtedly the first motivation that transformed this German-national student and spokesman in the Academic Debating Hall (where we had stared at each other contemptuously one evening at a meeting, without however knowing each other personally), into the perhaps more enthusiastic than convinced Zionist, as which he lives on in posterity.<sup>25</sup>

Schnitzler had been unfavorably struck at the time by the somewhat haughty, snobbish condescension of Herzl as a fraternity student. But he was also impressed and even envious of Herzl's precocious savoir-faire, his elegance,

self-possession, and oratorical capacities, already demonstrated in the *Akademische Lesehalle*.<sup>26</sup> Schnitzler always remembered the casual, seemingly effortless and commanding aristocratic pose, more common among Hungarians than bourgeois Jews in Vienna. But his recollections of Herzl were undoubtedly influenced by his own ingrained skepticism about Zionism.

In 1881, Herzl had decided to join the nationalistic dueling fraternity Albia, which four years earlier had adopted the black, red, and gold ensign of German nationalism.<sup>27</sup> His *nom de combat* was Tancred, recalling the young aristocratic hero of a novel first published in 1847 by Great Britain's future Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli. In *Tancred*, Disraeli had expressed a visionary, romantic Toryism, looking to reestablish the harmony of English society and to revitalize the Church as a moral and religious force by restoring its Hebraic foundations. For this purpose, the protagonist of the novel (like the young Disraeli himself) visits Palestine. Though a convert, Disraeli was evidently in favor of restoring national independence to the Jews and critical of Jewish assimilationists ashamed of revealing their race.<sup>28</sup> The young Herzl could have readily identified with Disraeli's conservative nationalism, his romantic extravagance and celebration of knightly crusader adventurism. These ingredients, as well as the latently messianic Judeo-Christian strain of proto-Zionism, might have unconsciously attracted him to the Tancred symbol.<sup>29</sup>

Herzl fought his obligatory student's duel on 11 May 1881, thereby upholding the aristocratic code of honor which the Austro-German student corporations scrupulously observed. But the rise of German racist antisemitism soon posed a serious problem for the 22-year-old Herzl. Hermann Bahr, a prominent member of the Albia fraternity (later to become one of Austria's most famous writers and an admirer of Herzl) had publicly called on his fellow students to seek spiritual renewal through a cult of "Aryan" pan-Germanism. The occasion for his outburst had been Richard Wagner's death on 13 February 1883 and the memorial celebration in the composer's honor held by the Union of German Students in Vienna. The funeral obsequies quickly degenerated into a pro-Bismarckian, pan-German, antisemitic demonstration against Jews and the Habsburg dynasty. Herzl's indignant letter of protest to the fraternity leadership in which he offered to resign as "a lover of freedom" (*Freiheitsliebender*) was coldly accepted and terminated his relationship with Albia.<sup>30</sup>

Herzl had already begun to concern himself with the “Jewish Question” after reading a novel, *The Jews of Cologne*, by the popular and prolific German writer, Wilhelm Jensen. This led him a year before his resignation from Albia to make some unflattering observations in his notebooks about the physical and moral effects of the ghetto on the Jews. Their degenerated physique and mentality was in his view the result of a lack of crossbreeding with other races. It was the “gloomy ghetto” whose influence endured “long after its material walls had fallen” (and which still cramped the outlook of many educated Jews) that was responsible for the misshapen historical development of Jewry. The ghetto had acted like a tight ring tormenting and paralyzing the fingers, stifling creative activity, initiative and free movement in Jewish life.<sup>31</sup>

Herzl followed this up by attentively reading Eugen Dühring’s *Die Judenfrage als Racen, Sitten und Kulturfrage* (The “Jewish Question” as a question of race, morals and civilization), a polemical treatise by the ex-Socialist *Dozent* from Berlin, which provoked an even angrier response<sup>32</sup>:

This rogue—the teeth past which his villainies gush should be bashed in!—turns up his eyes with odious mock-libertarian piety to say: To all men, the most boundless freedom; but for the Jews “a law of exception” (*Ausnahmgesetz*): the new phrase for the medieval ghetto.<sup>33</sup>

In Herzl’s eyes, the philosopher Dühring was nothing but a malicious, hypocritical *Freiheitsjesuit* (an “infamous freedom cleric”) whose would-be “solution” of the “Jewish Question” combined restoring the ghetto with “a modern systematic dejudaizing (*Entjudung*) of the press and usury...,” of law, medicine, and the other free professions.<sup>34</sup> The base motive for his racist policy of “dejudaization” was to destroy Jewish economic competition. But a new rationale was needed by the modern age which Herr Dühring had duly provided. The new style Jew-baiters clearly understood that religious accusations or allegations of ritual murder and well-poisoning were inadequate in a more “scientific,” secularized society.

They recognize, as does Herr Dühring, that religious attacks on the Jews no longer work. Now race must step forward! The faggots of the Middle Ages have become damp; they refused to ignite. Modern fuel is needed for them to blaze jollily, for spluttering Jew-fat to send up its savory smell to the straight noses of Protestants, of those free-thinkers who replace the Dominicans, who in medieval times

supervised such matters. From fire to loot—or vice versa—Herr Dühring and company hunt for loot and find it.... Greed is the low, stinking motive of all movements against the Jews...the only change has been more sophistication, erudition, intelligence....<sup>35</sup>

Despite his fury, Herzl acknowledged the qualities of Dühring's impeccably German prose-style. He even admitted the possibility of learning from the pitiless exposure of Jewish faults to be found in his book.<sup>36</sup> But Dühring's vengeful prejudices had led him to exaggerate and to overlook the historical conditioning of Jewish qualities.<sup>37</sup> The young Herzl still seemed hopeful that enlightened tolerance would eventually win the day against such adversaries:

Yet despite new nursery tales against the modern Jews, one hopes for a brighter future in which humane, unimpassioned men will look back upon contemporary anti-Jewish movements as educated people, even educated antisemites, today look back at those of the Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup>

Neither the shock of Dühring's intellectualized assault on Jewry nor his own traumatic experience with the Albia fraternity, were enough to transform Herzl into a Zionist, but they did heighten his awareness of antisemitism. Neo-Teutonic racialism troubled him, wounded his pride, and forcefully reminded him that he was a Jew. But he was still unaware in the 1880s of the Zionist critique of assimilation undertaken by Moses Hess, Peretz Smolenskin, Leo Pinsker, and Nathan Birnbaum. He knew nothing of Pinsker's *Auto-emancipation* (1883) nor even of the Zionist student society, Kadimah (Forward), established in the same year at the University of Vienna. This ignorance is all the more striking, since the "Jewish Question" had become a political issue in Austria in the 1880s, and as we have seen, it did affect Herzl's personal development.<sup>39</sup>

During the next decade Herzl traveled widely throughout Europe, turning out some thirty plays of varying quality as well as innumerable articles, travelogues, and short stories. Newspapers in Vienna and Berlin opened their columns to his witty *feuilletons*. This was a fragile and evanescent art-form whose mysteries he commanded with consummate mastery.<sup>40</sup> Then, in 1891, he was invited to fill the prestigious post of Paris correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse*, the leading newspaper of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. France would be the laboratory in which Herzl tested out new political ideas and acquired practical knowledge of how the real world operates.

In his Zionist diary, begun in Paris around Pentecost 1895, he confessed that the “Jewish Question,” had haunted him for years. It was something that

gnawed and tugged at me, tormented me and rendered me profoundly unhappy. In fact, I always came back to it whenever my own personal experiences—their joys and sorrows—lifted me to a higher place.”<sup>41</sup>

He admitted that there were times he had fantasized about slipping over “into some corner of the Christian world.” But when Dr. Heinrich Friedjung, the leading Jewish pan-German ideologue and editor of Vienna’s *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, advised him “to adopt a pen name less Jewish than my own,” Herzl flatly refused.<sup>42</sup> Before arriving in Paris, he had briefly thought of writing a “Jewish” novel based on the milieu of his close friend Heinrich Kana (who committed suicide in Berlin in February 1891). The plan which never materialized was to contrast the sufferings of poor Jews with the comfortable complacency of their richer brethren. This was a theme which continued to preoccupy Herzl.

His four years in Paris were to be crucial in giving Herzl a new understanding of politics and insight into modern antisemitism:

In Paris I came into close contact with politics—at least as an observer. I saw how the world is governed. I stared, too, at the phenomenon of the crowd—for a long time without understanding it. I also attained here a freer and more detached attitude toward antisemitism, from which I did not suffer, at least in any direct manner. In Austria or Germany I constantly have to fear that someone will shout, “Hep, Hep!” at my heels. But here I pass through the crowd “unrecognized.” In this “unrecognized” lies a terrible reproach against the antisemites.<sup>43</sup>

Herzl had been aware of antisemitism all of his life, first as a schoolboy, then as a university student and finally as a young adult. He had encountered it in Hungary, Germany, and above all on his “home” soil in Austria. Only in Paris, however, did he begin to see it as a *universal* phenomenon, to “understand it historically and to pardon.” At the beginning of September 1892 he had written his first published article on the subject, following the killing of Captain Armand Mayer (a young Alsatian Jewish officer in the French army) by the aristocratic antisemite, the Marquis de Morès. Full of sarcastic humor, Herzl’s report still maintained a certain measured optimism:

Until recently there was a measure of decency in French antisemitism, one could almost say: courtesy.... Even when it burst out against the

Jews directly, it did not deny that they were human beings. For one coming here from other countries this was very surprising. In France the particular sin with which the Jews were charged was that they came from Frankfurt; the injustice is plain to see for some are from Mainz and even from Speier. They are often called *Israélites* which must be seen as expressing a more relaxed attitude. However, the Jews have been most fortunate of all in their death. When their brilliant lives, the object of so much envy, duly came to a successful end, these Jewish humans are buried among the Christian humans.<sup>44</sup>

During regular coverage of French parliamentary politics, financial scandals, class warfare, anarchist terror, and antisemitism, Herzl always tried to maintain a certain ironic distance from the phenomena he was describing. Gradually, however, he began to see disturbing parallels between the corruption of the Republican order in France and the crisis of politics in his Austrian homeland. The new mass movements of the Right and Left, the loss of faith in the parliamentary system and the triumph of irrationality together with the growing importance of the “Jewish Question” seemed to be part of a larger crisis of European liberalism in the 1890s.<sup>45</sup> By 1893, Herzl seemed to believe that antisemitism could only be defeated by a larger mass movement such as Social Democracy. In a long letter on the “Jewish Question” sent from Paris on 26 January 1893 to Baron Friedrich Leitenberger in Vienna, Herzl wrote:

If one cannot suppress a movement, one reacts with another movement. By that I simply meant Socialism. It is my conviction that the Jews, pressed against the wall, will have no other alternative than Socialism.<sup>46</sup>

Herzl had been convinced for some time of “the emptiness and futility” of trying to combat antisemitism in the spirit of liberal Christian Leagues such as that presided over in Vienna by Baron Leitenberger.<sup>47</sup> But as he watched the steady progress of the Christian Social antisemitic movement in successive Viennese elections and the growth of parallel agitation in Paris and other European cities, his faith in a universalist solution to the “Jewish Question” began to erode.

For a brief moment in 1893 Herzl flirted with the idea of solving the “Jewish Question” by personal combat, even imagining himself as challenging Schoenerer, Lueger, or Prince Lichtenstein—the leading Austrian antisemites of the era—to a duel. Should Herzl lose his life he

would become a martyr to “the world’s most unjust movement,” but if he won...

then I would have delivered a brilliant speech which would have begun with my regrets for the death of a man of honor.... Then I would have turned to the Jewish question and delivered an oration worthy of Lassalle. I would have sent a shudder of admiration through the jury. I would have compelled the respect of the judges, and the case against me would have been dismissed. Thereupon the Jews would have made me one of their representatives and I would have declined because I would refuse to achieve such a position by the killing of a man.<sup>48</sup>

From this “affair of honor,” Herzl passed to an even more archaic solution—the mass conversion of Austrian Jewry to Catholicism—all in accordance with his own strict code of chivalry. Baptism would of course be free and honorable,

inasmuch as the leaders of this movement—myself in particular—would remain Jews, and as Jews would urge a conversion to the majority faith. In broad daylight, on twelve o’clock of a Sunday, the exchange of faith would take place in St. Stephen’s Cathedral, with solemn parade and the peal of bells.<sup>49</sup>

Fortunately for Herzl’s reputation, the editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Moritz Benedikt, vetoed this fantastic plan, based on an approach to the Pope in Rome through the Austrian princes of the church. He pointed out to Herzl:

For a hundred generations your race has clung fast to Judaism. You are proposing now to set yourself up as the man to end this stand. This you cannot do, and have no right to do. Besides, the Pope would never receive you.<sup>50</sup>

Abandoning such naive fantasies, Herzl began to develop a more philosophical approach to antisemitism, in talks with the Austrian Jewish journalist and art critic, Ludwig Speidel. According to Herzl, the core of the issue was that Jews had remained a foreign body among the nations as a result of antisocial characteristics they developed in the ghetto. The oppression and discrimination practiced by secular princes and by the Catholic Church had forced them into usury and damaged their character. Even after emancipation they still remained “ghetto Jews” in their mentality and behavior. Worse still, they were concentrated in the liberal professions, creating “a terrible pressure upon the earning powers of the middle classes, a

pressure under which the Jews themselves really suffer most.”<sup>51</sup> At this stage, Herzl nonetheless believed that antisemitism would do the Jews no harm.

I hold it to be a movement useful for the development of Jewish character. It is the education of a group by the surrounding populations and will perhaps in the end lead to its absorption. We are educated only through hard knocks. A sort of Darwinian mimicry will set in. The Jews will adapt themselves.<sup>52</sup>

A few months later, in Paris, while sitting in the studio of the Jewish sculptor, Samuel Friedrich Beer, Herzl conceived his last non-political attempt to overcome antisemitism. His play, *Das neue Ghetto* (1894), written at white heat in a mere seventeen days, depicted the familiar milieu of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie in Vienna. The high-minded Jewish lawyer who is the hero of the play, Dr. Jacob Samuel (another self-portrait of Herzl) is married to Hermine, the spoiled, emotionally shallow daughter of a rich businessman.<sup>53</sup> The play begins with his marriage and ends with Jacob’s tragic death in a duel, shot by an antisemitic aristocrat and retired captain of cavalry, Count von Schramm. Jacob Samuel-Herzl then utters his dying statement, which concludes the play:

O Jews, my brethren, they won’t let you live again—until you.... Why do you hold me so tight? (Mumbles) I want to—get—out! (Louder). Out—of—the Ghetto!<sup>54</sup>

In the drama, Dr. Samuel acquired his chivalric sense of honor and gentlemanly conduct from a boyhood Gentile friend, Dr. Franz Wurzlechner, to whom he confesses: “I learned big things and little—inflections, gestures, how to bow without being obsequious, how to stand up without seeming defiant—all sort of things.”<sup>55</sup>

Wurzlechner’s break with Dr. Samuel is the result of his decision to go into politics and his frank recognition that with “too many Jewish friends, brokers, speculators,” he would automatically be labeled a *Judenknecht* (“Jew-lackey”). The male bourgeois milieu around Dr. Samuel, which includes the millionaire Bourse-Jew Rheinberg, the small stockbroker Wasserstein, the apostate physician Dr Bichler, and Rabbi Friedheimer, is very negatively depicted by Herzl as being superficial, materialistic, and irredeemably warped by ghetto traits. Nevertheless, the market-playing Rabbi Friedheimer defends the ghetto for having preserved patriarchal family virtues. He warns Jacob Samuel:

When there was still a real ghetto, we were not allowed to leave it without permission, on pain of severe punishment. Now the walls and barriers have become invisible, as you say. You are still rigidly confined to a moral ghetto. Woe to him who would desert it.<sup>56</sup>

Dr. Samuel, escorting the Rabbi to the door, appears to express Herzl's own view that "the inner barriers we must clear away ourselves. We ourselves, on our own." Escape from the ghetto therefore involved more than a struggle against antisemitism. It was above all an act of self-emancipation from harmful Jewish qualities. The last thing Herzl had in mind was "a defense of the Jews or a rescue-attempt on their behalf," as he made clear in a letter to Arthur Schnitzler, defending his play against the charge of misanthropy. He was not in the least concerned to present positive or sympathetic Jewish characters.<sup>57</sup>

*Das neue Ghetto* (Herzl's best and favorite play) was eventually performed on 5 January 1898 at the Vienna Carl Theatre where it ran for twenty-four performances. It marked an important stage in his evolving perception of the "Jewish Question."<sup>58</sup> As in many of his other plays, there was a strong element of social satire, directed against the materialism and moral decadence of the middle classes. Herzl's hero, Jacob Samuel, tries, for example, to save workers' jobs and avoid a catastrophe in the mine whose funds have been irresponsibly dissipated by its titled owner, Captain von Schramm. "You are guilty," Samuel tells the owner, after the mine has been flooded and lives needlessly lost "because while pursuing your aristocratic pastimes, you permitted your slaves to drudge for you underground...for miserable starvation wages."

Herzl's plays often reveal this tyrannical hold of money over bourgeois society, something which influenced his desire to create a new type of Jew, free from any taint of egoistic materialism.<sup>59</sup> In 1894, he informed Ludwig Speidel that the "ruling powers forced us into the money-traffic." As the Emperor's vassals (*Kammerknechte*) Jews had been obliged to serve as a medium for indirect taxation:

We extracted from the people money which the rulers later squeezed from us or confiscated. All of these sufferings rendered us odious and changed our character, which in former times had been proud and noble.<sup>60</sup>

Herzl, like Nathan Birnbaum a decade earlier, saw Zionism as a way of overcoming the corruption and decadence induced by this dominance of

money-values in Jewish middle-class life. Significantly, in a letter to Baron de Hirsch on 5 July 1895, he complained that Jews seemed unable to understand “that a man can act for other motives than money, that a man can refuse to be dominated by money without being a revolutionist.”<sup>61</sup> This unhealthy preoccupation with Mammon, like other “ghetto” characteristics such as restraint, timidity, and fear, stood in sharp contrast to the new behavioral ethos that Herzl publicly advocated in order to forge an independent and free nation. For him, Zionism meant a radical transvaluation of values in the Nietzschean sense, the creation of “a noble ideal of a new Jew, a man living by the myth of chivalry,” who would be the antithesis of the old ghetto culture.<sup>62</sup> A diary entry of 8 June 1895, written after dining with some middle-class Viennese Jewish friends, revealed his awareness of the yawning gap between his own ego-ideal and that of his surroundings.

Well-to-do, educated, depressed people. They groaned under their breath against antisemitism.... The husband expects a new Saint Bartholomew’s Night. The wife thinks that conditions could hardly be worse. They disputed whether it was good or bad that Lueger’s election as mayor of Vienna had not been officially validated.

Their despondency took the heart out of me. They do not suspect it, but they are Ghetto creatures, quiet, decent, timorous. Most of our people are like that. Will they understand the call of freedom and manliness?<sup>63</sup>

Herzl’s interview with the Baron de Hirsch in June 1895 illustrates his view that Zionism must uplift the Jews, make them strong for war, virtuous, and properly educated in the love of work.<sup>64</sup> The encouragement of deeds of “great moral beauty,” of *actions d’éclat*, would be part of the training in “true manhood” that would liberate Jews from the legacy of the ghetto and its shabby occupations.<sup>65</sup> In all these respects, Herzl’s vision was virtually identical with that of Max Nordau—his most important early recruit to the Zionist movement. Herzl’s emphasis on the importance of a flag (“with a flag you can lead men where you will”), of fantasy, visions, and imponderables in the organization of the masses further demonstrated his own leadership and grasp of the psychological dynamic behind nationalist movements.<sup>66</sup>

Herzl’s aesthetic politics with its love of the dramatic gesture owed much to his sense of the theatre and feeling for the importance of symbolism in the life of individuals and nations.<sup>67</sup> In his collection of fragmentary thoughts for the *Judenstaat* he recognized that “in all this I am still a dramatist,” taking

“poor, ragged fellows from the street,” dressing them in beautiful garments and allowing them “to perform before the world a wonderful play which I have devised.”<sup>68</sup> In fin-de-siècle Vienna he had perfected this capacity for dramatic orchestration, through which he would capture the imagination of the Jewish masses and be able to impress Zionism as a political movement on the consciousness of the outside world.

Herzl had a unique talent for weaving the illusion of power, for creating the mood and then the will for nationhood in a demoralized and dispersed people. His capacity to metamorphose private fantasy and ancient dreams into concrete deeds, to give visual form and spatial representation to his political ideas was unique among the Zionist leaders of his generation though it had parallels with other Austrian practitioners of the new politics.<sup>69</sup> “With nations,” he once said, “one must speak in a childish language: a house, a flag, a song are the symbols of communication.”<sup>70</sup> The same theatrical sense was apparent in his staging of the First Zionist Congress as an elegant, impressive, festive spectacle and in his stubborn insistence that delegates must wear formal dress.<sup>71</sup> Peter Lowenberg has admirably summed this up:

Herzl was a man of the theatre who brought the theatre into politics, making drama of politics. He had the capacity to pass from the unreal to the real, to mix the spheres of drama and politics, to transfer the enchantment of make-believe staging to the world of diplomacy and political power.<sup>72</sup>

This was to be a unique performance with himself as stage-manager, director, and leading actor.<sup>73</sup> In the new play which he would stage, the theme was to be:

the poignant salvation of a people, the plot was one man’s vision and sacrifice, which would overcome all odds, the supporting cast was the rulers of the world’s nations and the backdrop was the grim tale of antisemitism and racial persecution in European history.<sup>74</sup>

The central assumption of this drama was that the liberal project of assimilation had failed in Central Europe.<sup>75</sup> In *Der Judenstaat* (1896) Herzl wrote:

We have everywhere tried sincerely to merge with the surrounding national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), seeking only to maintain the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted to us. In vain are we loyal patriots, even super-loyal in some places; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of blood and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do

we strive to increase the fame of our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native lands in the arts and sciences or their wealth by trade and commerce. In our native lands, where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens (*Fremdlinge*); often by those whose ancestors had not yet arrived at a time when Jewish sighs had long been heard in the country. Who the alien is, that is something decided by the majority; it is a matter of power (*eine Machtfrage*) like everything else in the relations between nations.<sup>76</sup>

It is often asserted that the Dreyfus Affair was the historic turning-point which led Herzl to this far-reaching conclusion. Certainly, Herzl witnessed the traumatic degradation scene of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (a French-Jewish officer convicted of selling military secrets to the Germans) in Paris on 22 December 1894. His dispatches show that he was shaken by the ceremony, especially the cry of the Parisian mob at the École militaire: “à mort! À mort les juifs!”<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, his reporting on the Affair was by no means “Zionist” in its tone or conclusions.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, only after the announcement of the second guilty verdict against Alfred Dreyfus in September 1899, did Herzl publicly draw the Zionist conclusion that the officer’s fate represented that of the Jew as a whole in modern society: “the Jew who tries to adapt himself to his environment, to speak its language, to think its thoughts, to sew its insignia on his sleeves—only to have them ruthlessly ripped away.”<sup>79</sup>

It was only five years after Dreyfus’s arrest that Herzl first claimed the case had made him into a Zionist.<sup>80</sup> It was evident that the Dreyfus trials were no simple miscarriage of justice but “contained the wish of the overwhelming majority in France, to damn a Jew, and in this one Jew, all Jews.”<sup>81</sup> Hence Herzl concluded in September 1899 that it was the sovereign people itself who “in republican, modern, civilized France, one hundred years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man,” had spontaneously revoked the edict of the French Revolution.<sup>82</sup>

Though the violence of French antisemitism throughout the Affair undoubtedly shocked Herzl, the evidence does not suggest that Dreyfus’s first trial in December 1894 turned him into a fully-fledged Zionist.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, there is no word about Captain Dreyfus in the early part of Herzl’s Zionist Diaries, begun only four months after the degradation scene which he personally witnessed in the École Militaire in Paris. Indeed, Dreyfus is scarcely mentioned in the diaries at all. In *Der Judenstaat* the Affair is altogether ignored, while French antisemitism is still seen as little more than a social irritant.<sup>84</sup> This silence stands in marked contrast to the

preoccupation in Herzl's Diaries with the growth of Austrian antisemitism following Karl Lueger's spectacular series of electoral victories in the Austrian capital.<sup>85</sup>

*Der Judenstaat* should not therefore be attributed to any one event but rather to the interaction between Herzl's impressions of politics in France and Austria during the mid-1890s and the complex evolution of his mind-set at the time. The tract was in fact written in a semi-mystical state of ecstasy and possession.<sup>86</sup> Herzl was perfectly aware that it might be taken as the extravagant imaginings of a madman and that (as he wrote to Bismarck), "the first impulse of every rational human being must be to send me to the observation room—Department for Inventors of Dirigible Balloons."<sup>87</sup>

Despite his oscillations between euphoria and depression (not to mention the narcissistic fantasies that overwhelmed him during the gestation period), *Der Judenstaat* remains essentially a sober, rational analysis of the "Jewish Question" with a detailed and practical plan of operation. In contrast to the liberal view of antisemitism as a vestigial relic of the Middle Ages, Herzl contended that it was a product of emancipation and its unresolved tensions. The Jews, already a bourgeois people in the medieval ghetto, had emerged in the aftermath of emancipation as particularly dangerous economic competitors for their Christian neighbors. Accelerated assimilation into the wider society and envy at Jewish wealth had exacerbated the problem; so, too, had well-intentioned Jewish responses to persecution such as emigration—which merely spread antisemitism to lands where Jews migrated—or socialism which accentuated the vulnerability of the Jews at both poles of capitalist society.<sup>88</sup> The causes of antisemitism were ineradicable since they were rooted in the economic structure of Jewish life in the Diaspora:

We are what the ghetto made us. We have without doubt attained pre-eminence in finance because medieval conditions drove us to it. The same process is now being repeated. We are again being forced into money-lending—by being kept out of other occupations. But once on the Stock exchange, we are again objects of contempt. At the same time we continue to produce an abundance of mediocre intellectuals (*mittlere Intelligenzen*) who find no outlet, and this is no less a danger to our social position than our increasing wealth. The educated and propertyless Jews are now rapidly becoming socialists. Hence we will certainly suffer acutely in the social struggle [between classes].<sup>89</sup>

Herzl regarded antisemitism as a highly complex movement containing “elements of cruel sport, vulgar commercial rivalry (*gemeiner Brotneid*), inherited prejudice, religious intolerance,” and even a kind of Gentile self-defense.<sup>90</sup> He pointed out that “the old prejudices against us are still deeply ingrained in the folk ethos” (*Volksgemüt*) and that “folk wisdom and folklore are both antisemitic.”<sup>91</sup> Such prejudices might theoretically be overcome through full assimilation but this socio-historical process was simply not happening within the Christian middle classes where the “Jewish Question” was centered.<sup>92</sup> In any case, Herzl was by now convinced that the Jews were a distinct people whose assimilation was not desirable:

The distinctive nationality of the Jews neither can, will, nor must perish. It cannot, because external enemies consolidate it. It does not wish to, as two thousand years of appalling suffering have proved. It need not, as I am trying to prove in this pamphlet, in the wake of countless other Jews who did not give up hope. Whole branches of Jewry may wither and fall away. The tree lives on.<sup>93</sup>

Herzl made it clear that he regarded the Jews as “one people” (*ein Volk*) and the “Jewish Question” as preeminently a *national* question whose solution would have to be discussed “by the civilized nations of the world in council.”<sup>94</sup> Since there was no reasonable hope for the disappearance of antisemitism, an orderly exodus of the Jews to their homeland in Palestine and the creation there of a sovereign Jewish state would have to be worked out in conjunction with the Great Powers. This exodus would permit—according to Herzl—“an inner emigration of Christian citizens into the positions evacuated by the Jews,” hopefully weakening antisemitism. Such an exodus, Herzl mistakenly assumed, would not be accompanied by any economic disturbances, crises, or persecutions.

Responsibility for the exodus would be assumed by a political body called the Society of Jews to be established in London. Resettlement was to be assured by the Jewish Company, to which the longest chapter in Herzl’s pamphlet is in fact devoted.<sup>95</sup> On the crucial question of which territory, Herzl was undecided in 1896 between Palestine or Argentina, though clearly leaning towards “our unforgettable homeland”:

The very name [of Palestine] would be a force of extraordinary potency for attracting our people. If his Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we would in return undertake to regulate the finances of Turkey. There we should form a portion of a rampart for

Europe against Asia, we would be an outpost of civilization (*Kultur*) against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all of Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The Holy Places of Christendom would be placed under some form of international extraterritoriality. We should form a guard of honor about these holy places...[which] would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish Question after 1800 years of Jewish suffering.<sup>96</sup>

*Der Judenstaat* and its consequences placed Zionism firmly on the map of international politics, forcing a public discussion of the “Jewish Question,” exactly as Herzl had hoped. It signaled the beginning of an exhausting seven-year involvement at the head of the World Zionist movement. It was Herzl who created its organization, infrastructure, and diplomacy by setting in motion the First Zionist Congress in Basle (29-31 August 1897).<sup>97</sup> This tour de force of political activity did not, however, earn him the gratitude of most of his Jewish contemporaries either in his home city of Vienna or elsewhere in Europe. Whatever the personal respect and even admiration which he evoked, the movement he represented was still anathema in the eyes of most middle-class European Jews.<sup>98</sup>

To understand the bitterness which much of Jewish Vienna felt towards Herzl after 1896 one must realize with what enthusiastic affection the pre-Zionist feuilletonist of the *Neue Freie Presse* had once been regarded by his new-found opponents. They had been enchanted by his sparkling, worldly essays with their pathos, lucidity, and charm, by the elegance of his aphorisms and the refinement of his ironic skepticism. Stefan Zweig perceptively observed that none was better able to provide what the Viennese public wanted:

When, in collaboration with a colleague, he wrote a graceful comedy for the *Burgtheater*, it was just right, just what everyone wanted, a dainty morsel made of the finest ingredients and artistically served. Moreover, the man was strikingly handsome—courteous, obliging, entertaining; indeed, none was more beloved, better known or more celebrated than he among the entire bourgeoisie—and also the aristocracy—of old Austria.

This popularity, however, suddenly received a terrible blow. As the century approached this close there gradually penetrated a rumor...that this graceful, aristocratic, masterly *causeur* had, without warning, written an abstruse treatise which demanded nothing more nor less



Moritz Benedikt (1849-1920),  
Editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*  
Austrian National Library

than that the Jews should leave their Ringstrasse homes and their villas, their businesses and their offices—in short, that they should emigrate, bag and baggage, to Palestine, there to establish a nation.<sup>99</sup>

The most serious consequence of this Jewish irritation was its effect on his position in the *Neue Freie Presse*. The paper for which he had worked as literary editor since his return from Paris in 1895, remained a stronghold of German national liberalism of the classic variety. Its proprietor and editor-in-chief, Moritz Benedikt, typically once told Raoul Auernheimer (a cousin of Herzl and a well-known member of the *Jung Wien* literary circle): “I am not *pro-Jewish*; I am *a-Jewish*.<sup>100</sup> The *Neue Freie Presse* traditionally espoused a policy of passivity, silence, and *attentisme* towards radical, anti-liberal mass movements such as Marxist socialism or antisemitism, a strategy with which Herzl had decisively broken. Even before his conversion to Zionism, Herzl had boldly advised Eduard Bacher (1846-1906), co-editor and proprietor of the newspaper, that the Austrian Liberals should promote universal suffrage—a proposal which they unceremoniously rejected. In serious political matters Herzl was however, still considered a mere feuilletonist.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless he had hoped for a more sympathetic hearing from Bacher on his Zionist idea, despite the latter’s opposition to his project ever since they first discussed it in September 1895.<sup>102</sup>

Bacher dismissed Zionism as a utopia and called antisemitism an “unpleasant” but essentially ephemeral movement.<sup>103</sup> Shortly afterwards, Herzl brought up the subject with Moritz Benedikt, who emphatically refused to open up the columns of the *Neue Freie Presse* to any discussion of

Zionism. He even warned his star feuilleton writer: “Your idea is a powerful machine-gun and it may go off backwards.”<sup>104</sup>

Herzl knew that his determination to persist with Zionism was leading towards an inevitable confrontation with his editors which he could ill afford.<sup>105</sup> In a conversation on 3 February 1896, Bacher warned Herzl that antisemites would seize on his claim that Jews could not assimilate, drawing out of his text whatever suited their purpose and quoting it “forever after.”<sup>106</sup> The next day, Benedikt strongly urged Herzl to desist from publishing the *Der Judenstaat* on the grounds that he was risking his literary prestige and damaging the *Neue Freie Presse*, and in any case his position contradicted several principles of the paper. Benedikt further maintained that it was wrong for Herzl to take upon himself “the tremendous moral responsibility of setting this avalanche in motion—endangering so many interests.” As the editor-in-chief saw it: “We shall no longer have our present fatherland, and shall not yet have the Jewish state.”<sup>107</sup> Herzl, who had already published a synopsis of the *Judenstaat* in the London *Jewish Chronicle* refused to bow to this kind of pressure.<sup>108</sup> Benedikt in turn threatened, cajoled and flattered him—emphasizing that as “one of our most distinguished collaborators, you are part and parcel of the *Neue Freie Presse*.<sup>109</sup>

Herzl’s duel with his editors became even more acrimonious after he founded the Zionist weekly *Die Welt* in Vienna and published articles by writers who were also on the staff of the *Neue Freie Presse*. On 18 June 1897 Benedikt warned his literary editor that *Die Welt* must either disappear or else Herzl would have to sever all connections with it. Herzl recorded the clash as follows:

Benedikt sought, as a friend, to dissuade me from my “stubbornness.” Then a threat: I could not take my furlough until I had given a definite answer, that is to say, stop the publication of *Die Welt*. Then a promise: he guaranteed I should not regret it if I complied with his wish.... Furthermore, I must not play a prominent part at the [Zionist] Congress, I must not step to the fore.<sup>110</sup>

Having exerted “all the weight of his superior position” Benedikt then told Herzl in a mocking tone: “Of course I am not trying to force your conscience—only you must do nothing that may hurt the *Neue Freie Presse*.<sup>111</sup> Bacher echoed Benedikt’s threats concerning *Die Welt* and strongly urged Herzl not to become an itinerant Zionist preacher.<sup>112</sup> On one occasion, on 19 March 1897, Bacher did, however, confess that he would like to take a trip to Palestine.<sup>113</sup>

Herzl's editors were nevertheless adamant in refusing to publicize or even discuss Zionism in their immensely influential newspaper. While they privately regarded Herzl's involvement in the Zionist movement as a foolish, inexplicable act verging on madness, they were not prepared to dispense with his highly valued services as a prestigious literary editor. Herzl, for his part, as a result of his heavy financial outlays in Zionism, had become more dependent than ever on his income at the *Neue Freie Presse*. On 24 August 1899 he wrote:

I have to tremble lest I be dismissed; I don't dare to take the holiday which my health requires, for I have already been away from my desk for six weeks—the whole of it spent on active service for Zionism. So, once more, I return today to the office, after having been a free and mighty lord at Basle [the Third Zionist Congress] and enter my employer Bacher's room like a submissive clerk back from vacation. Cruel!<sup>114</sup>

Herzl, the wandering Jewish statesman without a state, continued therefore to lead an outwardly schizophrenic existence in Vienna after 1897. He was simultaneously the celebrated leader of an international movement and the "wage slave" of the *Neue Freie Presse*, constantly worried that he might lose his lucrative post which was his indispensable source of income. Furthermore, his inability to convince his superiors to recognize the existence of Zionism seriously hampered his political progress in Austria. As he explained to the Austrian Foreign Minister Count von Goluchowski on 30 April 1904, his movement was being killed by silence:

Here is Austria, I said, our movement is relatively unknown, owing to the silence of the *Neue Freie Presse*. This, in turn, is due to the fact that Benedikt denies the existence of a Jewish people. I happen to affirm this with a simple proposition: The proof of their existence is that I am one of them....<sup>115</sup>

Another major source of disappointment was the Rothschild family. Herzl's *Judenstaat* had originally been prepared as a 20,000 word "Address to the Rothschilds" and he tried hard to win them over to his project.<sup>116</sup> He felt that the solution of the Jewish problem would be much easier with their help and obviate any need to mobilize the masses.<sup>117</sup> In his "Address" he sought to prove that all Jews, including the House of Rothschild, were seriously threatened by antisemitism. In Russia, the property of the Jews would be confiscated; in Germany there would be anti-Jewish legislation, and

in Austria a wave of pogroms might soon break out. The Jews would most likely be expelled from all these countries and some of them killed in flight. Hence a Jewish State must be created to avoid this danger and the Rothschilds should invest their capital in this venture.<sup>118</sup>

On 28 June 1895 Herzl wrote a long personal letter to Albert Rothschild from Paris, announcing his readiness to come to Vienna to explain his ideas. Herzl informed the Viennese Rothschild:

I am only trying to overcome antisemitism, where it originated and where its main source still remains—in Germany. I consider the Jewish Question as extremely grave. Whoever believes that Jew-hatred is merely a passing phase is greatly mistaken. It must continually worsen until the inevitable revolution breaks out....<sup>119</sup>

Albert Rothschild did not answer this prophetic letter or to listen to his “Address”—a deeply wounding rebuff which prompted Herzl to publish the text independently. Herzl had discovered to his chagrin that it was easier to obtain an invitation from the Turkish Sultan, the German Emperor, Russian Imperial statesmen, British Cabinet Ministers, and even His Holiness the Pope than from the Rothschild family. He did not, however, abandon his efforts to win over the English and French Rothschilds even though the Viennese Rothschild was now beyond the pale. In Herzl’s novel *Altneuland* (1902) he is fleetingly evoked in most unflattering terms under the guise of Baron von Goldstein.

Herzl’s encounters with the Rothschilds and Baron de Hirsch reflected a certain ambiguity in his attitude to wealthy Jewish notables. On the one hand, he thought that he was providing them with the great historical mission of organizing a new Jewish exodus from Europe.<sup>120</sup> Their capital resources were an essential part of his strategy of persuasion aimed at gaining the support of the Turkish Sultan and European Great Powers for resettling the Jews in Palestine. At the same time, he was willing to publicly threaten the Jewish “plutocracy” if they proved obstructive.<sup>121</sup> The warnings issued against rich Jews were essentially bluff, though they sometimes had an intimidating and demagogic ring. Herzl nonetheless recognized the utility and indispensability of high finance and the stock-exchange even though he tended to blamed Bourse-Jews for the growth of antisemitism.<sup>122</sup>

*Der Judenstaat* had largely broken with laissez-faire economics, sketching out the role of the State in organizing work-battalions for the unemployed, in destroying urban slums, taking responsibility for old-age insurance, public health, and the integrity of the family.<sup>123</sup> But there was also an anti-statist

side to Herzl's social thought more apparent in his utopian novel *Altneuland*, with its vision of a "mutualist," co-operative society that functions without state control or the rule of professional politicians.<sup>124</sup> In Herzl's utopia, the state has truly "withered away."<sup>125</sup> There is no government but rather a "Council of administration"; there is no ministry of defense, no "high policy," or borders dividing people from one another. Economic and technological considerations have supplanted military and political affairs in the best Saint-Simonian manner. *Altneuland* is a society preoccupied with the development of industry, commerce, education, housing, welfare, and technical inventions. Its pioneers have applied and realized the utopian socialist visions of Fourier, Cabet, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Bellamy, and Theodor Hertzka<sup>126</sup>; they have implemented in practical form the cooperative experiments of the 19th century Rochdale pioneers and absorbed the lessons of the model Irish village of Rahaline.<sup>127</sup>

In Herzl's new society, all the land is in public ownership. Industries, banks, and newspapers are cooperatively owned by workers and consumers who live in clean, well-planned cities.<sup>128</sup> The new society is open, secular, cosmopolitan, and pluralist. It enjoys a seven-hour workday, female suffrage and scrupulously observes full equality between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>129</sup> Reshid Bey, the Muslim Arab protagonist is, for example, a full member of the New Society, and explains to an astounded Mr Kingscourt, his aristocratic Prussian questioner:

Jewish immigration was a blessing for all of us. Naturally first of all for the landowners who either sold their acres to the Jewish company at high prices, or kept them waiting for even higher ones. As regards myself, I've sold my land to the New Society because I find myself better off that way.<sup>130</sup>

The Arab fellahs, he points out, have prospered no less than the landowners from the general economic and technical progress created by the new society. With the draining of swamps, building of canals, planting of eucalyptus groves and avenues, a veritable transformation of living conditions had occurred.

These people are far better off than before; they are healthy, they have better food, their children go to school. Nothing has been done to interfere with their customs or their faith—they have only gained by welfare.<sup>131</sup>

Thus the idyllic cooperative vision of Zion in Herzl's *Altneuland*—one that also embraces Muslim Arabs—is that of a tolerant, progressive society that “could very well exist anywhere, in any country of the world.”<sup>132</sup>

But *Altneuland* is also a revealing fantasy despite its woodenness as literature. Its central figure, the young Viennese Jewish lawyer Friedrich Loewenberg (another a self-portrait) turns his back on Europe after a disappointment in love and together with his Prussian officer friend, Kingscourt, sets out for the South Sea, visiting a decaying and backward Palestine en route. Returning twenty years later to a flourishing Palestine, Loewenberg finds the family of David Litwak—a poor beggar boy from the Brigittenau district whom he had saved from starvation in Vienna. The honest and hardworking Litwaks—Herzl's ideal Jewish family—have been reborn in Palestine and David is about to be elected President of the New Society. By contrast Herzl also depicts Viennese Jewish bourgeois families like the Loefflers and Laschners, with their gaudy wealth and empty lives, prototypes of the self-seeking materialism he detested; or cynics like Gruen and Blau, “the two wittiest men of Vienna,” who in the early part of the novel ridicule Zionism; and spoiled, overdressed, coquettish women like Ernestine Loeffler, who had broken Friedrich Loewenberg's heart in Vienna:

In this circle money was everything, for it bought pleasures and profits, the only things worth having. And he, Friedrich, was tied to this circle, to the Jewish bourgeoisie, since they were his future clients, and he depended on them for his livelihood—worse luck! He would be fortunate if he became counsel for Baron Goldstein. The Gentile world was closed to him as surely as if it were bolted and barred. So what was left to him? Either to accommodate himself to the Loeffler's circle, share their mean ideal of life, act on behalf of doubtful moneyed people.... Or, if this was too unpalatable, loneliness and poverty.<sup>133</sup>

Herzl's social utopia, *Altneuland*, demonstrates the cosmopolitan and tolerant side of his vision which carried over from Austro-liberalism to find a new mode of expression in humanistic Zionism. His dream for the future represented the liberal spirit of the Victorian era at its best—the belief that science, technology, and material progress can transcend questions of race and religion.<sup>134</sup> However, this social utopia envisaged new beginnings without seriously taking into account the possibility of future national conflict in Palestine, religious fanaticism, and Great Power politics that might overwhelm any prospects for peace in the Middle East. In the new Jewish

society, the army does not take part in wars and remains neutral; the rabbis play no role in politics and there is a separation of state and religion. Nothing seems more remote than the vision of an implacable Muslim rage against the Jewish State in Palestine and a relentless determination to violently destroy it.

This failure of imagination was hardly unique to Herzl. But it does remind us of the yawning gulf separating his time from our own. In 1900 there was still no Arab or Palestinian national movement on the horizon and European empires held sway in the wider world. Herzl could not reasonably foresee that the clash between Arab and Jewish nationalism in the Middle East would a century later assume such a deadly and potentially apocalyptic character. Nor could he be expected to anticipate the murderous antisemitism that would lead to the Holocaust, though he did see some of its potential dangers more clearly than most of his contemporaries.

Herzl was a remarkable blend of statesman, artist, and social utopian. More anchored in Jewish tradition than is usually assumed, his “Zionist” solution owed as much to the biblical Exodus story as it did to Central European nationalism. He was indeed far removed from fashionable theories of “blood and soil” or tribalist mythology. The land of Israel was not the “Holy Land” for him or even the “land of the fathers.” He was not driven by ancestral memories or romantic yearnings for the Orient. On the contrary, he was appalled by the dirt, the filth, the backwardness, and religious fanaticism which he encountered during his single visit to Ottoman Palestine in 1898. He never envisaged that the future Jewish State would eventually have a Middle Eastern flavor, that it would be Hebrew-speaking (though he did come to realize that Hebrew was a living language), and forced to continually fight for its very existence. Herzl’s vision of Israel was liberal and modernist. The Jewish State was to be a transplant of the best Western European culture (Viennese opera, Parisian cafés, German culture, and English sports) to the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time it was to embody the highest ethical demands of the Jewish tradition—social justice, solidarity, and freedom and respect for the rule of law.

Theodor Herzl is buried today on one of the highest points in the modern city of Jerusalem. He could never have envisaged that within a short distance of his tomb there would be a large military cemetery with the fallen from Israel’s seven wars. Nor, despite his prescience about fin-de-siècle antisemitism, could he have imagined in his worst nightmares that six million Jews would be “scientifically” slaughtered by *Germans* (the epitome of culture in his eyes) only forty years after his death. The Holocaust memorial

honoring their memory at Yad Vashem is within walking distance of the Herzl Museum. On Mount Herzl and its immediate surroundings, key elements of myth, memory, and the traumas which have shaped modern Israeli identity are symbolically interwoven.

#### NOTES

1. *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 14 Jan. 1898.
2. Reuven Brainin, *Heiye Herzl* (Life of Herzl) (New York 1919), 17-18.
3. Grete Mahrer, "Herzl's Return to Judaism," *Herzl Yearbook* (New York 1959), 2: 28-33.
4. Joseph Patai, "Herzl's School Years," *Herzl Yearbook* (New York) 3 (1960): 60.
5. Ibid., 68; see also Andrew Handler, *Dori: The Life and Times of Theodor Herzl in Budapest (1860-1878)* (Tuscaloosa, Ala. 1983), xii.
6. Nathaniel Katzburg, *Ha-antishemiet be-Hungaria, 1867-1914* (Antisemitism in Hungary, 1867-1914) (Tel Aviv 1969).
7. Handler, *Dori*, 114-15.
8. Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Antisemitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982), 238-42.
9. Handler, *Dori*, 115.
10. But in 1896 Herzl did note in his diaries the warm reception given to his *Judenstaat* by the Hungarian antisemitic deputy and former colleague of Istoczy, Ivan von Simonyi. See *Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. and trans. by Marvin Lowenthal (London 1958), 101, 103.
11. Amos Elon, *Herzl* (New York 1975), 24ff; Handler, *Dori*, 65-66, Avner Falk, *Herzl. King of the Jews. A Psychoanalytic Biography of Theodor Herzl* (New York and London 1993), makes his relationship to his mother the key to his personality, politics, and cultural orientation. The result is predictably reductionist.
12. See Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989).
13. See William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: an Intellectual and Social History, 1848-1938* (Berkeley, Calif. 1983), 356-61.
14. Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938* (Cambridge 1989); and Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl* (New York 1989); Gideon Shimoni and Robert S. Wistrich, eds., *Theodor Herzl. Visionary of the Jewish State* (Jerusalem 1999).
15. Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl: Arist and Politician* (London 1974), 26-27.

16. See the extracts in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York 1973), 105-107; they are taken from Yehuda Alkalai, *The Third Redemption* (1843).
17. Zev. Y. Zahavi, *Me-ha-Hatam Sofer ve-Ad Herzl* (From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl) (Jerusalem 1966), 196-215.
18. Falk, *Herzl, King of the Jews*, 236.
19. Ibid., 4-11; Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 26; Ludwig Lewisohn, ed., *Theodor Herzl: A Portrait for this Age* (New York 1955), 34-35.
20. Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 64, 68-69. For the psychodynamics, see Peter J. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl: a Psychoanalytic Study in Charismatic Political Leadership," in *The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of History*, ed. by Benjamin B. Wolman (New York 1971), 150-91.
21. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 176, 179, 183-84; and Falk's biography, where it is a central thread.
22. Theodor Herzl, "An Autobiography," *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 Jan. 1898.
23. Elon, *Herzl*, 54.
24. William J. McGrath, "Student Radicalism in Vienna," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 3 (July 1967): 183-202.
25. Arthur Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien: Eine Autobiographie* (Frankfurt 1981), 153.
26. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 596-611.
27. Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 84-85.
28. Benjamin Jaffe, "A Reassessment of Benjamin Disraeli's Jewish Aspects," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (1975): 115-23.
29. Elon, *Herzl*, 55-56; Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 430.
30. Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 94-95; Elon, *Herzl*, 60-61.
31. Tullo Nussenblatt, ed., *Theodor Herzl Jahrbuch* (Vienna 1937), 22ff.
32. Ibid.; see also Leon Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre (1860-1895)* (Vienna 1920), 127-34.
33. Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre*, 133.
34. Ibid., 132.
35. Ibid.
36. Elon. *Herzl*, 57-58.
37. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 432; Pawel, *Labyrinth of Exile*, 76.
38. Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre*, 134.
39. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 348-406.
40. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (London 1980), 9-10.
41. *Diaries*, 4.

42. Ibid., 4-5.
43. Ibid., 5-6.
44. *Neue Freie Presse*, 3 Sept. 1892.
45. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 154-56.
46. Theodor Herzl, *Briefe und Tagebücher* (Berlin 1983), 1: 511-24.
47. Ibid.
48. Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, 87-88; Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 160.
49. *Diaries*, 7, and Herzl to Moritz Benedikt, 27 Dec. 1892 in *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 507-508.
50. *Diaries*, 8.
51. Ibid., 9-10.
52. Ibid., 10.
53. Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, 127-31; 147-51.
54. Theodor Herzl, *The New Ghetto*, trans. by Heinz Nordern (New York 1955).
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. See Olga Schnitzler, *Spiegelbild der Freundschaft* (Salzburg 1962), 90 ff.
58. Lewisohn, *Theodor Herzl*, 46-49. Oskar K. Rabinowicz, "Herzl the Playwright," *Jewish Book Annual* 18 (1960-61): 100-15.
59. Ibid.
60. *Diaries*, 9.
61. Ibid., 26-27.
62. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 169-71.
63. *Diaries*, 38-39.
64. Ibid., 17.
65. Ibid., 16-18.
66. Ibid., 22.
67. Robert S. Wistrich, "Theodor Herzl: Between Theatre and Politics," *Jewish Frontier* (July-Aug. 1982): 12-13.
68. Ibid.
69. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 146-75.
70. *Diaries*, 7 June 1895, pp. 36-38.
71. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 440.
72. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl," 166.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., 167.
75. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 441.
76. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 11th ed. (Jerusalem 1946), 11.

77. Benjamin Seff [pseud. Herzl], "Conditions in France," quoted in Lewisohn, *Theodor Herzl*, 210.
78. See Herzl's article in *Die Welt* 3, no. 23, 9 June 1899 with its optimistic conclusion that the case has been a victory for the liberal banner of truth and justice. Herzl's attitude here is universalistic and there is no Zionist message in his analysis. This would change only in September 1899, nearly five years after Dreyfus's first conviction.
79. Benjamin Seff, "Five against Two," in Levisohn, *Theodor Herzl*, 220; first published in *Die Welt* 3, no. 37, 15 Sept. 1899.
80. "Zionismus," in T. Herzl, *Zionistische Schriften*, 3rd ed. (Tel Aviv 1934), 374-76.
81. Ibid., 375.
82. Ibid., 376.
83. See Henry Cohn, "Theodor Herzl's Conversion to Zionism," *Jewish Social Studies* (Apr. 1970): 101-10.
84. Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 19.
85. See for example, *Diaries*, 69, 20 Sept. 1895.
86. Elon, *Herzl*, 149-50.
87. David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford 1975), 245.
88. *Der Judenstaat*, 20-21.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., 11.
91. Ibid., 12.
92. Ibid., 13.
93. Ibid., 14.
94. Ibid., 11.
95. Ibid., 30-50.
96. Ibid., 28.
97. Vital, *Origins of Zionism*, 267-375.
98. *Diaries*, 88; see also "Die Wahlen in den österreichischen Cultusgemeinden," *Die Welt*, 9 Nov. 1900.
99. Stefan Zweig, "König der Juden," *Herzl Year Book* (New York) 3 (1960): 110.
100. Raoul Auernheimer, "Beard of the Prophet," *Herzl Year Book* (New York) 6 (1964-65): 75.
101. *Diaries*, 7-8.
102. Ibid., 66.
103. Ibid., 67.
104. Ibid., 70.

105. Ibid., 1 Feb. 1896, 89.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid., 91-92.
108. Herzl, "The Solution of the Jewish Question," *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 Jan. 1896.
109. *Diaries*, 92.
110. Ibid., 216-17.
111. Ibid., 217.
112. Ibid., 219-20.
113. Ibid., 203-204.
114. Ibid., 24 Aug. 1899, 319.
115. Ibid., 2 May 1904, 437-38. On Herzl's relations with his newspaper, see Edward Timms, "The Literary Editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*," and Christoph Schulte, "Herzl and Nordau as Journalists and Littérateurs," both in *Theodor Herzl. Visionary of the Jewish State*, ed. by Gideon Shimoni and Robert S. Wistrich (Jerusalem 1999), 52-79.
116. Josef Fraenkel, "Herzl and the Rothschild Family," *Herzl Year Book* (New York) 3 (1960): 217-36.
117. *Diaries*, 188.
118. Fraenkel, "Herzl and the Rothschild Family," 218-19.
119. Ibid., 123.
120. *Diaries*, 7 June 1905, 35.
121. Ibid., 193 (letter to French Chief Rabbi Zadok Kahn, 26 July 1896).
122. Benjamin Seff [pseud. Herzl], in *Die Welt*, 12 Nov. 1897.
123. *Der Judenstaat*, 32-39.
124. Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Haifa 1960), 59.
125. Ibid., 210.
126. Ibid., 114.
127. Ibid., 115-18.
128. Ibid., 67-72.
129. Ibid., 108.
130. Ibid., 95.
131. Ibid., 95.
132. This was precisely the grounds for the vehement critique of *Altneuland* by Ahad Ha-am, who argued that Herzl's Zionist vision was ape-like mimicry of western culture. It ignored the Hebrew language revival and distinct character of the Jewish national spirit. See Pawel, *Labyrinth of Exile*, 471-72; see also S. J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet. Ahad Ha-am and the Origins of Zionism* (London 1993), 128-45,

193-99. My own view is that Herzl was far more “Jewish” in the biblical sense than Ahad Ha’am.

133. Herzl, *Altneuland*, 18.

134. See Derek Jonathan Penslar, “Herzl, Zionism, and Jewish Social Policy,” and Nachum T. Gross, “Herzl’s Economic Vision,” in *Theodor Herzl. Visionary of the Jewish State*, 215-39.

## CHAPTER 9

### In the Footsteps of “King Messiah”

The First Zionist Congress, which opened in the *Grosse Musiksaal* of Basle’s elegant municipal casino on 29 August 1897, was a high and solemn occasion attended by 196 delegates from sixteen countries. They had been brought together from four continents by the ancient dream of a return to Zion. The visionary who inspired this founding act and brilliantly orchestrated the Congress was an Austro-Hungarian journalist and playwright, Theodor Herzl, whose revolutionary tract, *Der Judenstaat*, had been published eighteen months earlier in Vienna. As he walked to the tribune, he was greeted by several minutes of stormy rejoicing and applause, punctuated by cries of “Long live the King!” The Russian Zionist journalist, Mordechai Ben-Ami, who was present at the proceedings, observed:

That is no longer the elegant Dr. Herzl of Vienna, it is a royal descendant of David risen from the grave who appears before us in the grandeur and beauty with which legend surrounded him. Everyone is gripped as if a historical miracle had occurred.... [I]t was as if the Messiah, the son of David, stood before us.<sup>1</sup>

Like most delegates, Ben-Ami was dazzled by Herzl’s physical presence—the regal bearing, his dignity and poise, the soft black beard and penetrating eyes—not to mention the impressive mise-en-scène of the Congress. Herzl, with his Wagnerian sense of drama, costume, and spectacle, not only succeeded in moving people but made them part of the action—in the words of Ernst Pawel “he had instinctively hit upon the alchemy of mass manipulation and successfully transmuted fantasy into power.”<sup>2</sup> It was no small achievement to have welded together a rather random and motley army of schnorrers, beggars, and shmucks (as Herzl unflatteringly described them in his diary) and made them conscious of their historic role as a national assembly of the Jewish people.

On 24 August 1897, just five days before the opening of the Zionist Congress, Herzl described some of the problems of stage-management and maneuvering between the divergent interests he had to contend with, as an

egg-dance—“with the eggs invisible.”<sup>3</sup> There were seven eggs he had to balance: the *Neue Freie Presse*, which he could not antagonize, for fear of losing his job as its literary editor; the Orthodox Jews; the Modernists; the egg of Austrian patriotism; Turkey; the Sultan; and the Russian government “against whom nothing disagreeable may be said, although the deplorable position of the Russian Jews will have to be mentioned.”<sup>4</sup> Then, there were the Christian denominations, sensitive about the Holy Places, Edmond de Rothschild (who had icily rejected his overtures), the Hovevei Zion in Russia who were suspicious of Herzl as a Westernized outsider and unstable adventurer or even a false prophet; at the end of the list came the Palestine settlers, “whose help from Rothschild must not be endangered, *tout en considérant leur misères* [while taking proper account of their troubles]. Nor did Herzl forget the egg of personal differences, of jealousy and envy. Summing up his Herculean task, Herzl concluded with a sentence that captured his own leadership style in a nutshell. “I must conduct the movement impersonally, and yet not allow the reins to slip from my hands.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the tremendous difficulties, Herzl’s egg-dance would in fact succeed beyond all expectations. At Basle the spectacular display of Jewish national solidarity certainly caught the imagination of the Jewish world and helped to persuade influential Gentiles that Zionism was a political factor. In Basle, a Jewish national assembly was established for the first time in 2,000 years; the foundation stone was laid for what fifty years later would become the sovereign parliament of Israel, the Knesset in Jerusalem. With characteristic boldness and even *chutzpa*, Herzl confided to his diaries on 3 September 1897, what must be one of the most astonishing prophecies of modern history:

If I were to sum up the Congress in a word—which I shall take care not to publish—it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish State.  
 If I said this out loud today I would be greeted by universal laughter.  
 In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it.<sup>6</sup>

Such a statement could only have been made by an individual wholly convinced of his own providential mission and committed to the inextricable blending of dream and deed in human action. In the same entry where Herzl makes his remarkable “prophecy” he also reveals the great importance he attached to seemingly small details and aesthetic effects.<sup>7</sup> He had insisted the delegates at the First Zionist Congress must have swallow-tails and white ties

in order to establish the appropriate mood for creating a National Assembly of the Jewish people.

Full dress has a way of making most men feel rather stiff. The stiffness induces a measured, deliberate tone—one not so readily come by in light summer suits or travel wear—and I had spared nothing to heighten this tone to the pitch of solemnity.”<sup>8</sup>

Carl Schorske, in an influential essay first published nearly forty years ago, regarded Herzl’s aesthetic concerns as essentially *irrational*, part of the fin-de-siècle revolt against liberalism and an expression of the new mass politics.<sup>9</sup> This is, in my view, misleading, even if we accept the element of Wagnerian histrionics in Herzl’s personality and politics, his readiness to summon up unconscious forces from the deep, and his ability to arouse messianic longings. Herzl rejected conventional assimilationist assumptions, but even Schorske admits that his vision of Zion “reincarnated the culture of modern liberal Europe.”<sup>10</sup> Both *Der Judenstaat* and Herzl’s utopian novel *Altneuland* bear witness to this commitment to tolerance, *Menschheit* (humanity), and respect for the rights of the individual. However, such values—with which Herzl profoundly identified—were no longer applied to Jews in an increasingly antisemitic Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The events of his own day—the pogroms in Russia, Karl Lueger’s antisemitic triumph in fin-de-siècle Vienna, and the Dreyfus Affair in France—were warning signs to Herzl which he grasped with impressive lucidity. This helps to explain the burning urgency of his Zionist program—the dramatic call for mass emigration, the demand for a new exodus from Europe—and the imperative of finding a “national home”—guaranteed by the Great Powers and under international law.

The “visionary” Herzl saw the explosive antisemitic potential, deeply rooted in European society, more realistically than his opponents or most of his followers in the Zionist movement.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, he coolly regarded the antisemitic movements of his time “without fear or hatred,” as a complex reality compounded of the social effects of Jewish emancipation, the ghetto legacy, Gentile economic envy, inherited prejudice and religious intolerance, nourished by popular folklore.<sup>13</sup> More daringly, Herzl believed that antisemitism could successfully be channeled for Zionist purposes, that it would become the engine, driving the train towards Zion. His working assumption was that *Judennot* (Jewish distress) might be strong enough to push Jews out of Europe, but in a basically liberal world, it would not break “the ultimate bonds of decency.” Arthur Hertzberg argued that this analysis

of antisemitism was paradoxically “one of the great acts of faith in liberalism that was produced by the nineteenth century.”<sup>14</sup> However, Herzl mistakenly assumed that antisemites were ultimately rational in their aims and that the Zionist movement would enable Jews to deal with them on a basis of equality and enlightened self-interest. This was at best a half-truth. Thirty years later, it would lead some Zionists into dubious associations with fascists and Jew-baiters. Above all, it underestimated the genocidal logic of antisemitism—a failure of perception shared by all of Herzl’s contemporaries.

It has been suggested that Herzl’s thinking was messianic, even though it was expressed in terms that were entirely secular and political.<sup>15</sup> It is certainly possible to view Zionism as the heir of messianic impulses and emotions derived from Jewish tradition. However, it is perhaps more pertinent to see it as

the most radical attempt in Jewish history to break out of the parochial molds of Jewish life in order to become part of the general history of man in the modern world.”<sup>16</sup>

Zionism, understood in this sense as a *secular messianism*, aimed to transform the collective position of the Jews as a people in the Gentile world. Whether it looked to enlightened liberalism, integral nationalism, or socialism to help it accomplish this end (*within* a Jewish national framework), Zionism still sought a reconciliation of Jewry with the peoples of the world once Jews had acquired their own nation-state.

From the Orthodox Jewish religious standpoint, the problem was less the return to Zion (prayers for Jewish restoration to the Holy Land were an integral part of Judaism) than the *secular* nature of the movement and its insistence on the primacy of the human effort rather than the divine will. Political Zionism insisted that it was a doctrine of Jewish self-help—that it was not sufficient to return to Zion by prayer alone—deeds were indispensable.<sup>17</sup> David Litwak, the central protagonist of Herzl’s *Altneuland* (1902), explains to his guests that with the national rebirth, the Jewish people realized that

they could expect nothing from fantastic miracle workers but everything from their own strength.... “*Gesta Dei per Francos*,” the French once said—and God’s deeds through the Jews’ say the truly pious today, those who do not let the partisan Rabbis incite them.<sup>18</sup>

Herzlian Zionism parted company with the passive track of Galut martyrdom and the quietist beliefs of traditional Jewish messianism. It was

not based on belief in the miraculous intervention of Divine Providence or faith in a mystical bond with the “Holy Land,” let alone an ancestral-tribal cult of the “land of the fathers.” Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the latent messianic features in Herzl’s project, even though he never spoke publicly in this vein. According to the account which he gave to the Hebrew writer, Reuben Brainin, less than a year before his death, Herzl was attracted to the Messiah legends of the Jews from early adolescence. At the age of twelve, he had a “wonderful dream,” which he recounted as follows

The King-Messiah came, a glorious and majestic old man, took me in his arms and swept off with me on the wings of the wind. On one of the shining clouds we encountered the figure of Moses. The features were familiar to me out of my childhood in the statue by Michelangelo. The Messiah called to Moses: “It is for this child that I have prayed!” And to me he said: “Go and declare to the Jews that I shall come soon and perform great wonders and great deeds for my people and for the whole world!”<sup>19</sup>

Shortly after this dream Herzl read a popular science book which presented electricity as the new King-Messiah which would liberate the nations and all mankind from servitude. At first he was indignant but then he began to wonder if electricity might not be the promised redeemer and decided to become an engineer—a childhood ambition which he never fulfilled. What is striking in this dream is the strong identification with Moses, with the Exodus from Egypt and technological advances that could totally transform the lives of humanity. It is precisely such a fusion of tradition and modernity, the idea of a new Jewish exodus and the Promethean redemption of mankind through the Zionist enterprise, that provided the *élan vital* of Herzl’s project. The Moses leitmotif and the image of the Messiah would reappear at various intervals in Herzl’s Zionist career. In August 1895, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Moritz [Moses] Güdemann, after listening to Herzl’s first sketch of his Zionist plan, remarked to him: “I could think you were Moses.”<sup>20</sup> Then, as they parted at the Munich railway station, Güdemann told him with deep fervor, “Remain as you are! Perhaps you are called of God!”<sup>21</sup> Herzl records only that he “laughingly rejected the comparison” as incongruous. Perhaps, though, he did take it seriously. Güdemann would, however, turn against him and less than two years later, condemn Zionism as a secularist movement incompatible with historic Judaism.

Herzl again found himself compared to Moses at the mass meeting in London's East End on 13 July 1896, where he spoke for an hour in the fearful heat.<sup>22</sup> It was an experience that first made Herzl conscious of "how my own legend is being born," a process which he himself describes as "perhaps the most interesting thing I am recording in this book."<sup>23</sup> Soberly, he recognized that the people were sentimental ("the masses do not see clearly") and that they might well have lavished the same affection on a clever demagogue, seducer, or impostor. Yet there is more than a biblical echo in his poetic observation: "A faint mist is beginning to rise and envelop me, and may perhaps become the cloud in which I shall walk."<sup>24</sup>

As if recalling Moses in Egypt, Herzl had returned to his brethren from the "other side," from the dazzling heights of a "refined" Central European culture which had begun to viciously stereotype and oppress the Jews. Like Moses he called to the oppressors "Let My People Go," while showing the demoralized Israelites the way from ghetto servitude to freedom, from darkness to light. Like Moses, too, he would never see the Promised Land.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly enough, Herzl thought at one point of writing a play about the aging Moses who had to face the constant murmurings and discontent of the people, fight against their slavish characteristics, confront the challenge of the Golden Calf, and overcome the revolt of Korah. The play was to be called *Die Tragödie eines Führers, der kein Verführer ist* (The tragedy of a leader who is no seducer)—a play on words in German that was indeed important to Herzl. Whenever he had to deal with a new crisis of opposition in the Zionist ranks, Herzl may well have been reminded of Moses as his *Leitbild*.

The image of both the Messiah and his shadow (the false Messiah) would accompany Herzl throughout the seven exhausting years of his Zionist leadership. The adulation with which he was received by the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Balkans carried unmistakably messianic overtones, captured in the childhood reminiscences of David Ben-Gurion. In a broadcast on Kol Israel (Israel Broadcasting Service) on 1 July 1966, Ben-Gurion recalled that seventy years earlier, when he was about ten years old, rumors had spread in his native Plonsk in Russian Poland, that the Messiah had arrived—"a tall handsome man—a doctor, no less—Dr. Herzl." In his recollections, published four years later, the founder of the State of Israel added:

He [Herzl] was a finely featured man whose impressive black beard flowed wide down to his chest. One glimpse of him and I was ready to follow him then and there to the land of my ancestors.<sup>26</sup>

The attraction of Herzl was rooted in something more than his striking features and his possessing one of the most impressive beards in modern Jewish history! It lay in the receptiveness of East European Jewish youth to his *activist* credo, to the idea he embodied—namely that a two-thousand-year dream of the Jewish people was approaching fulfillment. “In such a sense,” Ben-Gurion added, “Herzl was indeed the Messiah since he galvanized the feeling of the youth that Eretz Israel was achievable.” But his message also emphasized that “it could only come to pass with our own hands.”<sup>27</sup>

The harassed Jews of the Russian Empire were undoubtedly ripe for a redeemer, as Herzl would discover when he visited Vilna in August 1903 and was greeted with impassioned toasts to *Ha-Melekh Herzl* (King Herzl). He described it as an absurdity, “yet it had an uncanny ring in that dark Russian night.”<sup>28</sup> Similar responses came from some of the Sephardic Jews in the Balkans. In March 1895 a communication from Dr. Reuben Bierer in Sofia had enthusiastically informed Herzl that the local Chief Rabbi considered him the Messiah.<sup>29</sup> The same day that he received this letter, Herzl was received by the Reverend William Hechler, a deeply committed Christian Zionist and chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna. According to Hechler’s meticulous calculations based on biblical prophecy and especially the Book of Daniel, Palestine would be restored to the Jews in either 1897 or 1898. Hechler declared the new Zionist movement to be “biblical,” even though its leader believed himself to be proceeding rationally.<sup>30</sup> In his *Diaries*, Herzl waxes ironic whenever he evokes Hechler’s mystical discourse about the speedy fulfillment of prophecy. But he certainly valued his counsel and above all his excellent connections to Imperial Germany, especially with the Grand Duke of Baden and the Emperor Wilhelm II.

The Reverend Hechler believed that it was God’s will that he should be living in Vienna between 1885 and 1910, “in a position which enabled me to bring to the attention of certain people of importance the Messianic vision of the Jewish leader.”<sup>31</sup> Hechler was one of a long line of distinguished British Christians who hoped to see the Jews restored to their historic homeland, a subject on which he had written ever since the Russian pogroms of the early 1880s. His fashionable flat in Vienna’s Schillerplatz was overflowing with pictures, maps, temple models, archeological artifacts, and more than a thousand rare Bibles. It was the eccentric Anglican clergyman who most helped Herzl to obtain his long desired audience with the German Kaiser. Herzl never doubted his goodwill but he remained skeptical of Hechler’s

messianic expectations and publicly avoided any hint that his movement was part of a Providential design.<sup>32</sup>

This caution did not prevent bitter critics of Herzl's Zionism like the satirist Karl Kraus from mocking him as the "King of Zion" in his native Vienna. Stefan Zweig recalled:

When he entered the theater, a handsome bearded personage, grave and compellingly aristocratic in his demeanor, a sibilation arose on all sides: *Der König von Zion*, or "His Majesty has arrived." This ironic title peered at him through every conversation, through every glance.<sup>33</sup>

Zweig adds that at the turn of the 20th century, no man was more derided in Vienna ("this sarcastic city"), unless it was Herzl's contemporary and neighbor in the Berggasse, Sigmund Freud.

This scorn for Zionism as a pseudo-messianic movement was commonplace among many Jewish critics of Herzl, whether they were liberal, Reform, socialist, or Orthodox. It was also shared to some extent by critics of Herzl within the Zionist movement itself, like Ahad Ha-Am, who accused him of having "kindled a false fire" in the people's hearts after the First Zionist Congress. Ahad Ha-Am was highly skeptical of the adventurous, fantastic quality of Herzl's dreams, the haste with which he proceeded, and the illusory quality of the *political* solution which he proposed. Knowing the disastrous disillusion caused by earlier episodes of this kind in Jewish history, he clearly disapproved of the messianic urgency which he discerned in Herzl's attitude.

Other Russian and Polish-born Zionist leaders were more sympathetic to this visionary side of Herzl. Sokolow praised his prophetic genius, designating it as *ru'ah ha-elohim* (the spirit of God)—even comparing his spiritual pilgrimage from Paris to Jerusalem to that of Paul from Jerusalem to Damascus! Moreover, he added, there was something "apocalyptic" about Herzl's *Judenstaat*. "Of course there is much fantasy in it; but that, precisely, is its advantage. It is the imaginative power of Messianic vision."<sup>34</sup>

Some Zionists also pointed to parallels between Herzl and earlier would-be Messiahs from the 16th and 17th centuries like Sabbatai Zvi, David Reuveni, and Solomon Molcho. From the secular Zionist viewpoint, such earlier movements, even if they were led by "false Messiahs," still had a positive aspect if regarded as revivalist movements of "national liberation" seeking to restore the Jewish nation to its ancestral soil.

Even the great Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, despite his ideological opposition to Zionism, believed that there was a messianic element in Herzl's

sense of mission and underlined the historical analogy with Molcho. If the latter had returned to his persecuted Jewish brethren from a religious Marranism, Herzl had found his way back from the national Marranism of the 19th century. Both Molcho and Herzl had called for a national restoration, they had sought to free the Land of Israel from Turkish rule, and both had negotiated to this end with the German emperor and the Pope in Rome. The exalted 16th-century mystic had died in the fires of the Inquisition, while Herzl had burned himself out on the altar of his own political ambition.<sup>35</sup>

The Zionist Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Zevi Perez Chajes, understandably preferred the analogy with Moses. Israel’s greatest prophet (though raised as an Egyptian prince and educated at Pharaoh’s court) had been chosen by God precisely because he lived in freedom and could therefore imagine and demand complete liberation for the oppressed Jews. So, too, Herzl—as an emancipated Austro-Hungarian Jew spared the humiliations of the ghetto milieu and the material suffering of his people—sought the same liberty for his co-religionists which he had already tasted.<sup>36</sup> Shmarya Levin, a leading Russian Zionist, emphasized a different aspect of this popular analogy. Moses and Herzl had both received an “alien” education so that when the hour of liberation sounded, they would be *believed* by their Jewish brethren. Had they both received a Jewish education, their message would have been seen only in the light of tradition, not of rebirth. In moments of crisis, the chosen leader must step forward as a *stranger*; he must come from afar to create an atmosphere of renewed faith.<sup>37</sup>

Jewish artists, too, in their portraits of Herzl, sometimes elevated him to the position of Moses, as the new source of hope for a people scattered in the modern *Mizra’im* of contemporary Europe. The Galician-born Ephraim Moses Lilien, the finest graphic artist of early Zionism, whose life had been transformed when he heard Herzl speak in Basle, used the leader’s face and figure in precisely this sense. In his stained glass window design for the B’nai B’rith in Hamburg, Lilien paid tribute to the great role that he believed Herzl would play in the dreams of the Jewish people and in the fulfillment of ancient prophecy. In his striking design, Lilien shows Herzl standing like Moses on a mount, the Tables of the Law in his hand, in the silent pride of truth and conviction.<sup>38</sup>

An engraving by Boris Schatz, founder of the Bezalel School of Arts in Jerusalem, commemorated the death of Herzl by showing Moses with lifted hand looking across the hills at the land for which he has fought but will never enter. This was only one of the many portraits and likenesses in which

Herzl was represented by Jewish artists as a messianic figure and the redeemer of his people.<sup>39</sup> Especially after his death, he was canonized in countless photographs, pictures, and busts, in engravings, medals, and placards. His picture was displayed at every Zionist gathering, his likeness appeared on stamps, as an artistic motif for rugs, as a trademark on Jewish ceremonial objects, household articles, canned milk, or even cigarette boxes.

The popular iconization of Herzl represented his unique stature as the “hero” and martyr of the Zionist movement, its founder and prematurely deceased leader. His physiognomy, as Michael Berkowitz has noted, became the personification of Zionism’s self-image—one in which modernist, aesthetic, and prophetic-messianic motifs coalesced in a glowing mythology. The Herzl portraits looked both backward and forward, they recalled tradition and its messianic hopes but they also portrayed a modern culture-hero.

His beard and visage placed him squarely in the context of traditional Judaism while his gaze was directed towards the future. His manliness and handsome looks consciously rebuked the antisemitic stereotype of Jewish effeminacy and ugliness while his dark complexion and face were perceived and extolled as the perfect face in which the Zionist movement and Jews could take great pride.<sup>40</sup>

Berthold Feiwel, a leading Austrian cultural Zionist and early collaborator of Herzl, evoked the impact of his personality on an entire generation:

In our earliest youth he signified the embodiment of all beauty and greatness. We, the young, had been yearning for a prophet, for a leader. We created him with our longing.<sup>41</sup>

It was indeed the psychological needs of his followers (and of the demoralized Jewish masses) which had provided the source of the Herzl legend, of his messianic aura as the modern savior of the Jewish people. For downtrodden Jews in Eastern Europe, his life had become the stuff of popular fantasy (*Volksphantasie*), as Martin Buber somewhat grudgingly recognized in a eulogy in 1904.<sup>42</sup>

Herzl himself showed cool insight into this mass psychology and considerable interest in the legend of Sabbatai Zvi, the ill-starred predecessor with whom anti-Zionist rabbis and other Jewish opponents enjoyed comparing him. Significantly, in his novel *Altneuland*, an opera about Sabbatai Zvi, the false Messiah, is performed for the visitors to the New Society and the ensuing discussion permits Herzl to formulate some thoughts about the problem of messianic leadership. His hero, David Litwak, seeks to

explain why would-be Messiahs and adventurers are able to deceive the people and themselves about their mission:

I think it was not that the people believed what these charlatans told them, but the other way round—they told them what they wanted to believe. They satisfied a deep longing. That is it. The longing brings forth the Messiah. You must remember what miserable dark ages they were, the times of Sabbatai and his like. Our people were not yet able to gauge their own strength, so they were fascinated by the spell these men cast over them. Only later, at the end of the nineteenth century when all the other civilized nations had already gained their national pride and acted accordingly—only then did our people, the pariah among the nations, realize that they could expect nothing from fantastic miracle-workers, but everything from their own strength.<sup>43</sup>

Herzl was aware of the possibility that had he lived in an earlier age, he might have been burned at the stake like Solomon Molcho. As the self-proclaimed champion of enlightenment, reason, and modern science, he was, however, careful to distance himself from any suggestions that he was proceeding in the footsteps of the messiah. Yet his diaries testify that from June 1895 (when his Zionist conversion is usually dated) his curiosity and even sense of affinity with Sabbatai Zvi was growing. In March 1896 Herzl recorded the following terse observation:

The difference between myself and Sabbatai Zvi (the way I imagine him), apart from the difference in the technical means inherent in the times, is that Sabbatai Zvi made himself great so as to be the equal of the great of the earth. I however, find the great small, as small as myself.<sup>44</sup>

A few months earlier, Herzl had been warned by Dr. Joseph Samuel Bloch, editor of the *Österreichische Wochenschrift* (and founder of the first Austrian Jewish self-defense organization) that if he were to present himself as the Messiah, he would have all Jews against him. Rabbi Bloch mentioned various messiahs in Jewish history, culminating in Sabbatai Zvi,

whose emergence had had fatal consequences for the Jews and who had themselves come to a bad end, either turning their backs on Judaism or committing suicide.

The Messiah, he told Herzl, must remain a veiled, hidden figure.



Montage depicting Herzl meeting  
Kaiser Wilhelm in Palestine, 1898  
Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem

The moment he takes on actual flesh and blood, he ceases to be the Redeemer. In a word, every Messiah was stricken with blindness and was damned and cursed by the people.<sup>45</sup>

Others saw the parallel in a more positive light. At a Passover celebration of Unitas (a Jewish student fraternity at the University of Vienna) in March 1896, attended by Herzl, university lecturer Meir Friedmann spoke to him about Sabbatai Zvi and he “winked at me in a way that seemed to say that I ought to become such a Sabbatai. Or did he mean that I already was one?”<sup>46</sup> 1897 was the year of the First Zionist Congress, and the ensuing wave of enthusiasm that swept through the Jewish world generated more explicitly messianic emotions. Mordechai Ben-Ami (whom we have already quoted), recalling the mood at the Basle Congress, described the voice of Herzl “as the *shofar* of the Messiah, summoning to the Congress all those who in their hearts were still aware of the ties that bound them to their people.”<sup>47</sup>

In the flood of letters of support and veneration that Herzl received after the Congress, there were many messianic allusions, including some that greeted the Zionist leader as the “anointed of the Lord.” At the synagogue of Sofia, when Herzl stood on the platform, unsure how to face the congregation without turning his back to the Holy of Holies, a voice cried out: “It’s all right for you to turn your back to the Ark: you are holier than the Torah!”<sup>48</sup> Such response could only have reinforced the fears of the Orthodox rabbis that Herzl might indeed proclaim himself as the Messiah or act like one. This was indeed a major reason for the bitter opposition of the “Protest Rabbis” in

Germany and also of East European *haredi* Orthodoxy, to his Zionist program. Despite Herzl’s strenuous efforts to present his Zionism as purely political, the frequent comparison with Sabbatai Zvi made by Orthodox rabbis was damaging to the cause.<sup>49</sup>

Herzl’s visit to Palestine in October 1898 raised another kind of fear in his own mind: that like Sabbatai Zvi over two centuries earlier, he might be arrested by the Turkish authorities. In an entry in his *Diaries* dated Jerusalem, 31 October 1898 (the day the German Kaiser attended the consecration of the Church of the Redeemer in the Old City), Herzl comments on his own visit to the Tower of David: “At the entrance I said to my friends: ‘It would be a good idea on the Sultan’s part if he had me arrested here.’” The same entry records his shock at the dilapidated state of Jerusalem and his modernist vision of its future:

When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem, it will not be with delight. The musty deposits of two thousand years of inhumanity, intolerance, and foulness lie in your reeking alleys. The one man who has been present here all this while, the lovable dreamer of Nazareth, has done nothing but help increase the hate. If Jerusalem is ever ours, and if I were still able to do anything about it, I would begin by cleaning it up. I would clear out everything that is not sacred, set up workers’ houses beyond the city, empty and tear down the filthy rat holes, burn all the non-sacred ruins, and put the bazaars elsewhere. Then, retaining as much of the old architectural style as possible, I would build an airy, comfortable, properly sewered, brand new city around the Holy Places.<sup>50</sup>

Herzl was appalled by the misery and squalor, the superstition and fanaticism, which he found on all sides and among all the religious denominations. But his visionary eye saw the possibilities of a splendid new Jerusalem—the center of a restored Israel—being built outside the old city walls, one that could rival Rome itself.

It was indeed to be in Rome, in January 1904, during an interview with King Victor Emmanuel III, that the subject of Sabbatai Zvi came up one final time. The king of Italy told Herzl that one of his more eccentric distant ancestors had conspired with Sabbatai, and then unexpectedly he asked if there were still Jews who expected the messiah. Herzl’s reply is revealing: “Naturally, Your Majesty, among religious circles. In our own, the university-trained and enlightened classes, no such thought exists.... [O]ur movement has a purely national character.” To the king’s amusement, Herzl

informed him “how in Palestine I had avoided using a white horse or a white ass, so that no one would embarrass me with messianic confusions.”<sup>51</sup>

Herzl liked to see himself as a *Realpolitiker* who also had the vision to inspire a national movement that would restore sovereignty and freedom to the Jewish people. As a good Central European liberal, he believed in the separation of church and state, though he greatly respected Jewish tradition and tried hard to avoid alienating Orthodox rabbis. The core of his activity was clearly diplomatic—the effort to secure a legally recognized and binding charter that would guarantee a national home for the Jews in Palestine. To achieve his end he needed to mobilize and organize a completely scattered, disunited, and politically leaderless Jewish people in the Diaspora.

It was Herzl’s achievement to give the Jews a national assembly for the first time in two millennia, to create the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Colonial Trust, the Jewish National Fund and to tirelessly propagandize for the Zionist cause in his newspaper, *Die Welt*.<sup>52</sup> These were not the actions of a utopian dreamer, a coffee-house *littérateur*, a deracinated secular “post-Zionist” Jew, let alone a “false messiah.” They involved careful planning, organizational skill, diplomatic finesse, a coherent program, and above all, a profound belief in the continuity, the distinctiveness, and special vocation of the Jewish nation.

Zionism was an activist doctrine, a movement for the restoration of Jewish honor and independence, a revolt against the traditional passivity of the *Galut* (exile). It was a determined drive for collective dignity and self-respect, predicated on the need for Jews to transform and remake themselves, to awaken from the nightmare of their history and construct the materials for their redemption through their own labor. In that Nietzschean sense, it was a movement of self-overcoming and auto-emancipation. Herzl’s life embodied a powerful ingredient of self-transcendence and the conviction that the road to redemption lay through the *deed*. The Jews, Herzl warned, counted for nothing politically and their paralysis would continue until they created their own center for organized action.

Herzl was convinced that the Jewish state must come into existence because it fulfilled an objective Jewish need. His understanding of antisemitism enabled him to foresee that the “Jewish Question” would not disappear. It would only be exacerbated over time, thus making a sovereign Jewish State into a world necessity. At the same time, he envisaged this new society as standing at the cutting edge of modern science and technology. The New Exodus of the Jews would not only bring the salvation of Jewry but

also be a light to the Gentiles—part of a universal movement towards material progress and moral improvement.

Herzl's goals were radical, but by no means inconsistent with Jewish tradition. Though his program aroused much opposition, his untimely death in 1904 reinforced the messianic halo which surrounded his activity among many Jews—including those circles who had traditionally opposed him. A striking illustration is the eulogy for Herzl given in Jaffa, Palestine by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. The man who would eventually become the Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel under the British Mandate, was, not unexpectedly, ambivalent about Herzl. Yet he awarded him the title “Messiah, son of Joseph,” the fallen redeemer, who was paving the way for a future messianic era. In ancient Jewish tradition, the Messiah ben-Joseph was indeed a tragic figure who helps his people towards worldly salvation, but also embodies the inevitability of crisis and defeat. He is in fact a doomed redeemer, whose suffering belongs to the birth pangs of final salvation that can only be brought about by the Messiah ben-David. For Rabbi Kook, Herzl and the Zionist movement represented “the footsteps of the Messiah,” but it was still a limited “material” messianism, a quest for physical strength, that would inevitably lead to setbacks and crises.

The fight for material improvement was necessary, but it lacked the spiritual dimension, the light of Torah, the knowledge of God.

Because its preparation is lacking [in the other dimension], the forces are not united...until in the end the [Zionist] leader fell victim to the reign of evil and sorrow....this man, whom we may consider to have been the harbinger.<sup>53</sup>

In Rabbi Kook's double-edged and somewhat self-serving interpretation, Herzl's early death was tragic testimony to the split between the worldly and the spiritual, the political and the religious sides of the *Judenstaat*. Secular Zionism heralded the worldly salvation of the Jews through national rebirth but it was still a vision borne aloft on clipped wings.<sup>54</sup> Herzlian Zionism was a mixture of light and darkness, not the higher, complete synthesis. As long as adherents of the *Judenstaat* declared that they had nothing to do with religion, Zionism would remain a body without a soul. The task was to broaden “the narrow circle of the late lamented Dr. Herzl's dream, despite all its beauty and strength.” Herzl, as the Messiah ben-Joseph, was thereby transmuted by Rabbi Kook into a necessary forerunner of the true Davidic messianism, with its vision of the “revealed End.”<sup>55</sup>

Not only Orthodox Judaism of the national-religious stamp found a way to integrate Herzl as a messianic figure. The great German-Jewish philosopher, Franz Rosenzweig (himself a non-Zionist), favorably compared Herzl in one of his letters, to two of his severest Zionist critics, Martin Buber and Ahad Ha-Am. “With Herzl alone,” he wrote, “one feels Jewish Antiquity, with Buber and Ahad Ha-Am at most the Jewish Middle Ages (Talmud and Kabbalah). Herzl is “Moses and the Prophets.” That he was naïve enough to plan only from the present, out of Jewish distress, that is precisely his greatness....”<sup>56</sup>

Herzl’s view of his own place in history was more modest and devoid of any hint of mystical or metaphysical messianism. One 1 June 1901, he recorded the following lines in his diaries, which a century later still retain their resonance:

If once the Jewish state should come into existence, then everything will seem small and matter-of-course. Perhaps then a fair-minded historian will find that it was after all something that a Jewish journalist without means, in the midst of the deepest degradation of the Jewish people, in a time of the most sickening antisemitism, was able to create a flag out of rag-cloth and a nation out of a foundering rabble—a nation that flocked to this flag with straightened backs.<sup>57</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Mordechai Ben-Ami, “Erinnerungen an Theodor Herzl,” *Die Welt*, 3 July 1914, 692.
2. Ernst Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile: A Life of Theodor Herzl* (London 1990), 331.
3. *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. and trans. Marvin Lowenthal (London 1958), entry of 24 Aug. 1897, 220 (hereafter *Abridged Diaries*).
4. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of 24 Aug. 1897, 221-22.
5. Ibid., 222.
6. Ibid., entry of 3 Sept. 1897, 224.
7. On the artist in Herzl, see Steven Beller, “Herzl’s Tannhäuser: The Redemption of the Artist as Politician,” in *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century: From Franz Joseph to Waldheim*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (London 1992), 38-57.
8. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of 3 Sept. 1897, 224; also Theodor Herzl, *Briefe und Tagebücher* (Berlin 1983), 2: 99. On Herzl as an impresario, see Jacques Kornberg, “Theodor Herzl: A Re-evaluation,” *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 2 (1980): 752.

9. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (London 1980), 146ff.
10. Ibid., 173.
11. See Daniel Gutwein, “The Development of Herzl’s Theory of Antisemitism,” in *Theodor Herzl. Visionary of the Jewish State*, ed. by Gideon Shimoni and Robert Wistrich (Jerusalem 1999), 80-98.
12. Israel Eldad, “Herzlianut be-Yamenu, Ma-hi?” (What is Herzlianism in our times?), *Ha-Umma* 76 (1984): 165-74.
13. Theodor Herzl, “A Solution of the Jewish Question,” *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 Jan. 1896.
14. Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York 1973), 50-51. See also Robert S. Wistrich, “Antisemitism and the Origins of Jewish Nationalism,” *Midstream* 28, no. 9 (Nov. 1982): 10-15.
15. Hertzberg, *Zionist Idea*, 46: “Messianism is the essence of his stance, because he proclaimed the historical inevitability of a Jewish State in a world of peaceful nations.”
16. Ibid., 20.
17. Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (Jerusalem 1987), 58ff.
18. Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Old-New Land), trans. by Paula Arnold (Haifa 1960), 83.
19. Reuben Brainin, *Hayyei Herzl* (The life of Herzl) (New York 1919), 17-18.
20. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of 18 Aug. 1895, 63.
21. Ibid., 64.
22. Ibid., 180.
23. Ibid., 182.
24. Ibid.
25. *Abridged Diaries*, entry for 7 Nov. 1902, 381.
26. David Ben-Gurion, *Recollections* (London 1970), 34.
27. Ibid., 35.
28. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of 17 Aug. 1903, 404-405.
29. Ibid., entry for 10 Mar. 1896, 103-104.
30. Ibid., 104-106, 123.
31. See Hechler’s brief comments in *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial*, ed. Meyer W. Weisgal (New York 1929), 51.
32. Erwin Rosenberger, *Herzl As I Remember Him* (New York 1959), 56.
33. Stefan Zweig, “König der Juden,” in *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial*, 55.
34. Nahum Sokolow, “Zionism as a Moral Question,” in ibid., 18.
35. Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (Berlin 1929), 10: 338.

36. M. Rosenfeld, *H. P. Chajes, Leben und Werk* (Vienna 1933), S. 159; see also Jacob Allerhand, “Messianische Elemente im Denken und Wirken Theodor Herzls,” in *Theodor Herzl und das Wien des Fin-de-Siècle* (Vienna 1987), 60-75.
37. Shmarya (Schmarya) Levin, “Continuity and Creation,” in *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial*, 103.
38. Lionel S. Reiss, “Through Artists’ Eyes: The Portraits of Herzl as Revelations of the Man,” in *ibid.*, 111.
39. M. Narkess, “The Arts Portray Herzl” in *ibid.*, 119-20.
40. Michael Berkowitz, “Art in Zionist Popular Culture and Jewish National Consciousness 1897-1914,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 4 (1990): 24-25.
41. *Ibid.*, 26. The remark was made to the Austrian Jewish poet and dramatist, Richard Beer-Hoffmann, who was an admirer of Herzl and sympathetic to Zionism.
42. Buber was critical of Herzl while pointing to his unique role in inaugurating a new era of action in Jewish history. See “Theodor Herzl” (1904) and “Er und wir” (1910), in Martin Buber, *Die jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen, 1900-1914* (Berlin 1920), 146, 201.
43. *Altneuland*, 82-83.
44. *Abridged Diaries*, 3: 960. In July 1895 Herzl had read the novel *Der Jakobsstern* by Ludwig Storch, which dealt with Sabbatai Zvi. See Joseph Nevada, “Herzl and Messianism,” *Herzl Year Book* 7 (1971): 13-14.
45. Chaim Bloch, “Theodor Herzl and Joseph S. Bloch,” *Herzl Year Book* 1 (1958): 158. For Bloch’s politics and his attitude to Herzl, see Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989), 270-309.
46. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of Mar. 1896, 1: 317; see Nedava, “Herzl and Messianism,” 16-17.
47. See Leib Jaffe, ed., *Herzl ve-ha-Kongress ha-Rishon* (Herzl and the first Congress) (Jerusalem 1923), 134.
48. Nedava, “Herzl and Messianism,” 19.
49. Shalom Ben-Horin, *Hamishim Shnot Ziyyonut: Max Bodenheimer* (Fifty years of Zionism) (Jerusalem 1946), 102-10.
50. *Abridged Diaries*, entry of 31 Oct. 1898, 283-84.
51. *Ibid.*, entry of 23 Jan. 1904, 425-26.
52. For the role of *Die Welt* and journalism as Herzl’s school for politics, see Robert S. Wistrich, “Theodor Herzl: Zwischen Journalismus und Politik,” in *Wandlungen und Brüche: Von Herzls “Welt” zur “Illustrierten Neuen Welt” 1897-1997*, ed. Joanna Nittenberg, Anton Pelinka, and Robert S. Wistrich (Vienna 1997), 11-17.

53. See Abraham Isaac Kook, “Ha-Misped bi-Yerushalayim” (The eulogy in Jerusalem), *Ma’amarei ha-Ra’aya* (Articles of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook), (Jerusalem 1984), 94-99; the quote is from p. 97. For an illuminating discussion, see Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago 1996), 99.

54. Ravitzky, *Messianism*, 97-99. On the relationship between secular Zionism and religion, see also Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement, 1882-1914* (Philadelphia 1988); and Yosef Salmon, *Dat ve-Ziyyonut* (Religion and Zionism) (Jerusalem 1990).

55. Ravitzky, *Messianism*, 99.

56. Letter of 28 Sept. 1916, Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher* (The Hague 1979), 1: 237.

57. Herzl, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 3: 291. My translation.

## CHAPTER 10

### The Last Testament of Dr. Sigmund Freud

On the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1926, Sigmund Freud wrote to his friend and disciple Marie Bonaparte with a characteristic touch of irony:

The Jewish societies in Vienna and the University of Jerusalem (of which I am a trustee), in short the Jews altogether, have celebrated me like a national hero, although my service to the Jewish cause is confined to the single point that I have never denied my Jewishness. The official world—the University [of Vienna], Academy, Medical Association—completely ignored the occasion. Rightly, I think; it was only honest, I could not have looked upon their congratulations and honors as sincere.<sup>1</sup>

In the same letter, Freud singled out the celebration of the Jewish lodge “to which I have belonged for twenty years” and the speech in his honor made there by his private physician Professor Ludwig Braun, “which cast a spell over the whole audience, including my family.” Braun, who joined the Viennese lodge of the B’nai B’rith in 1900 (three years after Freud) and had known the founder of psychoanalysis for nearly forty years, defined him in this celebrating speech as a *Ganzjude*.<sup>2</sup>

Freud’s quality of wholeness, his ability to recognize the unity of nature and mind behind discordant surface phenomena, his independence from religious dogma or conventional taboos and especially his courage in opposing the rest of society, had stamped him as a genuine Jew. In his spiritual “optimism,” tenacious persistence, dignity, and composure in the face of social rejection he had exhibited precisely those traits which explained why Jews had always been in the forefront of the fight for freedom. These same characteristics, Professor Braun suggested, had naturally drawn Freud to B’nai B’rith and its humanitarian ideals. They had also been expressed in his brainchild, the new science of psychoanalysis, which Braun described as an “authentically Jewish conception of life” (*Lebensanschauung*), devoted to seeking the general laws of nature and fearlessly exploring the depths of the mind.<sup>3</sup>

Freud's own address to the B'nai B'rith on 6 May 1926 with its strong affirmation of his "Jewish nature," of the humanist goals of the Viennese lodge, and its importance as a forum for independent-minded men of principle, amplified Braun's remarks and demonstrated his high regard for the fraternity. Beyond that, it also provided an important testimony to his personal development, beliefs, and the nature of his Jewish identification. Freud recalled that his attraction to the lodge crystallized in the years after 1895 when he had been like a virtual pariah in Vienna.

On the one hand I had gained the first insight into the depth of human instinct, had seen many things which were sobering, at first even frightening; on the other hand the disclosure of my unpopular discoveries led to my losing most of my personal relationships at that time. I felt as though outlawed, shunned by all. This isolation aroused in me the longing for a circle of excellent men with high ideals who would accept me in friendship despite my temerity. Your lodge was described to me as the place where I could find such men.

That you are Jews could only be welcome to me, for I was myself a Jew, and it has always appeared to me not only undignified, but outright foolish to deny it. What tied me to Jewry was—I have to admit it—not the faith, not even the national pride, for I was always an unbeliever, have been brought up without religion, but not without respect for the so-called "ethical" demands of human civilization. Whenever I have experienced feelings of national exaltation, I have tried to suppress them as disastrous and unfair, frightened by the warning example of those nations among which we Jews live. But there remained enough to make the attraction of Jews and Judaism irresistible, many dark emotional powers (*Dunkelmächte*) all the stronger the less they could be expressed in words, as well as the clear consciousness of an inner identity, the familiarity of the same psychological structure (*die Hemlichkeit der gleichen seelischen Konstruktion*).<sup>4</sup>

According to Freud, this "uncanny" primordial feeling of solidarity, with its particularist ethnic nexus and common psychic structure had nothing to do with Jewish religious identity. Though he could not define it, these "dark emotional powers" were in fact profoundly rooted in the Galician Jewish background from which he originated and to which he was to remain attached all his life in a typically ambivalent fashion. His personality had indeed been



Jacob and Sigmund Freud

Leo Baeck Institute, London

formed in an East European Jewish home and then nurtured in the semi-proletarian Leopoldstadt district of Vienna to which Freud's parents had moved in 1859 from his birthplace in Freiberg, Moravia (now Příbor, Czechoslovakia).<sup>5</sup>

Freud's father Jakob, born in 1815 in the Galician *shtetl* of Tsymenitz, was originally an observant Jew, the son of a Chassidic rabbi. Steeped in Jewish learning and rituals he had remained strictly Orthodox until the age of twenty when he moved to Freiberg. Replying to a correspondent in 1930, Sigmund Freud observed in this connection:

It may interest you to hear that my father did indeed come from a Chassidic background. He was forty-one when I was born and had been estranged from his native environment for almost twenty years. My education was so un-Jewish that today I cannot even read your dedication, which is evidently written in Hebrew. In later life I have often regretted this lack in my education (*dieses Stück in meiner Unbildung*).<sup>6</sup>

This recollection is consistent with the fact that by the time the family had migrated to Vienna for economic reasons, Freud's father had already abandoned many of his earlier religious observances. But Jacob Freud still remained Jewish to the core in his appearance (he had a long beard and

dignified countenance), his ability to recite the Passover service by heart, his diligent study of the Talmud and his knowledge of Hebrew literature.<sup>7</sup>

On his son's thirty-fifth birthday, Jakob Freud proudly gave him the rebound copy of the Bible which Sigmund had read as a boy, with a special Hebrew dedication written in the spirit of Jewish religious tradition:

To my Dear Son, Solomon [Freud's Hebrew name was Shlomo, in memory of his paternal grandfather.] It was in the seventh year of your life that the spirit of G-d began to stir you and spake to you [thus] "Go thou and pour over the book which I wrote, and there will burst open for thee springs of understanding, knowledge and reason. It is indeed the book of books. Sages have delved into it and legislators have derived [from it] knowledge and law." Thou hast seen the vision of the Almighty. Thou hast listened and ventured and achieved, soaring on the wings of the wind.<sup>8</sup>

The gift, a token of his father's "undying love," was clearly intended to impress upon Sigmund the continuing importance of the religious tradition in which he had been raised. Yet Jakob Freud must surely have been aware that, in his son's eyes, the religious rituals of Judaism had long seemed to be empty and meaningless. Indeed the vehemence of Sigmund Freud's antipathy to Judaism as a religion was almost certainly connected with his symbolic rejection of the father who could no longer properly observe or transmit to him, fully intact, the traditional Jewish way of life. Like so many other Jewish fathers of this transitional generation, the textile merchant Jakob Freud had brought to Vienna only fragments of the living tradition from his ghetto community in the countryside. But this residual loyalty to Judaism was no longer sufficient for the generation forced to live between two worlds and two cultures. The inherent ambiguity of their situation produced for a whole generation of socially and spiritually uprooted young Viennese Jews a sense of inner conflict, imposture, and despair—the kind of localized neuroses out of which Sigmund Freud was eventually to construct his universalist psychoanalytic typology. In that sense, the Oedipus complex can indeed be seen—in Marthe Robert's terms—as the portrait writ large of the primordial "murdered father," Jakob Freud.<sup>9</sup>

Sigmund Freud's father-complex, of which he became fully aware only during his own self-analysis following Jakob's death on 23 October 1896, was closely linked to an early childhood experience that concerned antisemitism. During one of their strolls together in Vienna when Sigmund was eleven or twelve years old, Jakob Freud had recounted an incident that

had occurred many years earlier during his own youth in Freiberg. A local Gentile had come up to him, knocked his *Streimel* (fur hat) into the mud and ordered him off the pavement. Instead of resisting this impudent behavior, Jakob Freud had calmly picked up his cap in the roadway. For Jakob the point of the anecdote was to illustrate how much the condition of Jews had improved since the 1830s. However this “unheroic” conduct by his father deeply shocked the young Sigmund Freud and left an indelible impression on his mind. “I contrasted this situation, which did not please me, with another, more in harmony with my sentiments—the scene in which Hannibal’s father, Hamilcar Barca, made his son swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since then Hannibal has had a place in my fantasies.”<sup>10</sup>

Freud recalled this incident in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) but had not initially noticed that in the first edition he mistakenly gave the name “Hasdrubal” (Hannibal’s brother) in place of the Carthaginian general’s real father Hamilcar Barca. In the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* he subsequently explained that he had been unable to forgive the lack of courage of his own father towards “the enemies of our people.” It was this stinging memory of paternal cowardice that caused Sigmund’s “astonishing” error with regard to Hasdrubal.<sup>11</sup>

Sigmund Freud is unlikely to have felt a similar sense of shame with regard to his mother, a prime source of his unshakeable courage and self-confidence. This youthful and dominant woman, née Amalia Nathanson (1835-1930), who came originally from Brody in northeast Galicia, had arrived in Vienna when she was still a child (she actually witnessed the 1848 Revolution). According to the recollections of her grandson, Martin Freud, she was a typical Polish Jewess—“impatient, self-willed, sharp-witted and highly intelligent.” The center of the family, full of tender concern and devotion towards her eldest son, Amalia Freud still retained the language, manners and beliefs of her native environment. She belonged to a “peculiar race” distinct not only from the Gentiles,

but absolutely different from Jews who had lived in the West for some generations.... These Galician Jews had little grace and no manners: and their women were certainly not what we should call “ladies.” They were highly emotional and easily carried away by their feelings.... These [women] were not easy to live with and grandmother [Amalia], a true representative of her race, was no exception. She had great vitality and much impatience.<sup>12</sup>

Towards the *Ostjuden* from whom he sprang, Freud retained a degree of ambivalent affection. For years he collected Galician Jewish anecdotes and jokes, some of which he used in his book *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unterbewussten* (1905) and which he regarded as being “of deep significance.” Mostly these jokes evoked the aversion of Galician Jews to baths, the wiles of Jewish marriage brokers, the impudence of *Schnorrers* (beggars) and the superstitions of the *Wunderrabbiner* (miracle rabbis). Freud himself noted the prevalence of self-criticism in these jests which “have grown up on the soil of Jewish popular life.” Unlike jokes told about Jews by foreigners, which rarely rose above the level of brutal derision, the anecdotes created by Jews themselves were based on a knowledge of “their real faults as well as the connection between them and their good qualities.” Whether cynical, merely skeptical, tendentious, or absurd, this humor realistically reflected (according to Freud) the “manifold and hopeless miseries of the Jews,” the ambiguous relationship between rich and poor, the “democratic mode of thinking of Jews,” and their ability to laugh at their own characteristics.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless Freud’s response to this East European Jewish heritage during his late adolescence was marked by considerable equivocacy, as his letters to a close Romanian friend, Eduard Silberstein, make plain. He was steadily moving away from the traditional customs, ritual, and pieties of his home environment. Not only did he proudly proclaim himself “godless,” refusing to observe the Jewish festivals which his father still held sacred but, in letters to friends, he indulged in open mockery of Jewish ritual observances. Reminders of his own provincial background and ties with unassimilated *Ostjuden* from Eastern Europe began to grate on his nerves. An encounter with just such a family on the return trip from Freiberg, Moravia to Vienna in September 1872, prompted him to make some scathing remarks in a letter to his friend Emil Fluss:

Now this Jew talked the same way as I had heard thousands of others talk before, even in Freiberg. His face seemed familiar—he was typical. So was the boy with whom he discussed religion. He was cut from the cloth from which fate makes swindlers when the time is ripe: cunning, mendacious, kept by his adoring relatives in the belief that he is a great talent, but unprincipled and without character. I have enough of this rabble.<sup>14</sup>

The transparent desire to dissociate himself from such mercantile and provincial Jewish characteristics coincided with Freud’s growing desire to

identify with liberal German *Kultur*. By the time he entered medical school in Vienna, Freud already regarded Jewish religious traditions as anachronistic. He looked to German-Austrian democratic ideals as the basis for social integration, progress, and assimilation. This led him to try and sever his connections with the *Ostjuden*, the “alien race” who had become a prime target of German national antisemitism.<sup>15</sup>

During the period of his university studies Freud felt increasingly torn between the contradictory pressures of assimilation to German culture, social radicalism, and rising antisemitism. From 1873 to 1878 he was an active member of the Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Wiens, a radical student society committed to the German national cause. Already an enthusiastic Darwinist and materialist, Freud was increasingly attracted to scientific positivism and anticlerical liberalism. This tendency drew him towards the North German physicalist school of Helmholtz whose foremost representative in Vienna was another Protestant German, his greatly admired teacher, Ernst Brücke. At this time he also began to study the German materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach whose psychology of religion had a considerable influence on his radical views.<sup>16</sup>

Like other members of the Leseverein, Freud reacted to the financial scandals which helped discredit Austro-liberalism in the eyes of the younger generation, but he was already losing interest in politics. After 1875, philosophical and religious radicalism interested him far more than social democracy or German nationalism. His idols were the great medical teachers at the University of Vienna like Brücke, in whose laboratory he learned the art of detailed scientific observation; the brilliant psychiatrist from Dresden, Theodor Meynert, who specialized in the anatomy of the brain; and another North German, Richard Krafft-Ebing, author of *Psychopathia sexualis: Eine klinisch-forensische Studie* (1886).<sup>17</sup> The inspirational example of these great scientists from Protestant Germany helped to counteract the bitter disappointment which Freud had felt at encountering rampant antisemitism in the Viennese student body on entering the University in 1873.<sup>18</sup>

In his *Autobiographical Study*, Freud openly confronted the issue:

Above all, I found that I was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew. I refused absolutely to do the first of these things. I have never been able to see why I should feel ashamed of my descent or, as people were beginning to say, of my race. I put up, without much regret, with my non-acceptance into the community; for it seemed to me that in spite of this exclusion an active fellow worker

could not fail to find some nook or cranny in the framework of humanity. These first impressions at the University, however, had one consequence which was afterwards to prove important; for at an early age I was made familiar with the fate of being in the Opposition and of being put under the ban of the “compact majority.” The foundations were thus laid for a certain degree of independence of judgment.<sup>19</sup>

Freud’s sense of shock was understandable after having grown up in the tolerant, optimistic atmosphere of the 1860s and early 1870s, when integration and social acceptance still seemed relatively open to Jews.

By the early 1890s it had become clear to Freud that his earlier efforts at assimilation were futile. Like Herzl and Schnitzler he had come to recognize that his ethnic origins made him part of a distinct minority group which shared a common fate in an increasingly hostile world. The militantly Catholic Vienna of Karl Lueger’s electoral triumphs virtually obliged Freud to see himself as a member of a targeted group of potential victims. Whether he liked it or not, he could not escape being branded as a Jew in a community where antisemitism had become a rampant social disease rather than a mere individual idiosyncrasy. In Peter Gay’s words it “it pervaded and poisoned student organizations, university politics, social relationships, medical opinions.”<sup>20</sup> It was this everyday reality which provided the sobering backdrop to his scientific work. Living in a “laboratory for every known species of antisemitism,” it became a matter of defiance and personal honor for Freud to affirm his Jewish origins or at least not to deny them.

After 1895, the year of the intellectual breakthrough which produced the new “science” of psychoanalysis, Freud himself gradually became a target for antisemites. Was he not the epitome of the “godless Jew,” a subverter par excellence of religion, morals, and the family, the destroyer of human illusions? “Be assured,” he wrote in the summer of 1908 to his disciple, Karl Abraham: “If my name were Oberhuber, my innovations would have encountered far less resistance, despite everything.”<sup>21</sup> Despite his bitterness, Freud accepted this sense of exclusion and social marginality as constituting a major source of his own creative originality. It was no accident he wrote, that “the first advocate of psycho-analysis was a Jew,” for to “profess belief in this new theory called for a certain degree of readiness to accept a position of solitary opposition with which no one is more familiar than a Jew.”<sup>22</sup> Freud believed that this deeply rooted feeling of separation from the Gentile majority made him and other secular Jews much less conformist. They were relatively uncluttered by vestiges of worn-out dogma and superstition or by

the crushing burden of theological “delusions” bequeathed by Christian civilization. This was the meaning of Freud’s remark that only an absolutely irreligious Jew could have invented psychoanalysis.<sup>23</sup>

Ever since the mid-1890s, although he was distinctly alienated from traditional Judaism, Freud had come to identify with the culturalist interpretation of the ancestral faith promoted by the B’nai B’rith Lodge. Through the brotherhood he could articulate a congenial sense of ethical purpose and humanistic ideals, combining a secular Jewish identity with Enlightenment universalism.<sup>24</sup> This was the background to Freud’s special attraction to Moses as a lawgiver, liberator of the Israelites, and Hebrew prophet, which began to crystallize at the end of the 19th century. Already in his dreams of Rome in 1897, there were hidden, but nonetheless unmistakable, references to himself as a Moses seeing the “promised land” from a distance.<sup>25</sup> On 17 January 1909, he wrote to Carl Gustav Jung, then still his designated successor: “We are certainly getting ahead. If I am Moses, then you are Joshua and will take possession of the promised land of psychiatry, which I shall only be able to glimpse from afar.”<sup>26</sup>

It was in December 1913, shortly after Jung’s defection from the movement that Freud wrote his essay “The Moses of Michelangelo,” which he was initially most reluctant to publish. When he eventually did issue the work, Freud insisted upon anonymity as if he feared it was too personal and revealing.<sup>27</sup> Already during his first visit to Rome in 1901, Freud had paid daily visits to the church in which the famous statue of Michelangelo was located. For three weeks in September 1913 he stood once more in front of the sculpture, studying, measuring, and sketching it. What struck Freud most forcefully was the freedom with which Michelangelo had recast the character of the Hebrew prophet, placing “a different Moses on the tomb of the Pope, one superior to the historical or traditional Moses.” The great Renaissance sculptor had modified the theme of the broken Tablets: he did not let Moses break them in his wrath but “makes him calm that wrath, or at any rate prevent it from becoming an act.” In this way, Michelangelo had given a new, more human dimension to Moses; so that the giant frame

becomes only a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself.<sup>28</sup>

Freud’s Moses, it should be noted, is far removed from any “Zionist” or Jewish national identification.<sup>29</sup> Though it may seem surprising in retrospect,

Freud never met the fin-de-siècle “Moses”—Theodor Herzl, though they lived in the same street in Vienna for several years. Yet we know that he esteemed “the poet and the fighter for the human rights of my people,” to quote from his complementary letter of September 1902 to Herzl, accompanying a review copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.<sup>30</sup> A few years before, in 1898, Freud had seen Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto* in Vienna and he felt deeply troubled by its evocation of the “Jewish Question” and his own inability to guarantee a secure homeland to his own children.<sup>31</sup>

Herzl’s “Mosaic” solution of a physical Exodus from Europe to the Land of Zion did not appeal to Freud on a personal level.<sup>32</sup> He remained cautious with regard to political Zionism; at times sympathetic and on other occasions equivocal or even sharply critical. Theodor Herzl belonged in his eyes to a special group of practitioners of the politics of fantasy, who commanded the world “while they themselves remain on the other side of the psychic mirror.”<sup>33</sup> The Zionist leader’s concept of redemption through political action ran contrary to Freud’s skepticism about collective solutions, his commitment to the scientific analysis of dreams rather than their implementation, his fascination with the demythification of the unconscious and opposition to messianic ideals. In all those respects Freud was closer to the playwright Arthur Schnitzler than to Herzl.

Nevertheless Freud’s ambivalence about Jewish nationalism did not preclude his confessing to Karl Abraham in December 1917: “The only thing that [currently] gives me any pleasure is the capture of Jerusalem and the British experiment with the chosen people.”<sup>34</sup> Nor did his underlying doubts prevent him in 1926 from writing to Professor Friedrich Thieberger: “Towards Zionism I have only sympathy, but I make no judgment on it, on its chances of success and on the possible dangers to it.”<sup>35</sup> For Freud, this critical sympathy was part of his irrepressible sense of ethnic solidarity with Jews, even if the link could not be expressed clearly in words or given a “scientific” justification.

The Arab riots in Palestine in 1929 exposed some of Freud’s deeper misgivings concerning the Zionist enterprise. The incidents at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, in particular, highlighted his anxieties about the *political* side of Zionism and his visceral revulsion against any form of religious fanaticism. Writing to the Keren Hajessod in Vienna in 1930 his attitude to Jewish nationalism was nuanced but distinctly guarded about the future:

Whoever wants to influence the masses must give them something rousing and inflammatory and my sober judgment of Zionism does not

permit this. I certainly sympathize with its goals, am proud of our University in Jerusalem and am delighted with our settlements' prosperity. But on the other hand, I do not think that Palestine could ever become a Jewish State, nor that the Christian and Islamic worlds would ever be prepared to have their holy places under Jewish control. It would have seemed more sensible to me to establish a Jewish homeland on less historically burdened land. But I know that such a rational standpoint would never have gained the enthusiasm of the masses....<sup>36</sup>

Freud chose to blame the 1929 pogrom on "the unrealistic fanaticism of our people" which had awakened Arab distrust. He also warned against efforts to inculcate "unjustified hope" in Jewish hearts and deplored the national-religious cult of sacred stones. "I have no sympathy at all," he told Dr. Chaim Koffler, "for the misdirected piety which transforms a piece of Herod's wall into a national relic thereby challenging the feelings of the natives."<sup>37</sup>

Freud's interest in Palestine continued to be riddled with ambiguity. This was apparent in his special introduction to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*, written in Vienna in December 1930. In his preface, Freud surprisingly claims complete ignorance of Hebrew (which he certainly had learned to some degree in his youth) and insisted that he was "completely estranged from the religion of his fathers" as well as any nationalist ideals; at the same time he pronounced himself a Jew "in his essential nature with no desire to alter that nature."<sup>38</sup> Freud was adamant, that despite having abandoned the national and religious characteristics of Judaism, "a very great deal of Jewishness" remained in his personality. Though adopting "no Jewish standpoint" and making no exceptions "in favor of Jewry," he concluded the preface by expressing the hope that "unprejudiced science cannot remain a stranger to the spirit of the new [Palestinian] Jewry."

In the 1930s, though his interest in Zionism seemed to recede, the legend of Moses increasingly began to haunt and torment the powerful imagination of Sigmund Freud. But the analysis which emerged from his pen was not at all about the historical Moses of Judaism. Instead, Freud sketched a highly speculative portrait of a Moses who had been born as an Egyptian nobleman and whose presumed *murder*, by his "adopted" people, the Jews, had created Hebrew monotheism through a complex detour. In Freud's final version, as laid out in *Moses and Monotheism* (published in his London exile in 1939), "it was one man, the man Moses, who created the Jews." They were his

“chosen people,” their tenacity, obstinacy, and intellectuality were shaped by his character and will.<sup>39</sup>

The seeds of Hebraic monotheism were not however Jewish. They had been sown by a revolutionary, iconoclastic Egyptian Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, Akhenaton, of whom Moses was a loyal disciple.<sup>40</sup> After the collapse of Akhenaton’s “monotheistic revolution” from above, Moses had chosen the Hebrew slaves in Egypt to be the inheritors of his high-minded teachings. According to Freud (following a theory put forward by the German biblical scholar, Eduard Sellin in 1922), the Hebrews had initially betrayed his hopes by killing Moses before entering the Promised Land. To relieve their guilt they not only exalted Moses’ memory but eventually developed a sublime conception of God constructed in his image. However, such a transformation did not come about instantly. For many generations, the tribalistic Hebrews behaved like pagans worshipping Yahwe, “a coarse, narrow-minded local god, violent and bloodthirsty.”<sup>41</sup> But as a result of the universalist ethical teachings of the Hebrew prophets, the memory and the message of Moses began to resurface and be accepted as the religion of the Jews. This fact demonstrated to Freud “a peculiar psychical aptitude in the masses who had become the Jewish people....”<sup>42</sup> Unlike the ancient Egyptians, the descendants of slaves were willing to assume the exacting burdens of monotheism “in return for the reward of being the chosen people.”

The founder of psychoanalysis hypothesized that this exalted moral consciousness which Moses had imprinted “for all time” upon his “chosen people” was the source of such lasting “Jewish” character traits as the commitment to rationality, legalism, austerity, tenacity, and the will to separateness. Moses had thereby given a permanent anchorage to the self-esteem of the Jewish people. But his doctrine of chosenness also provided the deepest root of “much of the hostility it has experienced and still experiences.”<sup>43</sup> In a letter to Arnold Zweig on 30 September 1934, Freud asserted that explaining the enigma of antisemitism was in fact his prime motivation in writing *Moses and Monotheism*:

Faced with the renewed persecutions, one asks oneself again how the Jew came to be what he is and why he has drawn upon himself this undying hatred. I soon found the formula: Moses created the Jew.<sup>44</sup>

Freud undoubtedly identified with the figure of Moses, yet the narrative in his book suggests both deep hostility to the “father-religion” of Judaism and the wish to re-appropriate its message on his own, secular terms. A similar ambivalence comes out in his attitude to Christianity which he acerbically

described as “a cultural regression as compared with the older, Jewish one, as regularly happens when a new mass of people, of a lower level, break their way in or are given admission.”<sup>45</sup> Freud emphasized that Christianity was not strictly monotheist. It had borrowed “numerous symbolic rituals from surrounding peoples,” re-established the “great mother-goddess,” and permitted “the entry of superstitions, magical and mystical elements” which inhibited intellectual development for two thousand years. In a sarcastic gloss on European “Christian” antisemitism, Freud added:

We must not forget that all those peoples who excel today in their hatred of Jews became Christians only in late historic times, often driven to it by bloody conversion. It might be said that they are all “mis-baptized.” They have been left, under a thin veneer of Christianity, what their ancestors were, who worshipped a “barbarous polytheism.”<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, Freud did not develop this interesting insight into antisemitism as an “anti-Christian” eruption of barbaric instincts by poorly baptized Gentiles. Instead, in *Moses and Monotheism* he suggests that if only the Jews had confessed to their supposed “guilt” in killing the Primal Father—the Egyptian Moses—they might have been spared the Gentile-Christian accusation of having murdered God.<sup>47</sup> Yet Freud himself observes that the murder of Moses, like the crucifixion of Jesus, were “providential” occurrences insofar as they changed the course of Western civilization. A Father religion was replaced by a Son religion. But in both cases, it was the guilt arising from a “primal murder” which supposedly laid the foundations of human morality.<sup>48</sup> This was hardly a theory that could endear Freud to religious Jews or believing Christians, as he understood perfectly well. His longstanding antipathy to religion was a matter of record, undoubtedly exacerbated by his hostile view of the Catholic Church as a major bastion of antisemitism and clerical reaction in Austria. In contrast to the counter-Reformation, counter-Enlightenment, and counter-revolutionary forces symbolized by papal Rome, Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* highlights and praises Jewish *Geistigkeit* (spirituality). The prerequisites for attaining such heights demanded a renunciation of instincts, the cultivation of intellectual prowess, and manly self-control—all of them embodied by Moses. It was this founder of civilization who had taken the greatest achievements of the “Egyptian Enlightenment” under Akhenaton and bequeathed them to the Jews. This legacy involved a sharp rejection of idolatry, image-making, and magic, encouraging the cult of reason, justice, and truth as well as a radical

commitment to moral rectitude. Freud's Moses was very much in the tradition of German Enlightenment discourse from Lessing to Kant and Schiller.

We have already indicated that what prompted Freud to write *Moses and Monotheism* in the first place was the rising tide of Nazi antisemitism in the 1930s. Though he could see the catastrophe approaching, his focus was not at all on the motives of the oppressors and perpetrators but rather on how the Jews came to attract this undying hatred.<sup>49</sup> According to Freud's thinking, its ultimate source lay in Ancient Egypt, in the backlash against a strict monotheism which the Jews themselves had initially repudiated. Nevertheless, the Jewish people did become identified with the historic outcome—namely a heightening of conscience and ethical purity by means of monotheistic faith. The atheist Freud sincerely believed that it was precisely these traits which made Jewish survival possible.<sup>50</sup>

The victory of the Mosaic religion in Antiquity was seen by Freud as part of the gradual though slow ascent by mankind towards greater rationality.<sup>51</sup> Though Judaism, like other religions, resembled a traumatic "neurosis," it was more advanced than others in its emphasis on reason, truth, and abstract thought. Hence, it was more adapted to the "scientific age" and to psychoanalysis itself. At the same time, Freud realized that his views on Moses as an Egyptian would hurt Jewish religious sensitivities as well as robbing his co-religionists of their most famous son at a moment of acute danger. His book came out at a time when Nazi violence was beginning to threaten not only the survival of the Jewish people but the foundations of civilization.<sup>52</sup> However, as he told an English correspondent in 1938, he had spent his whole life "standing up for what I have considered to be the scientific truth, even when it was uncomfortable and unpleasant for my fellow men. I cannot end up with an act of disavowal."<sup>53</sup>

Freud was not only concerned about offending Jews. He was much more worried by the likely disapproval of the Catholic authorities in Austria. In particular, he was alarmed by the political influence of Father Wilhelm Schmidt, a distinguished anthropologist and professor at the University of Vienna. Schmidt was a prolific author, a forceful personality, and an aggressive antisemite who had sharply attacked Freud's *Totem and Taboo* for claiming that religion originates with totemism.<sup>54</sup> Freud, who had been a militant anticlerical throughout his adult life, had no illusions about the hostility of the Catholic Church to psychoanalysis. Nor did he want to provide either the authoritarian State or Church in "clerico-fascist" Austria

with any pretext for closing down the institutional basis of psychoanalysis in Vienna. Freud's extreme prudence about publishing *Moses and Monotheism* was directly due to those fears about the negative reaction in a Catholic country like Austria which was "under the protection of that church." Nothing should be done to endanger such protection while it lasted, even if, as Freud sardonically noted, the Roman Catholic Church had long been a relentless enemy of free thought and of scientific advances towards the discovery of truth. Indeed, "violent methods of repression" were, as Freud delicately phrased it, by no means "alien to the Church."<sup>55</sup>

Paradoxically, as he wrote in February 1938 (a month before the *Anschluss*) while still in Vienna, it was the same reactionary Catholic Church "which puts up a powerful defense against the spread of this [totalitarian] danger to civilization."<sup>56</sup> Freud had no doubt that new enemies like fascism, Nazism, and Communism were "more dangerous" than the old ones (like Catholicism) "with whom we have already learnt to come to terms."<sup>57</sup> In his preparatory note to Part I of *Moses and Monotheism* he added a cryptic comment on the regressive alliance of progress and barbarism in the contemporary world. There was, for example, the "most cruel coercion" in the Soviet Union which had robbed over a hundred million Russians "of any possibilities of freedom of thought." Freud also noted the growing violence in fascist Italy and in the case of the German people, what he called "a relapse into almost prehistoric barbarism."<sup>58</sup>

This was the new international context in which Freud had come to regard Austrian Catholicism as the last bulwark against German Nazism and as by far the lesser of two evils. In the summer of 1934, the founder of psychoanalysis noted in a family letter that if the swastika were ever to triumph in Austria "we shall have to leave." Austro-fascism, he added, while certainly unpleasant, was not a lethal danger—hence the willingness "to take it in our stride up to a certain point; it can hardly treat us as badly as its German cousin."<sup>59</sup> In February 1938, Freud wrote again to his son, Ernst, expressing the flimsy hope that Austria would not end up like Nazi Germany since "the Catholic Church is very strong and will offer strong resistance."<sup>60</sup> Even more pathetically, Freud wondered on 23 February 1938 (in a letter to Marie Bonaparte) whether it might not be possible "to find safety in the shelter of the Catholic Church?"<sup>61</sup> Clearly, he was clutching at reeds. Whether or not Freud believed in his own fantasies, the answer came swiftly in March 1938. The Austrian prelates, keepers of the Catholic conscience, did little or nothing to rally whatever forces of sanity still remained in the bosom

of the Church or in Austria itself. Cardinal Theodore Innitzer set the tone with his declaration of Austrian episcopal support for the Hitler regime; many priests chose to celebrate the Führer's achievements from the pulpits, promising to cooperate enthusiastically with the new Nazi order. Hitler's triumphant entry into Vienna was symbolically greeted with the ringing of church bells.<sup>62</sup>

In writing his *Moses* book, Freud was painfully aware of the ominous threat represented by German Nazism to the future of the Jewish people. Throughout the text there are references to antisemitism and a number of fragmentary attempts to find an explanation. At one point Freud sensibly observes: "A phenomenon of such intensity and permanence as the people's hatred of the Jews must of course have more than one ground."<sup>63</sup> He was clearly keen to distinguish between the superficial and the deeper causes. Jews were consistently reproached, for example, for being "aliens" even though they had often arrived in their host countries long before the "natives"; they were victimized as a small and exposed minority because "the communal feeling of groups requires, in order to complete it, hostility towards some extraneous minority."<sup>64</sup> Freud regarded these xenophobic aspects of anti-Jewishness as surface phenomena. He had no doubt that Jewish "difference" was deliberately exaggerated by the antisemites. Contrary to their racial myths, the Jews were "not Asiatics of a foreign race" but "remnants of the Mediterranean peoples and heirs of the Mediterranean civilization." A degree of distinctiveness—especially from the Nordic peoples—did indeed exist but this was due to "the narcissism of minor differences" which invariably exacerbated the intolerance of certain nations. Another facet of antisemitism—which Freud regarded as a reflection of reality itself—was the proven ability of Jews to survive the cruelest persecution. Despite being victimized, they were able to hold their own in commerce and still make "valuable contributions to every form of cultural activity."<sup>65</sup>

However, the deeper motivations for Judeophobia were of a different order altogether. They were "rooted in the remotest past ages," in "the unconscious of the peoples" and especially in envy at Jews having been elected as God's chosen people.<sup>66</sup> The belief that Jews were indeed a chosen people had made them proud and confident; this had been the pattern of Jewish behavior from Hellenistic times to the modern age. No less striking was the fact that "host" nations reacted to Jewish chosenness "as though they too believed in the superiority which the people of Israel claimed for themselves."<sup>67</sup> The self-

esteem of the Jews and their superiority complex were not in themselves unique. But these characteristics had been given a special religious anchorage by Moses. It was the founder of Judaic monotheism who had imprinted this trait (“significant for all time”) upon the Jewish people. Hence Freud’s “blasphemous” conclusion that one man, Moses, had in effect “created the Jews” in his own image: “It is to him that this people owes its tenacity of life but also much of the hostility it has experienced and still experiences.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, Moses was also responsible for antisemitism.

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud clearly moved a considerable distance from his earlier reluctance to deal seriously with Judeophobia. In 1927 he had written somewhat ill-temperedly to Arnold Zweig on the subject:

With regard to antisemitism I don’t really want to search for explanations; I feel a very strong inclination to surrender to my affects in this matter and find myself confirmed in my wholly non-scientific belief that mankind on the average are a wretched lot (*doch elendes Gesindel sind*).<sup>69</sup>

But the massive assault on the Jews and also on psychoanalysis as a “Jewish science” brought a change in Freud’s attitude. He now understood that the lives of his own family were directly threatened, as was the future of the Jews and of civilization itself.<sup>70</sup> In a letter to an English magazine, written on 16 November 1938, Freud described with restrained but unmistakable anguish how he had to leave Vienna after seventy-eight years of assiduous work; how the psychoanalytic society had been dissolved, its institutions destroyed, its printing press taken over; how his books had been reduced to pulp and his children expelled from their professions. He was deeply pained to learn that even in England—a country for which he had immense admiration since his youth—antisemitism was growing.<sup>71</sup> This letter was written about five months after he had gratefully acknowledged the very friendly reception which he received in “lovely, free, magnanimous England.”<sup>72</sup>

*Moses and Monotheism* was the first and only time that Freud attempted a tentative psychoanalysis of antisemitism. Among his hypotheses, circumcision appears as a custom which reinforced Jewish separateness and made “a disagreeable, uncanny impression.” It evoked the dread of castration and revived a gladly forgotten portion of the primeval past.<sup>73</sup> More significantly, Freud sought to link German Nazism to the ineradicable *ressentiment* of pagan barbarians “against the new religion [Christianity] which was imposed upon them.” Their rage was projected and displaced onto the Jewish roots of the Christian religion—a shift of responsibility made

easier by the fact that the Gospels were “set among Jews” and dealt almost exclusively with them. Hence, Freud’s intriguing conclusion that Jew-hatred “is at bottom a hatred of Christians.” There should be no surprise, he added, that “in the German National-Socialist revolution this intimate relation between the two monotheist religions finds such a clear expression in the hostile treatment of both of them.”<sup>74</sup> Freud’s insight was important though misleading if it implied any equivalence in the scale or quality of the persecution of Jews and Christians. There was no real comparison between the intensity of Nazi Christophobia (or discrimination against Christians) and the murderous nature of their onslaught against the Jews.

Freud was nonetheless correct in pointing out that Nazism, while drawing heavily on the Christian legacy of anti-Judaism lashed out with unconcealed fury against the entire Judeo-Christian corpus of ethical demands. Freud’s last work showed an acute understanding of this “return of the repressed.” It brought to light some of the hidden paths through which archaic elements in civilization retain their psychic grip over millions of people. *Moses and Monotheism* first appeared in print in 1939 as the darkest chapter in all of Jewish history was about to begin. Unfortunately, Freud had failed to develop any specific psychology of antisemitism or a practical politics of Jewish survival that could be of real help in this tremendous crisis.<sup>75</sup> He had remained too much of an Austrian *Grenzjude* to consider engaging in any effective political activity. Hitler’s genocidal antisemitism—had he lived to see its indescribable abominations—could only have confirmed Freud’s worst misgivings about the fragility of civilization and the bestiality that lurked beneath its thin veneer.

#### NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud to Marie Bonaparte, 10 May 1926 in *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst L. Freud (New York 1961), 221 (henceforth, *Letters*).
2. Ludwig Braun, “Die Persönlichkeit Freuds und seine Bedeutung als Bruder,” *B'nai B'rith Mittheilungen für Österreich*, 26 May 1926, 118-31.
3. Ibid., 128ff.
4. *Letters*, 366-67. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, Conn. 1991); and Emmanuel Rice, *Freud and Moses. The Long Journey Home* (Albany, N.Y. 1990) for contrasting efforts to interpret the meaning of this “inner identity”.

5. Freud to the Mayor of Příbor, 25 Oct. 1931, *Letters*, 407-408, in which he describes himself as the “happy child from Freiberg, the first-born son of a youthful mother, the boy who received from this air, from this soil, the first indelible impressions.

6. Freud to Roback, 20 Feb. 1930, *Letters*, 395. See Abraham A. Roback, *Freudiana* (Cambridge, Mass. 1957). Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, 69-70 questions Freud's claim that his education was “so un-Jewish.”

7. Judith Bernays Heller, “Freud's Mother and Father,” *Commentary* (May 1956): 418-21; Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (London 1953), 19; idem, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York 1955): 409. A number of scholars have shown that Jacob Freud, despite his attraction to the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) remained a devoted student of the Talmud into his old age; see David Stern, “The Ego and the Yid,” *New Republic*, 21 Sept. 1992, 43-49.

8. Roback, *Freudiana*, 92. See Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, 71-74. The elaborate and lengthy inscription was composed by Jacob Freud in the ornate style known as *melitsah*, consisting of arcane allusions and quotations from the Bible. It shows Jacob's virtuoso command of Jewish sources and his Hebrew knowledge. Both Yerushalmi and Rice argue that it expressed the father's desire that Sigmund renew ties to the Jewish tradition which he had abandoned.

9. Marthe Robert, *D'Oedipe à Moïse: Freud et la conscience juive* (Paris 1974), 24, “c'est Jakob le juif galicien, et non un roi grec de légende qui a été d'abord pour Freud le père assassiné.” However, in a letter of 2 Nov. 1896, following Jakob's death, Sigmund wrote: “I valued him highly and understood him very well indeed, and with his peculiar mixture of deep wisdom and imaginative lightheartedness he meant a great deal in my life....” Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess. Drafts and Notes, 1887-1902*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York 1977), 170-71.

10. “The Interpretation of Dreams,” in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols. (London 1953-1974) (henceforth S.E.), 4: 196ff.

11. Sigmund Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (Frankfurt 1976), 174.

12. Quoted in John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (New York 1988), 504-505. Amalia Freud appears to have remained religiously observant throughout her life and to have kept a kosher home. She most probably used her native Galician Yiddish when speaking to her children, including Sigmund.

13. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (London 1978), 157.
14. Quoted in Dennis B. Klein, *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (Chicago 1985), 46.
15. Ibid., 46ff.
16. Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew. Freud, Atheism and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, Conn. 1987), 53-56. In 1875, while a student at the University of Vienna, he wrote to a friend about Feuerbach: “Among all philosophers, I worship and admire this man the most.” Thirty years earlier, Feuerbach had exercised a similarly hypnotic effect on the young Karl Marx.
17. See Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* (Oxford 1978), 34-35 who points out that medical Vienna in the late 19th century was “a microcosm of German scientific talent”; that Freud lived and worked within a “larger German culture” and regarded himself as culturally German rather than Austrian, ibid., 90. See also William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848-1938* (Berkeley 1983), 229-33. I believe that Freud was far more of an Austrian than Peter Gay’s interpretation suggests.
18. Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, trans. James Strachey (London 1936), 15. On Freud’s encounters with antisemitism, see Dennis B. Klein, *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, 48-54; and Robert S. Wistrich, “The Jewish Identity of Sigmund Freud,” *Jewish Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (127) (1987): 47-52.
19. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, 14-15. See also the helpful essay on Freud’s psychosocial identity, in Peter Loewenberg, *Fantasy and Reality in History* (New York 1995), 33-45.
20. Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, 26.
21. *Sigmund Freud-Karl Abraham, Briefe, 1907-1926*, ed. by Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud (1965), 23 July 1908, 57.
22. Freud, “The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis” (1925) in *S.E.*, 19: 222.
23. *Psycho-Analysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London 1963), 63. At the same time, Freud was acutely aware of racial difference and developed a strong feeling of solidarity with the Jewish people (*Volk*). For the ways in which this effected his scientific work, see Sander L. Gilman, “Freud, Race and Gender,” in *Psychoanalysis in its Cultural Context*, Austrian Studies 3, ed. by Edward Timms and Ritchie Robertson (Edinburgh 1992): 20-38.
24. Klein, *Jewish Origins*, 69-102; see also Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989), 564-66.
25. Klein, *Jewish Origins*, 94-95; see also Martin S. Bergmann, “Moses and the Evolution of Freud’s Jewish Identity,” *Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related*

*Sciences* 4 (Mar. 1976): 3-26. It is quite possible that the figure of Moses had haunted him since childhood, as he would claim in 1935. See Peter Gay, *Freud. A Life*, 605.

26. *The Freud/Jung Letters. The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*, ed. William McGuire (Princeton 1974), 196-97.

27. *S.E.*, 13: 233. See also Ernst Simon, "Sigmund Freud, the Jew," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 2 (1957): 302-305. Freud, in 1913, could readily have identified with Moses as the embattled, patriarchal leader of a movement threatened by backsliding, rebellious sons. This reflected his own situation as head of the highly fractious psychoanalytical movement.

28. *S.E.*, 18: 233; and Emanuel Rice, *Freud and Moses*, 126-27.

29. Robert S. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 574-582 for Freud's ambivalence about nationalism in general and the Zionist movement in particular.

30. Freud to Herzl, 28 Sept. 1902, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

31. *S.E.*, 5: 441.

32. Peter Loewenberg, "A Hidden Zionist Theme in Freud's My Son, The Myops...Dream," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1970): 132, suggests that unconsciously, Freud may have envied Herzl for the realization of the repressed political ambitions of his own adolescence.

33. William J. McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1986), 314-16.

34. *A Psycho-Analytic Dialogue: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907/1926*, ed. by Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud, trans. by Bernard Marsh and Hilda C. Abraham (London 1965), 264.

35. Quoted by Ernst Simon, "Sigmund Freud, the Jew," 275.

36. Freud to Dr. Chaim Koffler, Keren Hajessod, Vienna, 26 Feb. 1930, Schwadron Collection, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

37. Ibid.

38. Quoted in Rice, *Freud and Moses*, 130.

39. *Moses and Monotheism*, in *S.E.*, 18: 46.

40. See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1997) for a stimulating analysis of the Egyptian background and its implications.

41. *S.E.*, 23: 50.

42. Ibid., 111.

43. Ibid., 106. Freud made it clear that the "jealousy of the people which declared itself the first-born favorite child of God the Father" was one of the key factors in the genesis of antisemitism.

44. Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by Ernst L. Freud (Frankfurt a.M. 1968), 102.

45. *S.E.*, 23: 88.

46. *Ibid.*, 91.

47. *Ibid.*, 136. See the discussion in Rice, *Freud and Moses*, 160ff. of Freud's view about the psychodynamic origins of Christianity and the direct link he created between the "murder" of Moses and the crucifixion of Jesus.

48. See Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History. Explorations in the Passage to Modernity* (Princeton 1998), 207, argues that Freud wished to give the Jews a basis for abandoning their exclusivist self-definition which prevented them "from realizing as Christians do, their own universality." The essential prerequisite for Freud, was that Jews recognize (as Christians supposedly do) their own patricidal crime and assume its guilt as participants in the brotherhood of man." This convoluted argument strikes me as fanciful.

49. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 6; see also Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (Cambridge 1998) for a close textual analysis of *Moses and Monotheism*.

50. *S.E.*, 23: 123.

51. *Ibid.*, 21: 53. In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) Freud displayed a qualified optimism about the eventual triumph of reason. "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest till it has gained a hearing. Finally, after a countless succession of rebuffs, it succeeds."

52. Bernstein, *Freud*, 138.

53. *Letters*, 31 Oct. 1938, 448, 450.

54. Freud to Arnold Zweig, *Letters*, 91-92; a letter of 9 Sept. 1934 describes Father Schmidt as an "inimical priest," "a confidant of the Pope and a student of comparative religion who abhorred psychoanalysis and would surely use any pretext to ban it in Vienna." Freud's preoccupation with avoiding a "state prohibition of analysis" by the ruling Catholic regime was repeated in a letter of January 1935 to Lou Andreas-Salomé. He also told her that the Moses story "has pursued me throughout the whole of my life." See Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 25. See also Ritchie Robertson, "Freud's Testament: 'Moses and Monotheism,'" in *Freud in Exile. Psychoanalysis and its Vicissitudes*, ed. by E. Timms and Naomi Segal (New Haven, Conn. 1988), 88.

55. *S.E.*, 23: 55; also Carl E. Schorske, "Politics and Patricide in Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams,'" *American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (Apr. 1973): 328-47.

56. *S.E.*, 23: 55.

57. Ibid. Freud realized that Catholicism could only regard psychoanalysis with suspicion, since it “reduces religion to a neurosis of humanity and explains its enormous power in the same way as a neurotic compulsion in our individual patients....” In his earlier letter of 6 Jan. 1935 to Lou Andreas-Salomé, he had explained that this compulsive strength of religion derived from “the return of the repressed”—the reawakening of memories derived from “very ancient, forgotten, highly emotional episodes of human history.”

58. *S.E.*, 23: 54-55; “Moses, His People and Monotheist Religion,” Part I [Vienna], before March 1938.

59. *Letters*, 420.

60. Peter Gay, *Freud. A Life for Our Time*, 617-18.

61. Ibid., 618. In a letter to Max Eitingon on 6 Feb. 1938, Freud wrote: “Our brave and in its way decent government is now more energetic than hitherto in keeping the Nazis at bay, although in view of the latest events in Germany no one can be sure what is going to happen.”

62. Ibid., 619. It should, however, be pointed out that Hitler and the S.S. saw Roman Catholicism as a major ideological opponent in Austria. On 8 October 1938 the Hitler Youth even stormed Innitzer’s palace in response to an earlier anti-Nazi demonstration of Catholic youth. See, however, Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria. Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 2000), 93-111 who emphasizes the intense anti-Jewish sentiment within the Catholic Church and its compromises with the Nazis.

63. *S.E.*, 23: 90.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., 91. Freud underlined in this context the vitality of the Jews, their “unexampled capacity for resistance” in the face of misfortune and ill-treatment; their high self-esteem, sense of superiority and “peculiar confidence in life”—“a kind of optimism” which “pious people would call...trust in God,” *ibid.*, 105.

66. Ibid., 106.

67. Freud clearly thought that Jew-hatred was rooted in pagan Antiquity. It had been exacerbated by Christianity because the Jews “did not recognize the redeemer.” But at its heart was sheer envy of the kind exhibited in the Biblical story of Joseph and his brothers.

68. *S.E.*, 23: 106.

69. Freud to Zweig, 2 Dec. 1927, *Briefwechsel* (1968), 14.

70. Freud’s letters of the late 1930s contain many traces of this anxiety. On 28 May 1933 he wrote to Oskar Pfister from Vienna that his horizon “has become darkly clouded by events in Germany. Three members of my family, with their families, two

sons and a son-in-law are looking for a new country and still haven't found one. Switzerland is not among the hospitable countries. My judgement of human nature, above all the Christian-Aryan variety, has had little reason to change." To Marie Bonaparte he wrote from London, just after the Crystal Night pogrom on 12 November 1938, about the plight of four of his five sisters, unable to leave Austria in time. They would be deported and killed by the Nazis. See *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, 417-18.

71. S.E., 23: 301, "Antisemitism in England" (1938), letter in English to the editor of *Time and Tide*.

72. Ibid., 57.

73. Ibid., 91.

74. Ibid., 92.

75. Some of his followers did make progress in the analysis of antisemitism in the 1940s. For a useful survey of psychoanalytic attempts to understand fascism and antisemitism in this period, see David James Fisher, "Vers une compréhension psychanalytique du fascisme et de l'antisémitisme: perceptions des années 1940," *Revue Internationale Historique Psychanalytique* 5 (1992): 221-41.

## CHAPTER 11

### **Stefan Zweig and the “World of Yesterday”**

The opening chapter of Stefan Zweig’s memorable autobiography *The World of Yesterday* conjures up the beguiling image of a world standing firmly and immovably in its appointed place.<sup>1</sup>

Everything in our almost thousand-year-old Austrian monarchy seemed based on permanency, and the State itself was the chief guarantor of this stability. The rights which it granted to its citizens were duly confirmed by parliament, the freely elected representative of the people, and every duty was exactly prescribed. Our currency, the Austrian crown, circulated in bright gold pieces, an assurance of its immutability. Everyone knew how much he possessed or what he was entitled to, what was permitted and what was forbidden.<sup>2</sup>

In this “Golden Age of Security” where everything had its definite measure, families lived on fixed budgets, estates and businesses “were handed down from generation to generation.” It was a golden age of insurance, respect for property, liberal idealism, belief in “irresistible progress”—strengthened by the new wonders of science and technology; these included electric lights, telephones, railways, aeroplanes, and comforts that were already widely spread among the middle classes. In the vast empire ruled by the aged Emperor Franz Joseph, “no one thought of wars, of revolutions or revolts.” In Zweig’s nostalgic elegy to a vanished supremacy: “All that was radical, all violence, seemed impossible in an age of reason.”<sup>3</sup>

Throughout *The World of Yesterday* one feels this conservative longing for an idealized past, one which in many ways is fictionalized, retouched, and full of wishful thinking. Yet so skillfully is this portrait of an age evoked that it has replaced and even overwhelmed lived experience and influenced much historical research.<sup>4</sup> Zweig’s biography of his own generation, which was written in New York state and Brazil in 1941 (at the height of Hitler’s military triumphs) recalls a Europe that was no more. Each of the alternative titles he had considered for the book: “These Days are Gone,” “A Life for Europe,” or “We, a Sorely Tried Generation,” suggests the bitterness mixed

with nostalgia and homesickness, embodied in his longing for the irretrievable past.<sup>5</sup> Stefan Zweig may have been the most acclaimed and popular German-language author of his day, but neither his amazing success nor his creed of secular humanism and pacifism provided much consolation in the darkest days of the Second World War.

Zweig's *Heimweh* or homesickness for a world that had collapsed, is particularly apparent in his portrayal of fin-de-siècle Vienna and the last years of the Habsburg Empire in which he had grown to maturity.<sup>6</sup> The Dual Monarchy is idealized for its stability, but the internal conflicts and tensions within this *Vienvölkerstaat* (a multinational state of many peoples) are barely mentioned. Reading Zweig one would never guess that irreconcilable nationality conflicts between Germans, Hungarians, Slavs, and Romanians were tearing this ancient monarchical structure apart; that the aged emperor, in his dogged pursuit of imperial prestige was pushing the Empire along the path of self-destruction; that the parliament was completely dysfunctional, an impotent punching-bag for warring ethnic groups and social classes; or that Viennese Jewry, far from fitting so perfectly into the happy-go-lucky atmosphere of the Habsburg metropolis, had been deeply troubled about its future prospects, ever since the year of Zweig's birth in 1881. The gilded, sanitized version that Stefan Zweig offers us of this era (“one lived well, one lived lightly and without a care in that old Vienna”) is indeed pure nostalgia. The musical, theatrical, and *gemütlich* Vienna that is so marvelously evoked, sometimes reads to the more cynical modern eye like a dream advertisement for the Austrian Tourist industry. It is hardly reliable history.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most glaring examples of the pitfalls of nostalgia in *The World of Yesterday* is Zweig's treatment of the “Jewish Question.” He was, of course, perfectly correct to point out the central role played by Jews in creating a modern culture in Austria.<sup>8</sup> He observes that “through a miracle of understanding, they [the Jews] gave to what was Austrian, and Viennese, its most intensive expression.”<sup>9</sup> Not only that, but writers like Hofmannstahl, Schnitzler, Beer-Hofmann, and Altenberg offered a “European standing” to Viennese literature; so, too, (to mention only the most famous examples) did Mahler and Schoenberg in classical music, Max Reinhardt in the theatre, or Freud in the field of medical science. Zweig is positively rhapsodic about the contribution of Jews to Austrian culture as scholars, painters, virtuosi, theatrical directors, architects, and journalists; and he perceptively observed that without “the ceaseless stimulating interest of the Jewish bourgeoisie, Vienna, thanks to the indolence of the court, the aristocracy and the Christian

millionaires, who preferred to maintain racing stables and hunts to fostering art, would have remained behind Berlin in the realm of art as Austria remained behind the German Reich in political matters.”<sup>10</sup>

In another, much more frequently quoted passage, Zweig reminds us that the Jewish middle classes

were the real audience, they filled the theatres and the concerts, they bought the books and the pictures, they visited the exhibitions, and with their more mobile understanding, little hampered by tradition, they were the exponents of all that was new.<sup>11</sup>

Zweig attributed this passion for promoting Viennese culture and the glory of the city, above all, to the patriotism of the Austrian Jews and their desire for assimilation.<sup>12</sup>

They felt that their being Austrian was a mission to the world...much, if not the most of all that Europe and America admire today as an expression of a new, rejuvenated Austrian culture, in literature, the theatre, in the arts and crafts, was created by the Viennese Jews, who, in turn, by this manifestation achieved the highest artistic performance of their millennial spiritual activity.<sup>13</sup>

Zweig may have exaggerated somewhat when he claimed that “nine-tenths of what the world celebrated as Viennese culture in the nineteenth century was promoted, nourished, or even created by Viennese Jewry.” But he did not make it up either. Nor did he fail to acknowledge the native Viennese love of culture, instinct for beauty, and exuberance of life—singling out, in particular, the musicality of the Austrian life-style—as a positive source of inspiration for Jews. In the Habsburg era, there was a uniquely productive Jewish encounter with “an easy-going people, inclined to conciliation, under whose apparent laxity of form lay buried the identical deep instinct for cultural and aesthetic values.” This common instinct is what made the “symbiosis” between Austrians and Jews possible.<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, Jews could not aspire to leading positions in the administration of the State, diplomacy, the army, the hereditary aristocracy, or the higher bureaucracy, but they could become “true Viennese” through their love of art. This prospect fulfilled a deep inner desire, the “longing for a homeland, for rest, for security, for friendliness” and for a tangible connection to the world around them.<sup>15</sup>

Zweig’s portrait certainly rings true for the highly cultivated Jewish bourgeoisie from which he sprang. It was a social class which during the liberal era had managed to adapt itself to the higher cultural sphere with

astonishing rapidity.<sup>16</sup> However, what Zweig above all wished to demonstrate to his readers was the falsity of the stereotypical view that Jews are primarily interested in business, the accumulation of wealth, and money-making. On the contrary, he insists that the real aim of Jews “is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world”; to sacrifice for the education of their children; to rejoice in the achievement of having as many professors, savants, writers, or musicians in the family as possible. Subconsciously, Zweig argues, the Jews desire to free themselves from “cold money-making” (the merely “Jewish”) and everything petty and morally dubious which is associated with trade. This is his thought-provoking answer to Richard Wagner’s *Judaism in Music*—it is as if the Jew “wished to redeem himself and his entire race from the curse of money.”<sup>17</sup>

Habsburg Vienna was so congenial to the aesthetes of “Young Vienna” precisely because it provided this opportunity for cultural excellence. The bourgeois Jewish creators of Stefan Zweig’s generation lived in a society that was more oriented to aesthetic pursuits than Realpolitik, to cosmopolitan hedonism rather than nationalist fervor. Viennese musicality—we are told—dissolved all contrasts into a harmonious synthesis.

Hospitable and endowed with a particular talent for receptivity, the city drew the most diverse forces to it, loosened, propitiated, and pacified them.<sup>18</sup>

This Austrian talent for the harmonization of opposites and assimilation was the result of an atmosphere nurtured over centuries, which favored “spiritual conciliation.” In the Habsburg Vienna of Zweig’s somewhat romanticized recollection, “subconsciously every citizen became supra-national, cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world.”<sup>19</sup> For Zweig (and many others from his social milieu) such a heart-warming nostalgic picture did undoubtedly reflect a subjective truth. They could enjoy wonderful music, dancing, theatre, cuisine, conversation—art, love, and all the entertainments associated with an epicurean city. The “theatromania” and the fanaticism for art which Zweig so charmingly describes, even percolated down to the masses, though not always in the benign way which he recalled.<sup>20</sup> It was nonetheless true that for many ordinary Viennese, the theatre was more important than events in parliament or world affairs; that court actors or opera singers were more easily recognized in the street by shop girls and cab drivers than prime ministers and wealthy magnates. Habsburg Austria was indeed a realm in which culture appeared to rule politics. Nevertheless, Zweig leaves out a great deal when he ignores the many examples of mass suffering, major

social or national conflicts, and radical challenges to the State in his pre-World War I idyll.

A highly significant symptom of this memory-hole is Zweig's nearly complete silence about Central European antisemitism in the pre-1914 era. The innocent reader of *The World of Yesterday* would scarcely realize that Vienna was the only capital in Europe governed by an openly antisemitic party. Far from being welcomed with open arms, Jews found themselves hounded by Karl Lueger's Christian-Social cohorts and sometimes physically attacked by German nationalist students—spouting the vilest racist doctrines—at least forty years before Hitler. One would hardly understand that the same Jews who so patriotically spread Vienna's artistic glory throughout the world were also regularly accused by the ruling party of desecrating its culture, morals, and society.<sup>21</sup> Nor could the reader of Zweig's opus be expected to grasp how the “lower depths” of Vienna were already spawning in the early 1900s future monsters like Adolf Hitler, since there is barely a hint in his book of the poverty and destitution that afflicted the mass of the population.

In Zweig's casual references to Dr. Karl Lueger, there is at best a passing awareness of the sources of this talented demagogue's appeal to the declining Viennese petty-bourgeoisie. The portrait of Lueger and his Catholic populist movement constitutes a disturbing trivialization of the impact of mainstream Austrian antisemitism. Lueger is called an “able and popular leader,” “an imposing person,” “academically educated in an age that placed intellectual culture over all else”; he is described as “vehement and witty” but never overstepping “the bounds of decency.”<sup>22</sup> He always maintained “a certain chivalry towards his opponents” and despite his official antisemitism he was “helpful and friendly to his former Jewish friends.”<sup>23</sup> In Zweig's glowing account, once Lueger was in power “his city administration remained perfectly just and even typically democratic.”<sup>24</sup> The Austrian Jews, “who had trembled at the triumph of the antisemitic party,” continued to live with “the same rights and esteem as heretofore.”<sup>25</sup>

While not totally false, this is a strangely unreal judgment. It seems at first sight to confirm all the criticisms of Zweig's political naiveté. Was he simply too busy reading the poetry of Valéry, Verlaine or Verhaeren before World War I, to notice the rabble-rousing racist rhetoric of Lueger's followers and their brazen advocacy of antisemitic legislation? Did he not see the continuity between Lueger's diatribes against Jews and the Christian-Social antisemitism of the First Austrian Republic or the discriminatory policies of

its clerico-fascist successors after 1934?<sup>26</sup> The question remains open. Zweig himself provides us with some clues. Almost casually, in his first recollection of Lueger, he informs the reader:

I personally must confess that neither in school nor at the University, nor in the world of literature, have I ever experienced the slightest suppression or indignity as a Jew.<sup>27</sup>

This claim is indeed puzzling. Even if it were confined solely to the Lueger era in Vienna (between 1897 and 1910)—the years of Zweig’s adolescence and early manhood—the assertion of never having experienced antisemitism seems implausible. But these lines were written eight years after Stefan Zweig’s works had been burned by the Nazis for their “destructive” (*zersetzend*) and corrupting “Jewish” influence. While bewailing the loss of his German readership after 1933 (and the end of his special connection to the Insel-Verlag), Zweig was initially very reluctant to break commercial and literary connections with Nazi Germany.<sup>28</sup> By 1937, however, he had no more illusions about the barbaric nature of National Socialism or the existential danger which it represented not only to Jews but to human civilization as such.<sup>29</sup>

In *The World of Yesterday*, the excessively mild depiction of the *Luegerzeit* seems related to Zweig’s determination to draw a stark contrast between the turn of the century and the 1930s. In 1900, according to Stefan Zweig, tolerance prevailed in the world:

The hatred of country for country, of nation for nation...did not divide people from people and nations from nations; not yet had every herd and mass feeling become so disgustingly powerful in public life as today. Freedom in one’s private affairs, which is no longer considered comprehensible, was taken for granted. One did not look down upon tolerance as one does today, as weakness and softness....<sup>30</sup>

However, Zweig knew well enough that Lueger had served as Hitler’s prototype in learning how to mobilize the disgruntled lower middle class and déclassé population. The Christian-Social leader had offered a model for how to divert hatred from the feudal elites by using antisemitic catchwords.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, despite these similarities, Zweig insists that “the entire vulgarization and brutalization of present-day politics, the horrible decline of our century, is demonstrated in the comparison of these two figures.”<sup>32</sup>

Nostalgic readers are informed that *Der Schöne Karl* (as the Viennese called him) had not gone to school in vain; that he was attractive, honest, and

could speak in a way that appealed to people, while holding his more rabid followers in check. The typically aesthetic and educational criteria of fin-de-siècle Vienna are used here by Zweig to create a high wall between the elegant Lueger and the semi-literate plebeian Adolf Hitler. Yet, in reality, the barrier was far from being hermetic. So, too, the differences between the two eras (while they certainly exist) are overstated. Referring to the Habsburg world, Zweig claims that “the poison of hatred, and the will to mutual and unsparing destruction had not yet entered into the bloodstream of the time.”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the paragraphs that immediately follow this passage—describing the pan-German nationalists in Austria—contradict Zweig’s own premise. The refined novelist and poet does in fact recognize that Georg von Schönerer’s movement with its brutality, racist antisemitism, anticlericalism, and desire to overthrow the Monarchy was a direct ancestor of National Socialism.<sup>34</sup> Faced with pan-German obstruction of all efforts to bring about peace between the nationalities, the Austrian Imperial government had to withdraw its proposed language reforms in 1898. Zweig himself acknowledges that this was an ominous turning-point:

The invasion of brutality into politics thus chalked up its first success.

All the underground cracks and crevices between the classes and races, which the age of conciliation had so laboriously patched up, broke open once again and widened into abysses and chasms. In reality it was during the last decade preceding the new century that the war of all against all began in Austria.<sup>35</sup>

Stefan Zweig was sufficiently honest and self-critical to admit that while being “completely wrapped in our literary ambitions,” his generation of impressionist aesthetes simply did not perceive these dangerous changes; they were too uninterested in politics and social problems to notice that “with the new century the decline of individual freedom in Europe had begun.”<sup>36</sup>

The “Golden Age of Security” so elegantly described in *The World of Yesterday* was not as safe as its author would have us believe. German nationalist violence at the universities, virulent antisemitism, the horrors of mass prostitution (to which a detailed chapter of the memoirs are devoted), and other social evils were rampant. The loving portrait of the multinational homeland plays down these darker sides without concealing them. Yet there is far more passion in Zweig’s denunciation of pedantry, boredom, and conformist mediocrity induced by the educational system than in his mild criticisms of Austrian politics. Not only that, but Zweig uncritically reproduced the chosen self-image of the Habsburg dynastic state as a benign,

pluralistic, supranational, and universal empire—the paternalist protector of order, stability, and freedom in Europe.<sup>37</sup> This myth which Zweig’s memoirs share with Roth’s *Radetzkymarsch* and some of Franz Werfel’s writings, existed even before the collapse of the Habsburg State. But after 1918, it was swiftly transmuted in the name of a vague indeterminate cosmopolitanism—espoused primarily by Jewish pacifist authors—in search of a broader European homeland. Zweig, in particular, worked towards the vision of a pan-European humanism, free of racial and religious hatreds, which would extend the ideal *Heimat* embodied by the Habsburgs and now threatened by a plague of murderous nationalism.<sup>38</sup>

Writers like Stefan Zweig were greatly reinforced in their pursuit of intellectual and artistic brotherhood across national frontiers by the terrible bloodletting of World War I.<sup>39</sup> His intimate friendship with Romain Rolland was a major source of inspiration for this new-found and highly “idealistic pacifism” though the French writer did not share Zweig’s “defeatism.”<sup>40</sup> In the Biblical drama *Jeremiah*, first performed in Zurich in 1917, Zweig gave an especially graphic and poignant expression to such all-embracing pacifism. Zweig always regarded this dramatic poem as his most personal and intimate work—one in which he came closer to his Jewish roots while subordinating his ethnic identity to a cosmopolitan ideal.<sup>41</sup> What especially attracted him to the prophet Jeremiah was the tragic situation of the “defeatist” and warner, despised as a weakling and coward by the multitude. Yet when defeat comes, he alone is capable of rising above the ensuing despair.<sup>42</sup> In *Jeremiah*, Zweig could articulate for the first time his deep conviction of the moral superiority of the vanquished and the “spiritual barrenness that afflicts whole nations as a result of victory.”<sup>43</sup>

Zweig wrote his biblical drama at the precise moment that Europe was destroying itself in the trenches of the First World War. He could literally see his own dream of *Weltbürgertum* going up in flames. This was the historic moment in which he turned to the Jewish Diasporic experience as a counter-model to European nationalism.<sup>44</sup> In a letter to Martin Buber of January 1917 he explained that never had he identified more with the “*weltbürgerlich*” and universalist human calling of Judaism. The Diaspora expressed for him “spiritual freedom” from the bonds of land, nationhood, and all the military horrors that went together with statehood.<sup>45</sup>

Following the Balfour Declaration, Zweig would distance himself even more clearly from Zionism—interpreted as a deviation from the universal ethical mission of the Jews. Zweig now expressed his gratitude to Diasporic

Judaism for having made this feeling of “supranational freedom possible”; a sentiment which gave him the absolute liberty to choose between nations, to feel a “welcome guest” wherever he went; and which had freed him from “this time of nationalist madness.”<sup>46</sup> Zweig’s embrace of exilic Judaism is now fused with and becomes identical to the “vocation for world citizenship and universal humanity.” The Diaspora is idealized as a “community” forged by blood, language, the spirit (*Geist*) and belief.<sup>47</sup> Its grandeur lay in its role as an intellectual ferment of the nations. But the exile also vindicated the Jewish fate of powerlessness, reinterpreted by Zweig as a mark of moral superiority and as a guarantee of “eternity.”<sup>48</sup> Last but not least, “homelessness” (*ewige Heimatlosigkeit*) and “rootlessness,” the “Wandering Jew” and “eternal suffering,” are all raised by Stefan Zweig in the midst of the First World War to the level of a prophetic ideal and destiny.

In this context, it is curious that the name of Martin Buber is never mentioned in *The World of Yesterday* (despite his important correspondence with Zweig), any more than are Joseph Roth, Franz Werfel, or his two wives, Friderike Zweig and Lotte Altmann.<sup>49</sup> This silence, in the case of Buber and Roth, is certainly revealing of Zweig’s eagerness to present himself to the broader public as the “good European—untainted by any kind of ethnic limitations. The opaque attitude to Zionism in his memoirs is an especially good illustration of how much Zweig leaves out. For example, the author describes in a couple of casual sentences how he became friendly in Berlin with a Galician Jewish artist E. M. Lilien (the full name, Ephraim Moses, is omitted). Lilien embodied “a Judaism which, in its strength and stubborn fanaticism, had hitherto been unknown to me.”<sup>50</sup> There is no hint in this passing reference to the fact that Zweig’s friendship with Lilien continued over many years; that Lilien was the foremost graphic artist of the Zionist movement around 1900, a founder of the Bezalel arts school in Palestine and a close friend of Herzl.<sup>51</sup> Nor is there any mention of the fact that the young Zweig had written an introduction in 1903 to the graphic art of this vibrant Jewish nationalist<sup>52</sup>; let alone any suggestion that Stefan Zweig seriously flirted with the Zionists at the beginning of the 20th century—especially with the cultural wing of the movement.<sup>53</sup> As a result of these silences, few readers of *The World of Yesterday* could know that Stefan Zweig firmly believed in 1903 that Zionism was a “creative idea” which contained a “deep, aesthetic beauty.”<sup>54</sup>

The memoirs, despite their scattered allusions to Zweig’s Jewish identity, present some serious obstacles to a fuller understanding of this issue.<sup>55</sup> One

would never guess, for example, that Zweig had corresponded with the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem since 1931; or that on 11 December 1933, in a letter from Salzburg he offered its director, Hugo Bergmann, the most important items of his private correspondence—which were quickly shipped to Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> Zweig insisted on strict confidentiality but he also referred to the Jerusalem library as “unsere Bibliothek” (“our Library”), which implies at the very least a heightened degree of Jewish identification.<sup>57</sup> Hitler’s rise to power, it would seem, had created a serious dent in Zweig’s supranational European identity, without turning him into a fully-fledged Zionist.

Several years earlier, in 1929, Zweig had published a sympathetic portrait of Theodor Herzl—who had first opened the doors of the highly influential *Neue Freie Presse* to the aspiring young poet. Zweig mentions that in 1901, out of gratitude to Herzl, he had begun to frequent Zionist meetings in the Habsburg capital and frequently met with Martin Buber at the University of Vienna. He was, however, less than enthused by the Zionist students around Herzl for whom dueling seemed to be at the core of their Jewishness.<sup>58</sup> In *The World of Yesterday*, this personal involvement in the Zionist movement is clearly downplayed. But the portrait of Herzl is still memorable.<sup>59</sup> He pays tribute to the Zionist leader’s “astounding journalistic talent,” to his “aristocratic charm,” intelligence, and wit. He convincingly portrays the astonishment and annoyance of the Jewish bourgeoisie, of the “Protest” rabbis and satirists like Karl Kraus at Herzl’s unexpected proposal for a “Jewish State.”

Why should we go to Palestine? Our language is German and not Hebrew, and beautiful Austria is our homeland. Are we not well off under the good Emperor Franz Joseph? Do we not make a decent living, and is our position not secure? Are we not equal subjects, inhabitants and loyal citizens, of our beloved Vienna? Do we not live in a progressive era in which in a few decades all sectarian prejudices will be abolished?”<sup>60</sup>

No doubt, Zweig personally shared most of these objections. But he was also greatly impressed by Herzl’s appearance, authority, and manner. He faithfully recorded Herzl’s bitterness about Vienna, his approval of Zweig’s intention to go abroad—(“it is only there that one learns to think in terms of distance”)—and his regret that he had become leader of the Zionist movement too late in his life.<sup>61</sup> What especially overwhelmed Zweig, however, was the endless procession of Western, Eastern, Russian, and

Turkish Jews who came to Herzl's funeral in 1904. This "gigantic outpouring of grief" is what made him fully realize how much passion and hope this lonely individual "had borne into the world through the power of a single thought."<sup>62</sup> Though highly stylized, Zweig's description of the funeral still has the power to move the reader into understanding a truly dramatic moment in history.

Twenty years later, Zweig still felt sufficiently involved in cultural Zionism to write a warm appreciation for the foundation of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> Other evidence from the 1930s also suggests that Zweig continued to regard Zionism as an ideology which had substantially contributed to the reinforcement of the Jewish nation and to a renewal of its idealism. At the same time, it is clear that he did not want the universalist, supranational, and humane elements in Judaism to become encrusted in a purely Hebraic or nationalist shell.<sup>64</sup>

Whether as an Austrian, a Jew, a humanist, or a pacifist, Zweig had always found himself at the exact point where the global confrontations and cataclysms of the 20th century were at their most violent. By 1941, he was however a homeless wanderer, a cosmopolitan Jew without a country. His efforts to act as a European mediator for over three decades had crumbled under Hitler's onslaught.<sup>65</sup> He had come to hate politics as the "counterpole of justice" and the cult of power as the source of all evil.<sup>66</sup> Military and political hegemony, as he never tired of emphasizing, was based on violence and always liable to destroy humanist values. He had seen his beloved Salzburg (where he spent his most creative years between 1918 and 1934) turn into a hotbed of espionage, intolerance, and violence—prompting his flight from Austria to England four years before the *Anschluss*.

Adolf Hitler was to be Zweig's personal nemesis.<sup>67</sup> The first reference in his memoirs to the Nazi leader highlights the unforgivable crime that Hitler "perpetrated against Vienna when he sought to nationalize and provincialize this city"—thereby destroying its "spiritual supranationality."<sup>68</sup> Zweig linked Hitler with the principle of "terroristic intimidation," cunning opportunism, boundless ambition, and relentless aggression. But, like other writers and intellectuals, he could not take seriously such a coarse rabble-rouser. After all, Hitler wrote such stilted, bombastic prose!<sup>69</sup> His 1923 putsch had failed miserably. Moreover, Hitler was plainly uneducated even in comparison with his fellow fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini. He was an Austrian Nobody brought to power as a result of economic chaos and political disorder. By 1933 Zweig knew better. He began to acknowledge with consternation the

superior propaganda techniques employed by Hitler’s “cynical genius.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, he was much slower than his fellow Austrian writer, Joseph Roth, to grasp the demonic aspects of National Socialism or the significance of the anti-Jewish persecution which it immediately brought in its wake.<sup>71</sup> Zweig’s hesitation in halting his operatic collaboration with the great German composer Richard Strauss (who had become head of the Reich Music Chamber under the Nazis) was undoubtedly a symptom of his inner uncertainty. True, Strauss had been personally insistent on retaining Zweig’s services for their joint opera *The Silent Woman*. Moreover, the German composer was no antisemite and his son had married a Jewess.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, Zweig refused to protest publicly against a performance of the opera in Nazi Germany, citing his well-known loathing for political gestures. This quiescent stance infuriated the more robust among his anti-fascist friends and admirers.

Zweig’s growing sense of paralysis and consistent rejection of political action had its roots in the aesthetic outlook of fin-de-siècle Viennese intellectuals, so nostalgically evoked in *The World of Yesterday*. In his biographical study, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (published in 1934), a highly personal and poignant work, Zweig gave expression to analogous dilemmas experienced by his alter ego, the renowned 16th-century Dutch humanist. Erasmus, like his Austrian disciple, fought for a more spiritual world against the ravages of dogma, zealotry, intolerance, and fanaticism. Unfortunately, like Stefan Zweig, he was literally paralyzed by his desire to retain an Olympian impartiality, *au-dessus de la mêlée*.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps in answer to the sharp criticism of this posture of detachment in dark times, Zweig’s next book, *Castellio gegen Calvin* (1936) told the story of a passionate resistance to Calvin’s theocratic dictatorship with its draconian censorship and repression.<sup>74</sup> The hero was not a resigned Erasmian but a robust opponent of tyranny, ready to fight for humanist ideals while having no real prospect of immediate victory.<sup>75</sup> In this tract for the times, the figure of Calvin was turned into a devilish enemy of humanity resembling Mussolini and Hitler more than historical truth.<sup>76</sup> *Castellio* was the ideal model for that civic courage that Zweig unfortunately lacked—a character flaw of which he was all too aware.

After January 1933, Zweig characteristically counseled his fellow Jews to refrain from any ostentatious public activities. He feared that Jewish political activity would merely facilitate Hitler’s propaganda—a position that seems indefensible today. Until 1938, Zweig continued to underestimate Hitler,

usually presenting anti-Jewish persecution simply as a part of the universal suffering of the time.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, his Jewish consciousness was becoming heightened by the hammer blows of National Socialism. In 1937 he wrote *Der begrabene Leuchter*, set in the year A.D. 455, which highlights the story of the Menorah as a symbol of Jewish survival and the focal point of Jewish aspirations. The story of the Candelabrum concludes on an anguished, enigmatic note:

Like all God's mysteries, it rests in the darkness through the ages. Nor can anyone tell whether it will remain thus for ever and for ever, hidden away and lost to its people, who still know no peace in their wanderings through the lands of the Gentiles, or whether, at length, someone will dig up the Menorah on that day when the Jews come once more into their own. Only then will the Seven-Branched Lampstand diffuse its gentle light in the Temple of Peace.<sup>78</sup>

This sad story sounded a very different note from his letter of 1917 to Abraham Schwadron, expounding the credo of a "spiritual homeland" in opposition to political Zionism. Zweig had then written:

To me the greatness of Judaism is to be supranational, the ferment and cement of all nations through its own idea. Buber desires a Jewish nation but I see in any nationalism the danger of disunion, of pride of restriction, and of vanity.<sup>79</sup>

In a letter of February 1918, he had further amplified this exilic "anti-Zionism," writing to Buber as follows:

The more the dream threatens to become actuality, the dangerous dream of a Jewish State with cannons, flags and decorations, I am determined to love the painful idea of the Diaspora, to love Jewish destiny more than Jewish prosperity.<sup>80</sup>

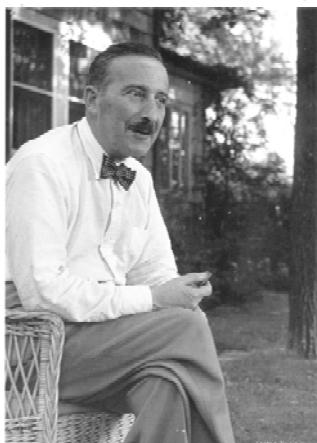
But after the Austrian *Anschluss* of March 1938, Stefan Zweig could no longer be so enamored by the bitter fruits of an enforced rather than a freely chosen exilic fate. Increasingly, he became obsessed with the desperate position of European Jews, not only in Nazi Germany or in his recently annexed Austrian homeland but also in Poland, Hungary, and Romania. At the end of December 1937 after a visit to the Austrian capital, he had been overcome by a feeling of impotence and despair, writing to Arnold Zweig:

Forgive me for becoming so bitter, when I only wanted to send you greetings, but I was in Vienna (and visited Freud) and looked on that city just as if the enemy were already at the gates.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout 1938 Zweig's alarm and despondency grew enormously. In Austria he had left behind relatives (including his aged mother) and countless unfortunates. He had lost virtually the last foothold for his books in the German-speaking world. A powerful sense of premonition aggravated still further his overwhelming feeling of anguish and despair at the sufferings of so many thousands of Jewish refugees. He sharply rebuked any hints of indifference to the torrent of Jewish misery that had surfaced in the wake of the Nazi conquest of Vienna.<sup>82</sup> Rejecting Arnold Zweig's coldly political view of the crisis, he explained:

What is happening in Vienna has *no parallel* in the history of Jewry—Germany was a velvet paw compared to that murderous blow. No, don't accuse the people of having been credulous—the Viennese, the Austrian Jews were much more homogeneous in their make-up than the Germans, they belonged there, they had shaped and helped to create the city of Vienna.<sup>83</sup>

Stefan Zweig's deep pessimism was reinforced by his anger at the Soviet Union for refusing to accept even a few thousand Jewish intellectual émigrés who could have been “an antidote to the growing nationalist isolation, stupidity, and anti-European orientation” manifested by Moscow.<sup>84</sup> Stalin, he perceptively concluded, was crippling the U.S.S.R. with his “appalling fear psychosis” and coming to resemble Hitler. Even the Western democracies no longer offered any hope.<sup>85</sup> Jews were no longer counted as victims or heroic “exiles” in 1938 but as “undesirables” and objects of suspicion, even in the more liberal British newspapers.<sup>86</sup> During a lecture tour of the United States, he wrote another letter (dated 19 January 1939) to Arnold Zweig in which he pointed to the American Jewish situation as being “more dangerous than it would seem at first glance.” The American Jews, he complained, misjudged their powerful position in New York as if it were representative of the country as a whole. It was the same mistake that Central European Jews had made regarding Berlin and Vienna. In reality, “they are as dependent on Roosevelt's survival as the Austrian Jews were on Schuschnigg.” Nor did Palestine hold out much promise. According to Stefan Zweig, it was “a sentimentality, illogical, and Herzl, the only statesman, saw clearly when he



Stefan Zweig  
Ossining, N.Y., 1941  
Photograph by Susan Hoeller

wanted Uganda instead. Palestine *can* no longer be supported and subsidized by poverty-stricken and exhausted Jewry...."

Stefan Zweig's despairing assessment of the Jewish condition in 1938-1939, marked the final collapse of his faith in the power of *Bildung* and *Geist* to overcome the Central European crisis. He had hitherto always focused on humanity as a whole, on the primacy of individual freedom and the possibility of a liberal definition of Jewishness beyond religion and nationalism.<sup>87</sup> His books had, after all, reached millions of readers in Germany, Austria, and around the world between 1918 and 1933. They had been serialized, cheaply priced, and were readily available in popular lending libraries. Zweig's works had indeed popularized the values of the Enlightenment, keeping alive a German-Jewish liberal heritage which now lay in ruins. The driving forces of history, so it appeared, were not only determined by individual character and fate, as Zweig had over-optimistically assumed in his highly successful biographies.<sup>88</sup> Nor were the rationalist ideals of humanist intellectuals remotely capable of stopping the Nazi flood. As Zweig put it in 1938:

We are too Erasmian...to prevail against these men who have a battering ram in place of forehead and brain. Against those possessed by the mania of nationalism only those themselves possessed can stand: we are poisoned by our humanity.<sup>89</sup>

On the eve of the Holocaust, Zweig's endemic pessimism had become increasingly consonant with the views of Sigmund Freud, "that great and

austere spirit who, more than any other in our time, deepened and broadened our knowledge of the soul of man....”<sup>90</sup> Zweig had long admired Freud’s bold spirit, his willingness to break taboos, his uncompromising mind-set, moral strength, and intellectual rigor.<sup>91</sup> Neither illness, age, nor exile had dimmed Freud’s mental lucidity, though they had somewhat mellowed his intransigence. In London, shortly before the Second World War, Zweig frequently spoke with Freud about the horrors of Hitler’s world and the bestiality unleashed by Nazism. The crisis of civilization had confirmed Freud’s view that “the barbaric, the elemental destructive instinct in the human soul was ineradicable....”<sup>92</sup> Like Stefan Zweig, the tragedy of Judaism increasingly preoccupied him in the late 1930s. He now regretted having published his controversial book on Moses “in the most terrible hour of Jewry.” Zweig could not but agree with this judgment. Moreover, in *The World of Yesterday*, he himself evokes the Central European Jewish tragedy in a highly succinct but compelling way that suggests he had lost all hope:

they [the Jews] were the real victims, everywhere the victims, because, already dispersed before the blow, they knew that whatever evil was to come would touch them first and with sevenfold force, and that the most hate-maddened man of all times wished to humiliate them especially and to harry them to the end of and under the earth.<sup>93</sup>

Stefan Zweig’s *The World of Yesterday* was finished shortly before his own suicide in Brazil and published posthumously. It was a noble if desperate attempt to preserve something of the tradition of *Bildung* and Enlightenment from the nihilistic destruction of Hitlerism. It was an effort somewhat vitiated by Zweig’s romanticized Austrian patriotism, overly idealized version of the Jewish “moral mission,” and apolitical humanism. The sentimentalized transfiguration of the Habsburg Empire in his memoirs ignored its reactionary and anachronistic features as well as the deeply rooted political antisemitism which gave birth to Hitlerism in the first place. The nostalgic myth that Zweig created of the “Golden Age of Security” can hardly meet the rigorous test of history. Nevertheless, it remains a highly revealing and beautifully written testament to the liberal humanist values of Central European Jewry before their descent into the “Kingdom of Night.”

#### NOTES

1. Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (London 1943), 13-32 for the opening chapter entitled “The World of Security.”

2. Ibid., 13.
3. Ibid., 14.
4. For a personal account that captures the atmosphere of the time, see George Clare, *Last Waltz in Vienna. The Destruction of a Family 1842-1942* (London 1982); also the evocations in Hilde Spiel, *Vienna's Golden Autumn 1866-1938* (London 1987); and Paul Hofmann, *The Viennese Splendor, Twilight, and Exile* (New York 1989).
5. Hofmann, *Viennese Splendor*, 275.
6. Steven Beller, "The World of Yesterday Revisited: Nostalgia, Memory and the Jews of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna," *Jewish Social Studies* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 37-53.
7. Ibid., 39.
8. See Hans Zohn, *Wiener Juden in der deutschen Literatur* (Tel Aviv 1964); Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989); and Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938* (Cambridge 1989).
9. Stefan Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 28-29.
10. Ibid., 28. In a rare reference to antisemitism in culture, Zweig notes the miserable failure to create an "Aryan" theatre in Vienna around 1900 since (without Jewish support) neither authors, actors, nor a public was forthcoming.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 29; see also Robert S. Wistrich, "The Modernization of Viennese Jewry. The Impact of German Culture in a Multi-Ethnic State," in *Towards Modernity. The European Jewish Model*, ed. by Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, N.J. 1987), 43-70; Steven Beller, "Patriotism and the National Identity of Habsburg Jewry, 1860-1914," *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 41 (1996): 215-38; and Marsha L. Rozenblit, "The Dilemma of Identity: The Impact of the First World War on Habsburg Jewry," in *The Habsburg Legacy*, ed. by Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, *Austrian Studies* 5 (Edinburgh 1994), 144-57.
13. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 29.
14. Ibid., 27.
15. Ibid. Zweig stresses that art in 19th-century Austria had lost its traditional defenders in the Imperial house and aristocracy. The Jews had stepped into the breach and adopted the promotion of artistic endeavour as a "personal task."
16. Zweig places great emphasis in his memoirs on the solidity, thrift, modesty, tact, and sobriety of his industrialist father, who made his fortune in textiles in North Bohemia. On his mother's side he was descended from an international Jewish banking family of Italian background. Ibid., 17-19.
17. Ibid., 20-21. Zweig perceptively observes that within two or three generations, the impulse to wealth in the great Jewish banking dynasties and businesses, tended to

dry up. Hence “a Lord Rothschild became an ornithologist, a Warburg an art historian, a Cassirer a philosopher, a Sassoon a poet.”

18. Ibid., 21.

19. This view reflected in Franz Theodor Csokor’s play *Dritter November 1918* (Vienna 1936). The Jews are the only true Austrians left, by the end of the Monarchy in 1918. It is also the vision that animates Joseph Roth’s masterly if nostalgic novel, *Radetzkymarsch* (1932). In Carl Schorske’s *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Politics and Culture* (London 1980), 129, Jews are called “the supra-national people of the multi-national state.”

20. Hermann Broch, *Hofmannsthal and His Age* (Chicago 1984), gives a striking account of the “style-democracy” that developed in the late Habsburg era. Broch, a Jewish convert to Catholicism and a leading Austrian novelist in the 1930s, who subsequently emigrated to the United States, was more aware than Zweig of the “value vacuum,” hollowness, and theatricality of Central European culture.

21. For a good account, see Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Destruction. A History of Austrian Antisemitism* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1992), 1-74.

22. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 30, 57-58.

23. See Robert S. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 206-37; also Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger, Mayor of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit 1990), 265-97.

24. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 58.

25. Ibid.

26. See Richard Mitten, “‘Synkretistischer’ Antisemitismus. Zur Kontinuität antisemitischer Vorurteils in Österreich,” in “Dreck am Stecken.” *Politik der Ausgrenzung*, ed. by Anton Pelinka and Ruth Wodak (Vienna 2003), 32-60.

27. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 30.

28. Hartmut Müller, *Stefan Zweig mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Hamburg 1988), 96ff; see also the bitter personal reproaches made to Zweig by Ernst Fischer, Wieland Herzfelde, and Joseph Roth over his reluctance to publicly criticize the Nazis and break his last ties with Germany. Ulrich Weinzierl, ed., *Stefan Zweig. Triumph und Tragik. Aufsätze, Tagebuchnotizen, Briefe* (Frankfurt a.M. 1992), 89-101.

29. See, for example, Stefan Zweig, *Briefwechsel mit Sigmund Freud* (Frankfurt a.M. 1990); and Joseph Strelka, *Stefan Zweig. Freier Geist der Menschlichkeit* (Vienna 1981), 95-126, for his perceptions of political events during the years of exile.

30. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 30.

31. Ibid., 57.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 58.
34. Ibid., 58-59. Zweig noted that Hitler took over the “anti-Semitic racial theory,” the “storm troop” principle of terroristic intimidation, and the pro-German orientation from von Schönerer. The pan-German students dominated Austrian universities with their unceasing aggression against Jewish, Slavic, Catholic, and Italian students.
35. Ibid., 59.
36. Ibid., 60.
37. Claudio Magris, *Der Habsburgische Mythos in der Österreichischen Literatur* (Salzburg 1966), 265-72.
38. Ibid., 272. Magris saw that Zweig’s *Die Welt von Gestern* forged the dominant popular image of Franz Joseph’s Austria—lending it the familiarity and charm of an old family album.
39. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 184-95; see also the essays on war and peace in Mark H. Gelber and Klaus Zelewitz, eds., *Stefan Zweig. Exil und Suche nach dem Weltfrieden* (Riverside, Calif. 1995), 33-101.
40. Hildemar Holl, “‘Pazifistische’ Aktivitäten Stefan Zweigs 1914-1921,” in *ibid.*, 40.
41. See Lionel B. Streiman, “Stefan Zweig: The Legacy of World War I and the Tasks of Exile,” in *ibid.*, 73-87. In *World of Yesterday*, 196, Zweig says little about *Jeremiah*’s genesis, except that he had “written it in a spirit of exasperation against the time.”
42. Quoted in Hanns Arens, ed., *Stefan Zweig. A Tribute to His Life and Work* (London 1944), 17-18.
43. Stefan Zweig, *Jeremias* (Leipzig 1919), 204-16.
44. See Armin A. Wallas, “Mythen der Übernationalität und revolutionäre Gegenmodelle,” in *Österreich—Konzeptionen und jüdisches Selbstverständnis*, ed. by Hanni Mittelmann and Armin A. Wallas, (Tübingen 2001), 171-80 for a comparison of Zweig’s “supranational” myth with that of Joseph Roth—and its relation to the question of Jewish identity.
45. Stefan Zweig to Martin Buber, 24 Jan. 1917, in *Martin Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, vol. 1: 1897-1918, ed. by Grete Schaeder with the help of Rafael Buber, Margot Cohn, and Gabriel Stern (Heidelberg 1972), 462-64: “Nie habe ich mich durch das Judentum in mir so frei gefühlt als jetzt in der Zeit des nationalen Irrwahns....”
46. Hanni Mittelmann: “Jüdischer Dichter, österreichischer Geist. Stefan Zweigs Autobiographie ‘Die Welt von Gestern,’” *Das Jüdische Echo* 48 (1999): 199-205.
47. Stefan Zweig, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. by Richard Friedenthal (Frankfurt a.M. 1978), 75; Zweig to Martin Buber, 25 May 1917.

48. Zweig to Buber, n.d. [probably early 1918], *ibid.*, 83.
49. See Friderike Zweig, *Stefan Zweig* (New York 1946), an account almost devoid of references to Jewish themes, while full of appreciation for Zweig's nobility of soul. For Zweig's relationship to Roth, see Joseph Roth, *Briefe 1911-1939*, ed. Hermann Kesten (Cologne 1970); and Gershon Shaked, *The Shadows Within* (Philadelphia 1987), 39-56. In 1926, Zweig did write a short, unpleasant piece about Otto Weininger, “Vorbeigehen an einem unauffälligen Menschen,” published in *Menschen und Schicksale* (Frankfurt a.M. 1994), 298-301. In the same collection of Zweig's essays and portraits, there is a moving eulogy from 1939, to the memory of Joseph Roth. See also Sidney Rosenfeld, “Joseph Roth and Austria. A Search for Identity,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 31 (1986): 455-64.
50. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 97.
51. See E. M. Lilien, *Briefe an Seine Frau 1905-1925* (Bonn 1985); Milly Heyd, “Lilien: Between Herzl and Ahasver,” in *Theodor Herzl. Visionary of the Jewish State*, ed. by Gideon Shimoni and Robert S. Wistrich (New York 1999), 265-93; and Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley 2001), 92-114.
52. See Stefan Zweig, “Einleitung” to E. M. Lilien, *Sein Werk* (Berlin and Leipzig 1903), 9-29; for the context, see Mark H. Gelber, “The jung-jüdische Bewegung. An unexplored Chapter in German-Jewish Literary and Cultural History,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 31 (1986): 105-19; idem, “The Impact of Martin Buber on Stefan Zweig,” *Modern Austrian Literature* 14, no. 3-4 (1981): 313-35; and “Karl Emil Franzos, Achad Ha-am and Stefan Zweig,” in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 63 (1982): 37-49.
53. Mark Gelber, “Karl Emil Franzos,” 42-43 points out that two early Zweig poems, *Spinoza* and *Das Gesicht* as well as his story *Im Schnee* were initially published in Herzl's Zionist newspaper *Die Welt*.
54. Stefan Zweig, “Einleitung” to Lilien, 19.
55. Mark H. Gelber, “Stefan Zweig und die Judenfrage von heute,” in *Stefan Zweig heute*, ed. by Mark H. Gelber (New York 1987): 160-80.
56. Mordekhai Nadav, “Stefan Zweigs Übersendung seiner Privatkorrespondenz an die Jewish National and University Library,” *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 63 (1982): 67-73.
57. Ibid., 68. The letter begins: “Lieber Herr Doktor, darf ich Sie bitten, diesen Brief *streng vertraulich* zu behandeln, ich möchte, dass *nicht ein Wort davon in die Öffentlichkeit käme.*”

58. Stefan Zweig, “King of the Jews,” in *Theodor Herzl. A Memorial*, ed. by Meyer Weisgal (New York 1929); reproduced as “Erinnerungen an Theodor Herzl,” in his *Menschen und Schicksale* (Frankfurt a.M. 1955), 216-17.

59. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 85-91.

60. Ibid., 87. Zweig astutely observed that the Polish and Russian Jews were galvanized by Herzl’s revival of the thousand-year-old messianic dream of the Promised Land.

61. Ibid., 90. Herzl had remarked to Zweig that Victor Adler was already leader of the Austrian Social Democrats at 30, “in his best fighting years.” Herzl was 35 when he came to the Zionist idea, but not in good health.

62. Ibid., 91.

63. Quoted in Mark H. Gelber, “Stefan Zweig und die Judenfrage,” 176-77.

64. Ibid., 179. From a letter of Zweig, 4 Feb. 1937.

65. Harry Zohn “Stefan Zweig, the European and the Jew,” *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 27 (1982): 323-36.

66. Zweig, *Briefe an Freunde*, 264, Zweig to Hermann Hesse, 30 Jan. 1935. See also his biographical study of the French police chief Joseph Fouché, the incarnation of *homo politicus*. The collection of essays edited by Thomas Eicher, *Stefan Zweig im Zeitgeschehen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Oberhausen 2003) contains some useful pieces by Knut Beck, Gabriella Rovagnati, Bernd Hamacher, and others on Zweig’s attitude to contemporary politics.

67. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 219. He was already aware in the early 1920s that the Nazi leader was living just across the Alps in Berchtesgaden, facing Zweig’s home in Salzburg.

68. Ibid., 29.

69. Ibid., 273-74. Zweig noted in passing that the “blind overestimation and deification of ‘education’ in Germany” as well as the intense class-consciousness in Central Europe had contributed to a huge underestimation of Hitler.

70. Ibid., 274.

71. Shaked, *Shadows Within*, 48; see Roth to Zweig, May 1933, in *Briefe* by Joseph Roth, 264.

72. For Zweig’s benign account of the Strauss affair, see *World of Yesterday*, 281-85; for a more detailed analysis, Rüdiger Görner, “Schweigsame Dissonanzen. Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Richard Strauss und Stefan Zweig,” in *Stefan Zweig im Zeitgeschehen*, 77-92.

73. Stefan Zweig, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York 1956), 202-47. In the conflict between Erasmus and Martin Luther, the former comes across as a conciliatory

apolitical Austrian humanist while the Protestant reformer (with his doctrinaire fanaticism and demonic will-to-power) sounds like Hitler *avant la lettre*.

74. See Heidy H. Müller, “*Castellio gegen Calvin*. Stefan Zweig’s ‘Prinzip Hoffnung’ angesichts der postulierten immerwährenden Wiederkehr des Gleichen,” in *Stefan Zweig. Exil und Suche nach dem Weltfrieden*, ed. by Mark H. Gelber and Klaus Zelewitz (Salzburg 1995), 241-51.

75. Ibid., 244-46.

76. Ibid., 244. The subtitle of this book, *Ein Gewissen gegen die Gewalt (The right to heresy)* needs to be seen as part of its pamphleteering character.

77. Harry Zohn, “Stefan Zweig,” 334.

78. Stefan Zweig, *The Buried Candelabrum* (London 1944), 106.

79. Stefan Zweig, *Briefe an Freunde*, 71; letter written in the spring of 1917.

80. Ibid., 83-84.

81. Jeffrey B. Berlin, “The Austrian Catastrophe. Political Reflections in the Unpublished Correspondence of Stefan Zweig and Arnold Zweig,” *Austrian Studies* 6 (1995): 3-21.

82. Ibid., 11.

83. Ibid., 14.

84. Ibid., 16.

85. Ibid., 18.

86. Ibid., 15.

87. See George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Cincinnati 1985), 19-20, 24-41.

88. Ibid., 28. This was the premise of one of Zweig’s most successful books, *Sternstunden der Menschheit (Tides of Fortune)*, published in 1927.

89. D. A. Prater, *European of Yesterday: A Biography of Stefan Zweig* (Oxford 1972), 270.

90. Stefan Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 315.

91. See Stefan Zweig, *Die Heilung durch den Geist* (Frankfurt a.Main 1986), 75-380.

92. Zweig, *World of Yesterday*, 318.

93. Ibid., 319.

## CHAPTER 12

### Karl Kraus: An Anatomy of Self-Hatred

Karl Kraus was one of the most controversial and explosive personalities to emerge in Habsburg Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century. He was an original figure even in a period where Jewish genius flourished as never before in Viennese music, theatre, literature, the social sciences, medicine, psychoanalysis, physics, chemistry, and biology. Not even the nightmare of Hitler's Holocaust has been able to extinguish that brilliant cultural achievement of Viennese Jewry during the "Gay Apocalypse."<sup>1</sup> There was, however, another dimension to this "Golden Age," intimately connected with the ever-present "Jewish question" in fin-de-siècle Vienna, which Kraus's oeuvre can help us to illuminate. This darker side was the psychological sickness of Jewish self-loathing which Kraus's relentless attacks on his co-religionists have often been said to illustrate. Such has been the acrimony aroused by Kraus's ferocious attitude towards his fellow Jews that some would doubtless question the validity of approaching him as a "Jewish" intellectual at all. But even if one can agree that Kraus was first and foremost a German-Austrian *littérateur*, it is important to examine the influence of his Jewishness on the creativity and self-definition of Vienna's foremost satirist. His own preoccupation with the "Jewish problem" is proof enough of the pertinence of such an approach.

Any analysis, however, will quickly have to face the seemingly intractable gulf between admirers who see in Kraus a worthy descendant of the Hebrew prophets (in condemning the "corrupt" Judaism of his age) and those who view him as a pathological example of *Jüdischer Selbsthass* (Jewish self-hatred). Was Kraus essentially a prototype of the idealistic nonconformist Jew—a dedicated truth-seeker, rebelling against dogma and prejudice?<sup>2</sup> Or was he the quintessential anti-Jewish Jew who rejected the "Jewish" elements in his personality, projecting them outwards in harsh and unfair diatribes against his co-religionists?<sup>3</sup> Neither of these interpretations is as incompatible as it might seem either for Kraus or comparable Jewish intellectuals who have been intellectually creative in the 20th century. One might even argue



Karl Kraus  
Austrian National Library

that Kraus was afflicted less by self-hatred than by the “desire to liberate the self from compromising afflictions.”<sup>4</sup> This compulsive need drove him to cleanse his identity of all those “negative characteristics” he associated with Jewry, as part of his road to personal redemption.

Karl Kraus was born on 28 April 1874 in the town of Jičín (in present-day Czechoslovakia), the second youngest of ten children. He moved to Vienna with his parents (his father Jacob Kraus was a paper manufacturer) when he was three years old, where he attended school, and briefly, university. His first important work, *Die demolierte Literatur* (Literature demolished), written at the age of 23, was a satire of the literary circle of *Jung Wien* (“Young Vienna”), centered on the legendary Café Griensteidl. Among the major targets of his critical pen were such promising writers as Hermann Bahr, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Leopold von Andrian, and Felix Salten. Kraus reproached them for literary dilettantism, for easy-going superficiality, and pandering to the clichés of modernist fashion. This literary début foreshadowed an unceasing preoccupation with what he denounced as the lack of moral seriousness in Viennese literary production. In his own self-appointed role as destroyer of inflated reputations and intellectual pretentiousness, Kraus waged a campaign that soon mutated into a fanatical literary crusade. Though most of the writers of *Jung Wien* whom he criticized were of Jewish origin, Kraus did not immediately connect the “Jewish spirit” with corruption in literature, journalism, and public morality. But the close

links in Austria between the press, the banks, and industrial capital—much of it in Jewish hands—soon became a major theme of denunciation in his work.<sup>5</sup>

*Eine Krone für Zion* was Kraus's second publication—a short pamphlet directed by the satirist against Herzl and the new idea of political Zionism. It appeared early in 1898 and employed a particularly harsh anti-Zionist tone. Like most of the Jewish community in fin-de-siècle Vienna, Kraus regarded Zionism as an ephemeral and misguided reaction against xenophobic racism, one which could only exacerbate and vindicate antisemitic nationalism among Gentiles.<sup>6</sup> Kraus mocked the philanthropy of bourgeois Jews who espoused the Jewish national cause, arguing that Zionism had no prospect of providing a practical solution to the material distress of the poor Jews in Galicia. Nor was it likely to alleviate the boredom of coffee-house literati in Vienna.

Kraus wrote his polemic as if Zionism was merely another fad, invented by Ringstrasse dandies like Herzl, whom he despised not only as a Jewish nationalist and a *littérateur* of the Young Vienna school but also as a journalist of the powerful *Neue Freie Presse*. He could see no virtue in a nationalist philosophy which he accused of trying to make “hooked noses meritorious” and which offended his utopian belief in total assimilation. Though not even a socialist at the time, Kraus sarcastically suggested that the Jews would not arrive dry-shod in their “Promised Land.” Another “Red Sea,” that of Social-Democracy, would bar their path. He appeared to believe that only Socialism and certainly not Western bourgeois Zionism, could save the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe from destitution and despair.

With the foundation of his literary review, *Die Fackel* (The torch), in April 1899, Kraus began his unique career as a one-man literary guerilla organization and unofficial “Censor Germaniae” in Habsburg Austria.<sup>7</sup> From the outset, he saw the mission of *Die Fackel* as a massive cleansing operation to expose the literary, social, and political corruption of a decaying Empire. In a series of savage assaults on prevailing clichés and taboos, bureaucratic *Schlamperei* (slovenliness), and hypocritical morality in Austria, Kraus established himself as a prophet, prosecutor, and judge wrapped into one. Though his prime targets were rampant commercialism and a sensationalist press, he spared no institution, personality, or political party. He excelled in seizing on concrete and tangible abuses, weaving them into a mosaic of indignant parody.<sup>8</sup> This method proved however, to be questionable, leading to highly partisan conclusions and a confusion of symptom and cause. In his treatment of the “Jewish question” (seen from the local Viennese

perspective), there was a disturbing lack of common sense and political judgment.

At the heart of Kraus' polemical assault on Jewry lay the complaint that it represented a dominant elite in Vienna in the arts and sciences, the press, commerce, banking, or industry. It was a perception he stubbornly maintained despite the rise of Karl Lueger's Christian-social movement—whose decisive victory in 1897 in effect exposed Jewish vulnerability and the huge impact of gutter antisemitism on the Austrian lower classes—and the limits of Jewish political influence. When Kraus began publishing *Die Fackel* in 1899, Lueger had already been mayor of Vienna for two years. Though Lueger's antisemitism became somewhat muted after he took office, one could hardly pretend that the position of Austrian Jewry was entirely secure. Kraus, however, like other “antisemitic” Jews, was not interested in the objective balance of political forces or the real dangers that confronted the Jewish community. He judged his co-religionists by the standards of an “absolute” ethic which few of his contemporaries could possibly be expected to meet. Himself an agnostic Jew (he had formally left the *Kultusgemeinde* in 1899) Kraus nonetheless felt responsible for all the “sins of Israel.” In the antisemitic atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Vienna, these alleged vices represented a never-ending source of vilification.<sup>9</sup>

Having internalized the jaundiced outlook of his surroundings, Kraus sought to eradicate the Jewish component in his own personality by waging war on an imagined “Jewish” spirit, which he transformed into a demonic power. In contrast to his tragic contemporary, Otto Weininger, Kraus was able to concentrate his Judeophobic proclivities against a concrete phenomenon—the all-powerful Viennese press.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the liberal and socialist press in Austria was largely written, edited, and controlled by Jews turned into an observation that Kraus inflated to almost apocalyptic dimensions, much to the delight of the antisemites. “Jewish journalism” in the Krausian oeuvre virtually became a codeword for the falsification of values, inauthenticity of form, the cynical deformation of truth, and rapacious capitalist egoism. This was not far from the position of the Austrian Social Democrats—especially the Jews among them. Yet the aesthetic standards which Kraus himself espoused reflected the pre-industrial age of the Austrian *Biedermaier* rather than the historical materialism of Marx.

Kraus consistently wrote as if the bourgeois-capitalist principle of “Judaism,” operating in Vienna had appropriated and crippled any genuine literature or spontaneous feeling. At the same time, though he hardly admired

the clerical and antisemitic gutter press in Austria, he considered it less dangerous than liberal journalism since it epitomized outmoded and primitive values. The “Jewish” liberal press, being more skillful, persuasive, and “progressive” than its rivals, was therefore more harmful and corrupt in its effects. In an early issue of *Die Fackel* Kraus declared: “There are two beautiful things in the world: to belong to the *Neue Freie Presse* or to despise it. I did not hesitate for a moment, which choice I should make.”<sup>11</sup> The *Neue Freie Presse*, Vienna’s leading newspaper (edited by two Germanophile Jews, Moritz Benedikt and Eduard Bacher) would remain the prime target of Kraus’s critical rage. For him it was the arch-symbol of Viennese duplicity, embodying its worship of commercial values, sensationalist journalism, and the impressionist superficiality of the *feuilleton*. Kraus’ anger was especially aroused by repeated claims of liberalism to represent virtue, wisdom, and refined things of the “spirit.” This was the counterfeit way to wrap its stock-exchange venality in the mantle of culture.<sup>12</sup> The mere fact that the *Neue Freie Presse* was becoming alarmed at the rise of Austrian antisemitism seemed reason enough for Kraus to regard this movement with some degree of benevolence. Indeed, he was fond of castigating the *Presse* for regarding any critic of its economic interests as being an antisemite on a par with Lueger, Schneider, and Gregorig. Kraus repeatedly declared that predatory capitalism linked to “Jewish corruption” in the stock-exchange and press was the primary cause of Austrian antisemitism. In other words, the Jews of Vienna were largely to blame for the crisis in which they found themselves around 1900. The scandal, sensation, and graft with which they had become associated, legitimized antisemitic prejudices and made them generally respectable.

Kraus’s attitude to the Dreyfus Affair and the Hilsner ritual murder case in Bohemia (1899) followed a similar pattern, markedly influenced by the standpoint of the *Neue Freie Presse* and the liberal press. The pro-Dreyfus attitude of Austrian liberals, for example, induced Kraus to launch a venomous assault on the Dreyfusards, attacking the “partiality” of Jewish journalists, as well as criticizing communal leaders and rabbis in Austria. He accused the journalistic hacks of the Viennese press of inventing the “fairy-tale” of a Jesuit-military conspiracy against Dreyfus, to defend the stock-exchange rapacity of their paymasters! They were “hired scribblers” who tried to mobilize Austrian public opinion against the “iniquities” of the French army, while whitewashing the barbarities of the Habsburg political system and its upper classes. He concluded that “even the brutal disregard of

an individual's fate in the name of a higher goal, will always show itself to be more humane than the rage for truth of agitated frequenters of the stock exchange.”<sup>13</sup>

Not by accident *Die Fackel* was the only German or Austrian journal to publish the anti-Dreyfusard articles of the veteran German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht, who (like Kraus) treated the Dreyfus campaign as a conspiracy of the liberal and Jewish press which would only nourish antisemitism.<sup>14</sup> Equally, Kraus was able to exploit the fact that the two foremost Zionist leaders of the era, Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, defended Dreyfus in their journalistic work. This was further confirmation in his eyes that Zionism and the Dreyfusard cause were equally tainted by selfish Jewish interests and special pleading. In *Die Fackel*, Kraus sarcastically observed: “Between Basle and Rennes surges the thousand year-old affliction of Jewry, and both here and there, prophets lie in wait, who calculate the pathos of this world by the line.”<sup>15</sup>

Kraus’s response to the Hilsner “blood libel” in Polna (Bohemia) in 1899, where a hapless Jewish shoemaker’s assistant was wrongly condemned to death (later commuted to life-imprisonment) for “ritual murder” afforded another striking example of his own prejudices. *Die Fackel* trivialized the sickening antisemitic agitation in Bohemia and Vienna which had swelled up around the Hilsner Affair. Kraus did not merely proclaim his indifference to the “blood libel” as such, but contemptuously castigated the liberal press for wasting its time over the fate of a particular individual. He accused the *Neue Freie Presse* in its coverage of the Hilsner case of implying that any Jew convicted by an Austrian court must a priori be innocent.<sup>16</sup> This was a decidedly perverse position for a defender of the rights of the individual to adopt. Evidently, Kraus’s strong sense of moral indignation rarely extended to cases where it was a Jew who fell victim to palpable injustice.

When antisemitic riots broke out in Bohemia in 1899 as a result of the Hilsner Affair, Kraus made his own position clear by blaming the stock exchange and “ghetto Jews” for provoking popular wrath. In *Die Fackel*, he concluded:

Only a courageous purge of the ranks and the laying aside of the characteristics of a race, which through many centuries of dispersion has long ceased to be a nation, can bring the torment to a stop. Through dissolution to redemption!”<sup>17</sup>

Kraus did not identify with the assimilated Viennese bourgeois Jews indifferent to the plight of the *Ostjuden*, but was convinced that “ghetto

Judaism,” like the Jewish national renaissance, was irrevocably doomed.<sup>18</sup> By the same token, he was determined to downplay Austrian antisemitism, despite the inebriated Christian-social ruffians who periodically roamed Jewish districts in Vienna looting shops, breaking windows, insulting, or beating up Jews. Kraus’s most famous aphorism on the subject of antisemitism was recorded in 1913. It might even be termed witty if one is willing to abstract oneself from the social and political context of the time:

Antisemitism is that disposition that seriously means about a tenth of the reproaches which Jewish stock-market humor (*der Börsenwitz*) is prepared to use against those of its own blood.”<sup>19</sup>

The young Kraus repeatedly voiced concern about “Jewish characteristics” (*Eigenschaften*) which he feared might retard the *Selbstauflösung* (self-dissolution) that he resolutely advocated. In July 1899, for example, he wrote in *Die Fackel*: “despite every respect for the equality of all faiths: oriental enclaves in European civilization are a nonsense.”<sup>20</sup> He continued to believe that there should be no place for those Jews who obstinately clung to their traditions, religion, customs, and the Yiddish language—which he considered the trademark of the *Ghettomensch*. This radical view of assimilation explains his antipathy to Zionism, which had the *chutzpa* to revive a nation whose historical role was exhausted. Kraus’s ethnic death-wish was well expressed in the following lines, written in 1899:

Zionism may seem a less ridiculous aspiration when propagated amongst Eastern Jews or when it sends its victims from the puddle of Galician culture directly to the Palestinian settlements. But in Central Europe it offers the unpleasant spectacle of clumsy hands scratching at the 2000 year-old grave of an extinct people.<sup>21</sup>

For an “extinct people,” the Jews were of course stirring up a remarkable amount of controversy in Austria and beyond. Kraus’s own preoccupation with the issue was evidence enough that the corpse was alive and kicking! Among the “clumsy hands” busy reviving the extinct body in Vienna was the Zionist leader, Theodor Herzl, whom Kraus bitingly referred to in *Die Fackel* as “King Herzl I” or as “King of the Jews.” Kraus was tireless in lampooning Herzl’s literary efforts in the *Neue Freie Presse*, sarcastically portraying him as a perfumed dandy and mock-caricature of a Jewish messianic leader: “the clothes which he rents out of grief for his people, have been ordered from the most worldly tailor....”<sup>22</sup>

Kraus first expressed his aversion to Herzl when reviewing his play, *Das neue Ghetto* (The new ghetto), whose premiere was held at the Carl-Theater in Vienna in early 1898. Ironically (given Kraus's own outlook), he regarded Herzl's critical picture of the Viennese stock-exchange milieu not merely as overdrawn but even as antisemitic in tendency. Kraus admitted that the play's intention was to combat prejudice from an "honest national-Jewish standpoint" but he nonetheless charged that Herzl was reinforcing antisemitism by portraying such corrupt Jewish protagonists.<sup>23</sup> In the very first sentence of his review, there is already a satirical reference to the "King of Zion."<sup>24</sup> Kraus's pamphlet of 1898, *Eine Krone für Zion*, would continue this mocking allusion. Subsequently, in *Die Fackel*, Kraus gleefully commented on the stylistic lapses of Herzl, and his dual role as a feuilletonist and Zionist leader, which obliged him to earn his living with the *Neue Freie Presse*. Scathingly, he observed that politics was clouding Herzl's literary judgment:

Herr Herzl's head has swollen and he believes that as a literary guardian he is only allowed to promote those young striplings who were clever enough to mould a Zionist world view for themselves....<sup>25</sup>

Hence Kraus could particularly delight in denigrating youthful protégés of Herzl such as Stefan Zweig (mocked for displaying a "pygmy talent for form") who did not even begin to approach the genius of prodigies like Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the epitome of the "cultivated Central European."<sup>26</sup>

It is an effrontery, which one cannot let even a King of the Jews get away with quietly, to name these poor devils in the same breath as Hugo von Hofmannsthal. One does not need, prattles Herzl, to discover the "great poets." On the contrary, their success during their lifetimes embarrasses them.... If Herr Herzl should some day happen to find the throne of Jerusalem occupied, he will always find a position as a court fool there.<sup>27</sup>

Such mockery and derision was typical of Kraus's approach to Herzl. It is, however, doubtful if the Zionist leader ever read these satires.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless he was aware in general terms of the merciless ridicule to which he was subject as the new "King of the Jews." This was a fate he commented on extensively in his diaries. These same diaries also testify to Herzl's bitterness at his own treatment by the editors of the *Neue Freie Presse*, especially Moritz Benedikt. Though Kraus was unaware of this situation, Herzl to some extent shared the satirist's harsh view of his employer.

Karl Kraus was blinded to this facet of Herzl's life by the Zionist leader's prominent position in the *Neue Freie Presse*. This automatically seemed to make him part of that influential "Jewish clique" which he denounced for manipulating Austrian public opinion through the press. Kraus railed against these liberal journalists as the "officious representatives of capitalism" and they remained the prime target of his criticism.<sup>29</sup> His hatred of the liberals soon brought him some strange bedfellows. They included the mystical prophet of Austrian racism, Lanz von Liebenfels, who subscribed to *Die Fackel* and admiringly referred to Kraus as a "blond Jew."<sup>30</sup> Another contributor to the journal around 1900 was Houston S. Chamberlain, the expatriate Englishman then living in Vienna, whose best-selling antisemitic magnum opus, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, strongly appealed to Kraus.<sup>31</sup> The fact that these two openly racist philosophers (who helped to form Adolf Hitler's world-view) had such warm regard for Kraus suggests the extent of his complicity in the success of Austrian antisemitism.

Kraus's defense of pseudo-philosophical antisemitism as espoused by Houston S. Chamberlain found its most detailed exposition in July 1904. It emerged in the context of a positive evocation of Otto Weininger—the young Viennese thinker who had committed suicide only nine months earlier. Kraus tried to distinguish between a "higher" intellectual antisemitism (of which he approved) and lower "street forms" of expression which he despised.

It is true that I decided in *Die Fackel*, whose fight against corruption cannot easily be accused of being "Jewish," that the philosopher Weininger converted by conviction to Christianity and representing German idealism, was far more "German" than many Germans of Jewish spirit....<sup>32</sup>

However, according to Kraus, narrow and partisan minds had failed to see that

one can radically criticize the Judaism of Disraeli and company, while admiring the authentically German culture of a Heine and a Ferdinand Lasalle; and that one should not confuse the absolute rejection of Judaism (i.e., scientific and intellectual antisemitism) with the antisemitism of brawlers generally moved by nothing but material envy or reactionary clericalism. The Jewish party sees things more lucidly: it is not plebeian antisemitism which it fears...but the intellectual and higher antisemitism of a Houston S. Chamberlain.<sup>33</sup>

Kraus endorsed the fundamental assumption of Chamberlain that “Jerusalem” along with “Rome” was an arch-enemy of Christian-Germanic culture. Indeed, Kraus insisted that the slippery, elusive, and ubiquitous Jews were an even more powerful and dangerous enemy to German culture than the Catholics. Today, they might be “dressed for court,” tomorrow draped in a “red flag”; whether as the “lackeys of princes” or “apostles of freedom,” whether as bankers, parliamentarians, professors, or journalists, Jews had a dangerously “disintegrating” effect on modern civilization.<sup>34</sup> In his essay “Er ist doch a Jud” (1913), Kraus elaborated further on his own “higher antisemitism,” declaring:

I feel as if with the overwhelming force of a revelation, that I am entirely free of all those characteristics of the Jews, which in the present state of affairs we may by common consent identify....<sup>35</sup>

With a characteristic flash of wit, he added: “I go along with the development of Jewry as far as the Exodus but can no longer participate in the dance around the Golden Calf....”<sup>36</sup>

On 8 April 1911 Kraus entered the Roman Catholic Church (he would leave it in March 1923) though he remained publicly silent about his baptism.<sup>37</sup> Although he never officially defended Christian values, Kraus did place some hopes in the Christian-Social Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, who had promised to purge the city of its “corrupt liberalism” and “Jewish” press domination. The flirtation with Lueger (like all Kraus’s political ventures) was brief and ended in disillusionment.<sup>38</sup> In November 1900, he already regretted the fact that Moritz Benedikt, the *Neue Freie Presse*, the Rothschilds, and the Viennese Jewish community appeared to “feel very comfortable under Lueger’s regime.”<sup>39</sup> His scornful conclusion was that “there is only one partisan antisemitic lie: namely that all Jews are clever people....”<sup>40</sup> Lueger had evidently failed to tame the Jewish business class, making his peace with the Rothschilds after his election as Mayor of Vienna. This accommodation convinced Kraus that Austrian antisemites no more intended to solve the “Jewish problem” than they would root out capitalist corruption in general.<sup>41</sup>

Kraus was equally disillusioned with the *embourgeoisement* of the Viennese Social-Democrats, whom he had initially regarded as a potential ally. After 1900, he complained that they were unreliable supporters in the struggle against the liberal press. With irritation he remarked that the socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* was being read in those Jewish bourgeois homes, where *Die Fackel* was banned.<sup>42</sup> Only during the First World War was there a temporary

rapprochement with the Social Democrats, which continued in the early years of the First Republic. It was made possible by a common loathing for militarism, capitalist corruption, and class justice. In the 1920s, this intimacy was made easier as the Austro-Marxists began to embrace the cause of cultural modernism. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* defended, for example, artistic innovators such as the architect Adolf Loos (a close friend of Kraus), Schoenberg's atonal music as well as controversial, revolutionary intellectuals like Otto Neurath and Wilhelm Reich. The Social Democrats even arranged for Kraus to give public readings to working-class audiences. Nonetheless he remained critical of their cultural aspirations and repeated efforts to bring bourgeois operettas to the masses. The *Kulturpolitik* of the Socialists reminded him too much of methods previously employed by Austro-liberalism.<sup>43</sup>

Kraus's violent campaign against the Hungarian-Jewish press magnate, Imre Bekessy, who epitomized journalistic and financial corruption in post-1918 Vienna brought his relations with the Social Democrats (who had remained neutral in this crusade) to a low ebb.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the 1920s he had become a fierce opponent of the passivity and equivocating rhetoric of Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxist leadership, foreseeing the paralysis that would lead to its political demise in 1934. These differences did not, however, extend to the "Jewish Question," where Kraus often adopted a viewpoint similar to Friedrich Austerlitz, the acerbic editor of the socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Austerlitz, like Kraus, was a Viennese Jewish intellectual, who regularly lashed out against the "Judaization" of Austrian public life.<sup>45</sup> Both Austerlitz and Kraus sought to turn the tables on the antisemites through ridicule and the deconstruction of their racist discourse. Nevertheless, their campaigns against corruption failed to draw a clear line between business malpractice and Jewish identity.

Kraus's assaults on the worship of Mammon and other abuses in Austrian society (slovenly bureaucracy, pervasive nepotism, double standards, or sexual hypocrisy) did not set out to stigmatize the Jewish minority as such. They were primarily motivated by an intransigent pursuit of the truths revealed by language. Mastery of linguistic form was, for Kraus, the closest approximation to objective and ultimate knowledge.<sup>46</sup> In that respect, he was a *Sprachmystiker* who equated word and essence, regarding language as the "divining-rod" of thought. This preoccupation with the written and spoken word made him hypersensitive to the threat to its integrity in the ever-expanding influence of the modern commercial press. Abuse of the word was

treated by Kraus as an act of vandalism and sacrilege.<sup>47</sup> Precisely because he blamed “Jewish” influence on the Viennese press for such debasement, Kraus’s prophetic rage against modern civilization increasingly assumed an antisemitic coloring.<sup>48</sup>

Karl Kraus set out to purge his “linguistically decadent” epoch with the weapons of wit, satire, and grammar (*Sprachlehre*). In pursuing this crusade he accused a whole range of Jewish writers and journalists in Vienna of enacting a daily “pogrom” against his idealized vision of the German language. He paid far less attention to the linguistic barbarities of the German nationalist and antisemitic press. It was Theodor Lessing (himself a prime example of Jewish self-hatred) who pointed to one of the more striking ironies behind Kraus’s obsession with journalism, language, and the word. “He hates the sacrilege of the Word and uses millions of words to praise the chaste bliss of the holy Silence.”<sup>49</sup> Kraus’s incessant attacks on the “Jewish” character of Viennese cultural and linguistic decadence represented the darker side of his passion for the “Word.” However, this obsession was not without similarities to the tradition of Eastern Jewish mysticism and Hassidism.<sup>50</sup> Kraus was too ignorant of Jewish spirituality to appreciate this parallel. But he was certainly aware that his indignation at Jewish “materialism” echoed Biblical warnings against worshipping the Golden Calf.<sup>51</sup>

Kraus’s distaste for materialism was a central theme in his satires of Jewish journalists, literary cliques, mannerisms, expressions, and business talk. The “shameless press” of the great metropolitan centers was not only animated by sensationalism and sheer greed; it was also responsible for the cretinization (*Verblödung*) of public opinion and the leveling impact of mass culture. Kraus was convinced that modern journalism had replaced authentic moral and aesthetic sensibility with a new cult of mediocrity. But his efforts to link this symptom of “decadence” with Jewry not only echoed the vocabulary of the antisemites—it flattened out the richness and variety of Jewish types in Vienna.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Kraus’s portrayal of the printing presses of modern capitalist journalism as a radical evil reflected an unduly elitist viewpoint which judged the culture of his time against an unreal criterion of artistic truth.

Despite these objections one cannot deny the courage and integrity of Kraus’s struggle against the falsifications and distortions of the new journalism in his own day. His loathing of counterfeit pathos, his bold exposure of war propaganda, of the nationalistic press and corrupt institutions

as well as anachronistic party politics gave a unique freedom and authority to his cultural criticism. Kraus was indeed a visionary satirist able to pinpoint the gap between human inadequacy and the highest cultural ideals. His work may have been critical and destructive, but as the Hungarian Marxist critic, Georg Lukacs once put it—"satire is the negative mysticism of a godless world." In the "godless world" of fin-de-siècle Vienna with its salon poets and dramatists, bohemians and escapists, dandies and hedonists, Kraus perfectly fulfilled the role of apocalyptic moralist, acting as a seismograph for his age. Though he lacked the psychological insight of Freud or Schnitzler, he proved to be a prophetic herald of the twilight of European bourgeois civilization.

It was fitting that Kraus's supreme literary work, which assured his enduring literary reputation, should be entitled *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The last days of mankind). This epic drama was written during the First World War—the great conflagration whose ravages he had long foreseen and warned against. In this 800-page work, Kraus assembled a gigantic collage out of the raw material of newspaper reports, daily chatter on the streets, in the stock-exchange, law-courts, and military headquarters, documenting the barbarism and the lies, the nightmare and the anguish which four years of world war had created. In this monumental work he managed to capture with the heightened perception of the artist-prophet the sickness of a crumbling civilization.<sup>53</sup>

Jews feature throughout Kraus' play, most of them sarcastically represented. We find many corrupt and gullible caricatures of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie, but also profiteer industrialists, well-fed social climbers, renegades, and super-patriotic, "treacherous" intellectuals. There is, of course, Moritz Benedikt (the devil of the play) and the "lying language" of his *Neue Freie Presse*: "in this language an ancient Jewish spirit brings neo-Germanism fanatically to fulfillment."<sup>54</sup> The Devil in Kraus' drama is therefore very specifically *Jewish*. Indeed, in the final Epilogue of the play, Benedikt appears as the Lord of the Hyenas. Among other competing symbols of evil in this sprawling epic are the foul, prevaricating war reporters with their "crooked noses" like Alice Schalek—a prominent Jewish journalist who truly represents the "enemy within." Then there are the lurid descriptions of Jewish war profiteers:

Do you want to know what the war-God of this struggle looks like?  
There he goes. A fat Jew from the Automobile Corps. His belly is like

a Moloch. His nose is a sickle which drips blood. His eyes shine like carbuncles.<sup>55</sup>

The central character of the play, the “Grumbler” also polemicizes in classic antisemitic style against

the capitalist—in other words, Jewish-Christian—destruction of the world, which resides in the consciousness of those who live for and off the idea, but who don’t fight, and who, if they don’t die naturally, die of overweight or excess of sugar.”<sup>56</sup>

Typically, Kraus attacks the materialist “idea” for which people are senselessly dying, as if it was essentially a Jewish conspiracy. With the same bile, he depicts the Viennese bourgeoisie (the main object of his venom) as being “judaized” to the core. However, no attention is paid to the Polish Jewish refugees streaming into Vienna from the Galician war front; or to the new Jewish radicalism and Poalei Zionism, let alone the fate of provincial Jews as the multi-national Habsburg Empire begins to fall apart.<sup>57</sup> In this drama we do not find references to Magyars, Romanians, Italians, or Slavs. Budapest, Prague, or Krakow are virtually absent. The stage is narrowly Viennese, yet the message still remains universal, echoing the warning role of the biblical prophets. Kraus speaks in God’s name to his native Austria, denouncing idolatry with the force of a Hebrew prophet.

Though he had anticipated the catastrophe of the First World War, the victory of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany caught Kraus completely by surprise. It was as if he was too preoccupied by everyday, concrete phenomena to grasp the broader significance of social and political processes. Between January and October 1933, during the first nine months of Nazi rule in Germany, *Die Fackel* (which had came out uninterruptedly for the past thirty-four years) ceased to appear. Kraus was literally speechless when confronted by the phenomenon of German National Socialism. The sheer horror of the events seemed to lay bare the limits of his satire. As he would graphically put it: “One cannot oppose a bomber with pathos and a madman with wit.”

In January 1934, *Die Fackel* reappeared, with a statement of support for the “Austro-fascist” Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss. Kraus evidently regarded his authoritarian Catholic dictatorship as the last bulwark against Nazism in Austria.<sup>58</sup> Many admirers of Kraus were shocked by this political judgment. But it was consistent enough with his earlier support for Lueger, his admiration for “strong men” and conservative assumptions about mass

politics. Though Kraus had drawn closer to the Austrian Social Democrats in the 1920s, he was no leftist or party ideologue. The probing nature of his *Kulturkritik*, his maverick mind and financial independence made him a highly unorthodox and apolitical rebel. Earlier collaboration with antisemitic racists like Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Lanz von Liebenfels, as well as his support for Dollfuss and Starhemberg, revealed a curious blend of anti-modernist elitism and maverick prejudices.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, Vienna's leading satirist display no complicity with Nazism. In his last polemic, entitled *Die Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, Kraus unmasks with characteristic lucidity the depraved language used by the Nazis.<sup>60</sup> This posthumously published work showed how brutal metaphor had been transformed into grim reality during the Third Reich. Karl Kraus himself died on 12 June 1936, barely two years before Adolf Hitler returned to Vienna in triumph, bringing the curtain down on seven decades of the Austrian-Jewish "symbiosis." Kraus did not live to see his furniture, library, and letters destroyed. Most of his friends who remained in Vienna would be murdered by the new masters of the *Ostmark*.

Kraus's harsh attitude to Jewry (*Judentum*) softened somewhat under the impact of Nazism. In 1934, he even spoke of "the pure and natural strength of an incorruptible Judaism" which stood beyond contemporary politics. Nevertheless, his declared neutrality in the antagonism between "profiteers" (Jews) and "troglodytes" (Nazis) hardly represented a positive affirmation of his origins. Such "impartiality" did not prevent antisemites from rejecting his right to speak for the "Aryan-Germanic" race; or Austrian socialists from attacking him as an individualist and bourgeois aesthete. But his admirers continued to regard Kraus as a writer of genius, a passionate fighter for justice and truth, a modern Jeremiah denouncing the Moloch-like militarism and barbaric imperialism of the age. They asserted that Kraus spoke in the name of Judaism, even while he was lambasting its sins.<sup>61</sup> There may be a grain of truth in this view, though it ignores or trivializes the scorching self-hatred dispersed in his oeuvre.<sup>62</sup> Even so measured a contemporary as Arthur Schnitzler was outraged by what he saw as the "servility" of Kraus towards the Austrian antisemites.<sup>63</sup>

In this context it is worth recalling the testimony of one of Kraus's most fervent admirers, Elias Canetti, the Bulgarian-born Sephardic writer and Nobel Prize laureate who lived in Vienna between 1922 and 1938. Canetti left a memorable portrait of his hero, evoking a small, rather frail, hunched figure with a sharp, agitated voice who exercised an overpowering, mesmeric

influence on his audience.<sup>64</sup> “There has never existed such a speaker in my lifetime—not in any European language that I know.”<sup>65</sup> When Kraus spoke, it was as if the scourge of God was issuing an absolute judgment, an irrevocable verdict against which there was no redress. These “judgments” were like public executions, in which the enemy was hunted down, outlawed, banished, or crushed without mercy.<sup>66</sup> Canetti—despite his idolization of Kraus—concluded that his mentor had formed “a hunting pack of the intelligentsia,” exhibiting a murderous desire to verbally destroy the target of aggression. Kraus himself was a “volcano of hatred,” one of the “deadly satirists of mankind,”<sup>67</sup> always ready to attack and pursue the enemy to the bitter end.<sup>68</sup>

Canetti did not aspire to become another Karl Kraus, forever excoriating his co-religionists for the sins of capitalism or complicity with a corrupt establishment. His own attitude to the Jews and Judaism nonetheless bore the imprint of Kraus’s self-hatred. In his novel *Auto-da-Fé* (1935), Canetti introduced a major character called Fischerle, a Jewish dwarf who is also a hunchback, a pimp, a pickpocket, and a swindler. This completely anomie and despicable villain is specifically designated as a Jew at a time when the Nazis were already persecuting Canetti’s co-religionists and preparing their auto-da-fé.<sup>69</sup> Deformed in character and body, Fischerle is not portrayed as a victim of injustice or cruelty but simply as a psychopath. This twisted portrait of the Jew as an “enemy of civilization” might be seen as Canetti’s personal synthesis of images and ideas derived from the works of Otto Weininger and Karl Kraus at their most perverse. Canetti’s novel was published in German at the time of the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws. It almost perfectly matches the Nazi conception of the “inferior” and malevolent Jew. It is a caricature which in some places would have done credit to *Der Stürmer*, with its emphasis on the shallow, uncreative intelligence of the Jew, his commercial greed, mimicry, swindling, and immorality. Though some have chosen to see this novel as an exposure rather than an expression of antisemitism, its stereotypical extremism makes such an interpretation problematic. Much the same could be said of Karl Kraus’s legacy when it came to the “Jewish Question.”

Kraus’s negative attitude towards his former co-religionists was clearly shaped by a compulsively internalized antisemitism. The term “Jewry” (*Judentum*) became a shorthand or “cultural code” by which Kraus could denounce everything which he despised—from the “corruption” of the Viennese press to commercial capitalism, Zionism, hypocritical sexual

puritanism, or the Freudian psychoanalytical movement in Vienna. According to Kraus, everything bad in Austrian business and culture derived from the “disintegrating” (*zersetzend*) power of the Jews—a catch-call metaphor widely used by the antisemites. Only the rise of fascism and Nazism in the 1930s obliged him to modify this cultural Judeophobia without leading him to any fundamental moral reckoning with his own prejudices. Karl Kraus remained to the end the quintessential Viennese satirist of his generation and at the same time a prototype for anti-Jewish Jews in the 20th century.

#### NOTES

1. See Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern* (Frankfurt a.M. 1962), for the optimistic view of pre-1914 Vienna as the “Golden Age of Security.”
2. For this viewpoint, Caroline Kohn, *Karl Kraus. Le Polémiste et l’Écrivain. Défenseur des Droits de l’Individu* (Paris 1962), 100-101; Hans Weigel, *Karl Kraus oder die Macht der Ohnmacht* (Vienna 1968), 95-104. A useful biography is Paul Schick, *Karl Kraus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek 1965). A good critical account is by Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist* (New Haven 1986).
3. See Wilma Abbeles Iggers, *Karl Kraus. A Viennese Critic of the 20th Century*, (The Hague 1967), 180-83; Theodor Lessing, *Der jüdische Selbsthass* (Berlin 1930); Ritchie Robertson, “The Problem of Jewish Self-Hatred in Herzl, Kraus and Kafka” *Oxford German Studies* 16 (1985): 92ff.
4. Timms, *Karl Kraus*, 237.
5. See Jacques Bouveresse, “L’Actualité de Karl Kraus,” *Austriaca* (University of Rouen) 49 (Dec. 1999): 25-29. Names like Rothschild, Taussig, Gutmann, and Karl Wittgenstein feature prominently in his attacks on big capitalists.
6. Karl Kraus, *Eine Krone für Zion* (Vienna 1898). In this booklet written shortly after the First Zionist Congress, he claimed that Zionists responded to the antisemitic slogan “Hinaus mit den Juden!” (Throw the Jews out!), with the words: “Ja, hinaus mit uns Juden!” (Yes, throw us Jews out!). See Karl Kraus, *Frühe Schriften, 1892-1900* (Munich 1979), 2: 312.
7. Perhaps the closest parallel to Kraus was another Jewish satirist, Maximilien Harden, whom he initially admired but later ferociously attacked. Harden, along with Paul Réé, Walter Calé, Max Steiner, Otto Weininger, and Arthur Trebitsch, were subjects of Theodor Lessing’s notorious indictment, *Der jüdische Selbsthass*. See the

review by Julius H. Schoeps, “Hass auf die eigene jüdische Herkunft,” *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), no. 5 (25 Jan. 1985): 15.

8. Jacques Bouveresse, “L’actualité de Karl Kraus,” 10-36.
9. Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens* (Vienna and Leipzig 1933), 266.
10. Weininger’s moral absolutism as well as his “Jewish” antisemitism did, however, influence Kraus. See Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Vienna 1903); Hans Kohn, *Karl Kraus, Arthur Schnitzler, Otto Weininger* (Tübingen 1962), 47-48; Gerald Stieg, “Kafka and Weininger,” in *Jews and Gender. Responses to Otto Weininger*, ed. by Nancy A. Harrowitz and Barbara Hyams (Philadelphia 1995), 195-206. Kraus in the early 1900s became a conscious advocate of Weininger against defamation by the liberal bourgeois press. A similar attitude can be found in the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Allan Janik, “Kraus, Wittgenstein et la philosophie du langage,” *Austriaca* 49 (Dec. 1999): 67-84.
11. *Die Fackel*, no. 5 (1899); see also Werner Kraft, *Karl Kraus. Beiträge zum Verständnis seines Werkes* (Salzburg 1956), 20.
12. This animus against liberal capitalist journalism continued in Kraus’s campaign after 1918 against the newspapers of the Hungarian-Jewish press baron in Vienna, Emmerich Bekessy. For an illuminating discussion see Edward Timms, “The Kraus-Bekessy Controversy in interwar Vienna,” in *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Robert S. Wistrich (London 1992), 184-98.
13. *Die Fackel* (Aug. 1899).
14. Wilhelm Liebknecht, “Nachträgliches zur Affaire,” *Die Fackel* (June 1900). Liebknecht’s articles were translated and quickly published in French by the intensely antisemitic *L’Action Francaise*. For the wider context, see Sigurd Paul Scheichl, “Réactions autrichiennes à l’affaire Dreyfus,” in *Relations franco-autrichiennes, 1870-1970, Austriaca* (Rouen), Special ed. (June 1986): 241-59; also James F. Brennan, *The Reflections of the Dreyfus Affair in the European Press, 1897-1899* (New York 1998), 213-66 for the Austrian media as a whole.
15. *Die Fackel* (Aug. 1899): 3.
16. *Die Fackel* (Apr. 1901).
17. *Die Fackel* (Nov. 1898): 5ff.
18. Kraus, “Eine Krone für Zion,” *Frühe Schriften*, 2: 298-314. The third edition was published in 1908. Subsequently, Kraus did not include it in his collected works, admitting in 1924, that most of what was in it he would no longer “say in the same way.” *Die Fackel*, nos. 657-667 (1924): 168.
19. *Die Fackel*, nos. 381-383 (1913): 70. In this same essay of 1913, Kraus claimed not to know what “Jewish characteristics” were and confessed that “as far as race is concerned, I am at a loss.”

20. *Die Fackel* (July 1899): 5.
21. Ibid., 6.
22. *Die Fackel* (Apr. 1899); also “Achtung vor dem König von Zion,” ibid., no. 80 (June 1901); and no. 91 (Jan. 1902): 11-12. After reading Herzl’s Diaries for the first time in the early 1920s, Kraus regretted the violence of his attacks and conceded that he had misjudged the founder of modern Zionism. He called him “an incomparably superior figure to the associates of his journalist years, whom unfortunately, he did not possess the royal power [to which his features seemed to testify] to renounce with a manifesto of disdain.” *Die Fackel* nos. 649-656 (1924): 138.
23. Kraus, “Wiener Chronik,” *Die Waage*, 15 Jan. 1898, included in *Frühe Schriften*, 2: 151-57.
24. Ibid.
25. *Die Fackel*, no. 88 (1901): 11-18, “Der Zerrissene: (causa Herzl contra Nestroy),” for his literary attack on Herzl.
26. *Die Fackel*, no. 157 (1904): 23 for a polemic against Herzl’s efforts to claim young Viennese poets and writers for the Zionist cause.
27. Ibid.
28. There is no mention of Karl Kraus in any of Herzl’s writings, correspondence, or diaries. See Gerald Kriegerhofer, “The Case of Kraus versus Herzl,” in *Theodor Herzl and the Origins of Zionism*, ed. by Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, *Austrian Studies* 8 (1997): 107-21. Kriegerhofer points to interesting parallels between Herzl and Kraus despite the hostility of the latter to Zionism.
29. *Die Fackel* (May 1899).
30. *Die Fackel* (19 Sept. 1913).
31. For Houston S. Chamberlain’s article on Mommsen and on “Catholic universities,” see *Die Fackel*, Nov.-Dec. 1901 and Jan. 1902; Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist*, 238-40.
32. *Die Fackel*, no. 165 (July 1904).
33. Ibid. Kraus at this time referred to his own outlook as “ehrlich and arisch,” “honorable” and “Aryan,” thereby embracing Chamberlain’s view that the conflict between “Aryans” and “Semites” was spiritual and ideological rather than biological.
34. See Timms, *Karl Kraus*, 238-39.
35. *Die Fackel*, no. 386 (Oct. 1913): 3.
36. Ibid.
37. Timms, *Karl Kraus*, 241 points out the irony of how “unchristian” the tone of Kraus’s satire remained and the vigor of his campaigns against Christian attitudes to sex and morality. It is not clear what aspect of Catholicism (if any) might have attracted him.

38. *Die Fackel* (May 1900).
39. *Die Fackel* (Feb. 1900): 22-23.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 12ff.
42. *Die Fackel* (May 1900): 5.
43. For the complex story of Kraus's relations with the Social Democrats, see Alfred Pfabigan, "Karl Kraus als Kritiker des Austromarxismus," in *Karl Kraus in neuer Sicht*, ed. by Sigurd Paul Scheichl and Eduard Timms (Munich 1986), 235-54.
44. Edward Timms, "Kraus-Bekessy Controversy," 190 ff. points out that the Social Democratic Party was deeply compromised in the Bekessy affair.
45. Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London 1982), 275-80 on Austerlitz.
46. See Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (Cambridge 1952), 183-201. Kraus's influence on the young Ludwig Wittgenstein was very marked.
47. Sidney Rosenfeld, "Karl Kraus: The Future of a Legacy," *Midstream* (Apr. 1974): 71ff.; Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York 1973), 67-91.
48. Harry Zohn, "Karl Kraus: 'Jüdische Selbsthasser' oder 'Erzjude'?", *Modern Austrian Literature* 8, no. 1/2 (1975): 1-15.
49. Theodor Lessing, *Der jüdische Selbsthass* (Berlin 1930). On Lessing, see Lawrence Baron, "Theodor Lessing: Between Jewish Self-Hatred and Zionism," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1981): 323-40; and Jacob Golomb, "Jewish Self-Hatred: Nietzsche, Freud, and the Case of Theodor Lessing," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (2005): 233-48.
50. Berthold Viertel, "Karl Kraus: Ein Charakter und die Zeit," in idem, *Dichtungen und Dokumente*, ed. by Ernst Ginsberg (Munich 1956), 261-62.
51. See Paul Neumarkt, "Kraus, Tucholsky, F. Mendelssohn: A Trio of Apostates," *Jewish Currents* 27 (11 Dec. 1973): 39ff.
52. William O. McCagg, "Jewish Assimilation in Austria: Karl Kraus, Franz Werfel and Joseph Roth on the Catastrophe of 1914-1919," in *Austrians and Jews*, 64.
53. McCagg, "Jewish Assimilation in Austria," 61-66.
54. Karl Kraus, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1919-1922) (Munich 1964), 2: 85.
55. Ibid., 1: 119. "Wissen Sie, wie der Ares dieser Krieg aussieht? Dort geht er. Ein dicker Jud vom Automobilkorps. Sein Bauch ist der Moloch...."
56. Ibid., 1: 146.

57. For a more comprehensive picture, see William O. McCagg, "On Habsburg Jewry and its Disappearance," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, ed. by J. Frankel 4 (1987): 172-96.
58. *Die Fackel* (Jan. 1934).
59. *Die Fackel* (Feb. 1935).
60. Karl Kraus, *Die Dritte Walpurgisnacht* (Munich 1952).
61. Werner Kraft, *Karl Kraus*, 81ff.
62. See Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford 1989), 488-93, 497-516, 532-34; Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self Hatred* (Baltimore, Md. 1987), 233-41; Nike Wagner, "Incognito ergo sum—Zur jüdischen Frage bei Karl Kraus," *Literatur und Kritik*, nos. 219-220 (Nov.-Dec. 1987): 387-99.
63. Jacques Le Rider, *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité* (Paris 1990), 298ff.
64. Elias Canetti, *The Conscience of Words and Earwitness* (London 1987), 28-38, 135-56.
65. Ibid., 32.
66. Ibid., 34.
67. Ibid., 30.
68. Ibid., 38-145. Canetti remarked that nowhere in his entire oeuvre did Kraus ever make fun of himself: "He attacks, he awaits attacks and he protected himself."
69. Leo Schneiderman, "Canetti: The Loneliness of the Noble Prize Winner," *Midstream* (Dec. 1987): 45-48.

## CHAPTER 13

### **Karl Lueger and Catholic Judeophobia in Austria**

The multi-national Habsburg Empire rather than Imperial Germany, Russia or France, was the true birthplace of antisemitism as an electorally powerful modern movement. Although the impetus came from events in Germany and Hungary, Austrian antisemitism was more novel in its methods, more skilful in its techniques of mass agitation, and more effective in its political impact.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, there were some similarities with the Berlin movement of Adolf Stoecker and his *völkisch* rivals in Germany who preceded their contemporaries by several years. Austrian and German antisemites both reacted against Jewish emancipation, which had been completed in Central Europe by 1871. In both countries, the stock market crash of 1873 ruined a mass of small investors and fostered the burning resentment of the “little man” against liberal capitalism and the Jews. This economic discontent of the peasant and craftsmen class supplied a clientèle that proved extremely receptive to antisemitic agitation in Austria as in Germany.<sup>2</sup> The existence of universal male suffrage in Germany and the modest electoral reform of 1882 in Austria gave the support of the declining *Mittelstand* (intermediate strata) a special political importance. But the differences between Austria and Germany are no less important, and help to explain why the antisemitic movement was electorally successful in the polyglot Habsburg Empire before 1914 but much less so in the German heartland.

In Austria-Hungary, unlike Imperial Germany, antisemitism was not restricted to a single nationality. It was equally widespread among the oppressed as well as the dominant peoples. There was a Czech antisemitism directed against the Germans, a Slovak antisemitism which was anti-Magyar, a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) antisemitism that was anti-Polish, and a Polish antisemitism driven by anti-German and anti-Russian sentiment. In each case, Jews were seen as accomplices of the politically hegemonic nationality. However, ideological antisemitism remained most highly developed among the Germans of Austria and it is with them that we are mainly concerned.

One factor in Austrian antisemitism that was especially ugly was the credence given to ritual murder charges that repeatedly provoked popular disturbances in the Habsburg lands. Their intellectual patron was August Rohling, a German Catholic Professor of Semitic Languages at Prague University whose *Der Talmudjude* (1871) claimed that Talmudic Judaism encouraged cheating, stealing from, and exploiting Gentiles. This tissue of lies was taken up in Hungary and by agitators in Vienna in the early 1880s. Rohling's diatribes against Talmudic Judaism were a vulgar rehash of Andreas Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthum* (1701), a malevolent but more serious work by a German scholar from Heidelberg.<sup>3</sup> The Tisza-Eszlar Affair in Hungary (1882) and the subsequent antisemitic campaign of the Hungarian politician Gyözö von Istóczy, ensured the dissemination of Rohling's unbelievably crude ideas to a wider public.<sup>4</sup> An Austrian street demagogue, Franz Holubek, turned, for example, to Rohling's academic "authority" as a screen for his own wild aspersions against the Talmud. In 1882, he was acquitted by a Viennese jury of causing racial incitement. In Hungary, however, the same ritual murder charges were demonstrated to be wholly without foundation. By 1885, Rohling had been exposed as a charlatan, a liar, and a forger in the Viennese courts, thanks to a bold campaign by Rabbi Joseph Bloch. Nevertheless, the ritual murder accusation revived again in the 1890s, exploited by Christian-social agitators like Father Joseph Deckert and the mechanic Ernst Schneider. In April 1900, Schneider even asked the Lower Austrian Diet to grant police protection to Christian children in the weeks preceding the Jewish Passover and demanded special supervision of Jewish butchers.<sup>5</sup> Father Deckert, a militant pamphleteer, saw no contradiction between the Christian gospel and promulgating the fantasy of Jewish ritual murder about which he preached from the pulpit in the 1890s.<sup>6</sup> In Bohemia, the Polna blood libel of 1899, in which Leopold Hilsner, an illiterate Jewish shoemaker's assistant, was falsely accused of murdering a young Christian girl, was especially destructive and sparked off Czech anti-Jewish riots. Hilsner was condemned to death (later reduced to life imprisonment) and finally acquitted in 1918.<sup>7</sup> This was only the most notorious of the numerous ritual murder accusations in Austria-Hungary between 1867 and 1914. The revival of this deadly medieval myth reflected the tenacity of popular superstition and the hostility of the clergy in Catholic Austria towards Jewish emancipation.

The impact of Austrian antisemitism also needs to be seen in the light of certain peculiarities of the electoral system, the semi-feudal social structure,

and the general backwardness of economic development in the Danubian Monarchy. The widening of the franchise in 1882 was indeed an indispensable condition for the success of the antisemitic movement in Austria. This extension of the vote effectively ended the conservative-liberal monopoly of Austrian politics, ensuring that power in Vienna would henceforth depend on the increasingly discontented lower middle-class. The newly enfranchised Five-Guilder Men (the payment of five florins a year in tax meant that one qualified for the vote) were drawn from the populous class of small proprietors, artisans, petty officials, and shopkeepers. Before 1882, politics had largely been the preserve of the aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie and only about 3 percent of the population had enjoyed the franchise. This antiquated electoral system with its divisions into various *curiae* according to property and income, had been grossly unequal and weighted in favor of the upper classes.<sup>8</sup> It also had the effect of artificially maintaining the hegemony of the Germans within the Empire despite their declining numbers.

Under Count Taaffe's reform of 1882 and the rule of his "Iron Ring" coalition, the dominance of aristocratic privilege was threatened for the first time. Taaffe, like the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, had turned away from an alliance with the National Liberals in 1879, trying to govern instead through a coalition of Slavs and Austro-German Catholics.<sup>9</sup> The shift in Taaffe's policy from German-oriented liberalism was a key factor that encouraged the emerging cohorts of political antisemitism. The electoral reform of 1882 also strengthened anti-capitalist forces in the lower reaches of the Viennese *Mittelstand* embittered by liberal indifference to their plight. It opened the way for their political alliance with those clerical conservatives who were ready to protect desperate handicraftsmen from ruin in order to defeat the hated Liberals.<sup>10</sup>

Another factor which favored antisemitism was the socio-economic structure of the Austrian population with its traditionalist patterns of pre-capitalist organization. Vienna was never a true industrial metropolis in the sense of Berlin, though it did remain a residential imperial city with a large-scale bureaucracy and predominantly small-scale production. According to the industrial census of 1902, as many as 90,174 out of 105,570 industrial and commercial establishments employed from 1 to 5 persons only. In the industrial sector, tiny workshops employed almost a third of all wage-workers—115,505 out of a total of 373,424 persons.<sup>11</sup> Another third of the labor force worked in small and medium-sized factories. In Vienna, such

conditions prevented the organized working-class from possessing the same social and economic clout that they had in Berlin. The electoral disenfranchisement of the Austrian workers added a political dimension that was only corrected in 1906. At the same time, the predominance of small-scale producers (craftsmen, tradesmen, and shopkeepers) facilitated the emergence of an economically motivated antisemitic movement. In this respect Vienna may have resembled Paris more than Berlin. Significantly, the Imperial City of Franz Joseph continued to be a major nucleus of Austrian antisemitism even after the equivalent German movement lost support, especially in the Prussian capital.

The prominence of Jews in many spheres of cultural and economic life was even more evident in Vienna than it was in Berlin. The demographic picture also showed a rapid increase of the Jewish population after 1860, which directly corresponded to the genesis and growth of Viennese antisemitism. The pressure of new immigrants was combined with the dramatic ascent of the Jews in social and economic status after emancipation. In 1860 there were 6,200 Jews in Vienna (2.2 percent); within a decade this had risen to 40,200 (6.6 percent). By 1880, the figure had reached 72,600 (10.1 percent)—the very moment that antisemitism began to emerge as a political force.<sup>12</sup> Immigration from the provinces continued to swell the Jewish population and provide fuel for xenophobic agitators. But statistics alone do not explain why Jews became the symbol of modernization and the evils of capitalism to the average Viennese *Kleinbürger*.

A much-publicized meeting of artisans in the “Dreher-Saal” of Vienna in late 1880 to protest against unwelcome Jewish competition was the birth date of modern political antisemitism in Austria.<sup>13</sup> It was organized as a response to the arrival of immigrant Jewish peddlers from Poland, Hungary, and Russia. The artisans founded the *Gesellschaft zum Schutz des Handwerks* in the following year. In 1882, an umbrella organization called the *Oesterreichischer Reformverein* was established as the leading organization of Viennese antisemitism. It adopted an anti-immigrant platform and also warned against the big Jewish capitalists who were allegedly ruining craftsmen with their modern manufacturing methods. The new antisemitic agitation began to lash out against Jewish emancipation, hoping to restore the restrictions on Austrian Jews operative before 1848 (special marriage permits, a numerus clausus, a poll-tax, forbidding Jews to have Christian servants, and preventing them from owning real estate). But there were also more general democratic demands like social security, old-age pensions,

health insurance, and ensuring the vote for all taxpayers. The Viennese movement was decidedly more radical in this area than Adolf Stoecker's parallel agitation in Berlin. Its lower class leadership (Schneider was a mechanic and Buschenhagen a watchmaker) was more plebeian than its German equivalents. Antisemitism in the German Reich was still predominantly elitist, attracting outstanding academic personalities like Heinrich von Treitschke, brilliant composers like Richard Wagner, and establishment figures like the Court preacher, Adolf Stoecker. Nevertheless, there was also an aristocratic strand in Austrian antisemitism that sought to combine political conservatism, economic protectionism, the restoration of the guilds, and of a corporatist Christian social order with anti-capitalist radicalism. Its prophet was Karl Freiherr von Vogelsang, a North German convert to Catholicism and the leading ideologist of Christian socialism in Austria.

Vogelsang was an aristocratic apostle of neo-feudalism and the first "Austrian" conservative theorist to perceive in the disoriented artisan class an instrument through which he could realize his romantic dream of restoring a Christian society. The antisemitic elements in Vogelsang's Catholic social theory were a reflection of the economic backwardness of Austrian society. However, although his denunciations of liberalism, materialism, and secularism were reminiscent of Adolf Stoecker in Germany, they were conceived on a more sophisticated theoretical level. Vogelsang exploited the fact that the *Gewerbefreiheit* Law of 1859, which institutionalized the free-trade principle in Austria, was anathema to the tradesman and artisan class. These impoverished strata favored a revised form of the guild system which would protect them from free competition. They hoped to create a Chinese wall of "special certificates of competence" and to preserve their traditional privileges and to impose legal restrictions on the ability of big capital to undermine their livelihoods.

Vogelsang showed an acute appreciation of the social problems of capitalist society. Even Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer and Karl Renner admired his critique of laissez-faire economics. They agreed with him that market capitalism was to blame for evils like alcoholism, crime, egoistic materialism, moral nihilism, and social atomism. On the other hand, they ridiculed his Christian corporatist panacea.<sup>14</sup> Austro-Marxists recognized a certain parallel between Vogelsang's critique of economic activity as an end in itself and the anti-capitalism of the young Karl Marx—a similarity extending to their views on the "Jewish question." Indeed, Vogelsang himself

quoted from Marx's *Zur Judenfrage*, concluding that the victory of capitalism meant the emancipation of bourgeois Jews who had no God but Mammon.<sup>15</sup>

Vogelsang agreed with Marx that modern Christians had in effect become "Jews" in the material sense. Capitalism and the "Jewish spirit" were essentially synonymous. But the specifically Catholic slant which he gave to such concepts was symptomatic of a fundamental difference between the Christian-social party and Austrian Socialism. Unlike Vogelsang, Austro-Marxists did not allude to the "anti-Christian" Jew whose capitalistic spirit was undermining the *Christian* social order. The victory of the "Jewish spirit" angered Vogelsang because it implied that the Christians had lost their religious faith—something of no interest to Marxists.<sup>16</sup> When his journal, *Das Vaterland*, deplored the dissolution of traditional society as a result of commercial capitalism and the influence of the big city press, it was primarily the disappearance of an organic faith-community based on Catholicism which he lamented. Where Marx envisaged redemption through a classless society, Vogelsang believed only a restored Christian society could save Austria from "Jewish tyranny."<sup>17</sup> Vogelsang interpreted the young Marx's identification of the Jew with capitalism in a typically conservative and clerical direction; "the Jew" represented not only the wealthy manufacturer, industrialist, and banker but also the anti-clerical and subversive revolutionary. The Christian-social party inherited this dualistic image of "the Jew" from Vogelsang. Both in Vienna and lower Austria, this stereotype would prove extraordinarily successful as a battering ram to overthrow the liberal political order. Vogelsang's aristocratic antisemitism was never specifically racist and sought to remain within the framework of Catholic theology. But like Stoecker in Protestant North Germany he was eventually outflanked by unscrupulous and plebeian fanatics with little interest in the nuance of "Christian" and "anti-Christian" antisemitism.

Vogelsang was the spiritual godfather of the *Christlichsozialer Verein* created by his Tyrolese disciple, Ludwig Psenner, together with Adam Latchka. This was to become the focus of anti-liberal forces in Austria and the nucleus of the future Christian-social party.<sup>18</sup> It would include radical aristocrats like the "Red Prince" Alois von Liechtenstein, the mechanic Ernst Schneider, the clerical Dr. Gessmann, the nationalist Robert von Pattai, the theologian Franz Schindler, and the populist "democrat" Karl Lueger. This motley alliance was eventually assembled into the *Vereinigte Christen* (United Christians) in 1889, a formidable organization dedicated to

Mayor Karl Lueger  
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overthrowing major bastions of liberal political hegemony in Austria like the Viennese municipal council and the lower Austrian diet. Its manifesto of 1889 reflected an antisemitism based on economic envy that was already rampant among petty-bourgeois Catholics. It called for excluding the Jews from the professions (medicine, law, etc.), from teaching in Christian schools, or from the civil service and judiciary, as well as demanding drastic restrictions on Jewish immigration. By 1889, the “Jewish question” was already an issue that could potentially unify clerical conservatives, pan-German nationalists, racial antisemites, social reformers, disillusioned ex-liberals, and democrats in one fighting movement. All that this front lacked was a charismatic leader—who soon stepped forward in the shape of Dr. Karl Lueger.

Lueger was a relative latecomer to antisemitism—compared to his main predecessor and rival, Georg von Schonerer, founder of Austrian pan-Germanism. From Schoenerer’s circle in the early 1880s one can trace the genesis of the three great camps in Austrian political life—the Conservative-clerical (Christian-social), the National (nationalist/pan-German) and the Social-Democratic parties.<sup>19</sup> For a brief moment in 1882, when Schoenerer stood as the unchallenged leader of the democratic opposition in Austria, he was able to unite under his wing such diverse figures as Karl Lueger, Ernst Schneider and Robert Pattai, Victor Adler, Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Heinrich Friedjung, and Otto Steinwender. The future leaders of Austrian Social-Democracy and of Christian socialism as well as pan-German nationalism

could therefore trace their origin back to the same roots. The common ground between all three parties lay in their anti-liberalism, but Schoenerer's rebellion was the most antisemitic and anti-Austrian.<sup>20</sup> While the Social-Democrats and the Christian-social party accepted (in differing ways) the cosmopolitan framework of the Habsburg dynastic State, the Austrian Pan-Germans totally rejected the multinational Empire. The Christian-social party patriotically proclaimed its loyalty to the Austrian state, but the Pan-Germans owed allegiance only to the Germanic *Volk*. Where the Luegerites affirmed their dynastic patriotism, the followers of Schoenerer flaunted a Germanic nationalism that sought to overthrow the Habsburgs. If Social Democrats inherited the liberal belief in reason, education, and enlightenment, pan-Germans openly advocated an illiberal cult of blood, race, and soil.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless until the 1890s the split between clerical and nationalist antisemites was far from definitive and many points of convergence remained. The Austrian Socialists were by no means hostile to Schoenerer and borrowed a number of points from his Linz Program of 1882. This is less surprising when one recalls that Victor Adler, before becoming the founder of Austrian Social Democracy, had been a close ally and collaborator of Schoenerer.

Schoenerer's own family background contained several pointers as to why his revolt against liberal values cut deeper than the rebellion of Karl Lueger or Victor Adler. His father Mathias had been a successful railway engineer and entrepreneur, rewarded for his services to the Habsburg dynasty with the title of Ritter and the 18th-century castle of Rosenau in Zwettl. Schoenerer eventually rejected all the values epitomized by his father who was a true representative of industrial capitalism and a close collaborator of the Rothschilds.<sup>22</sup> Initially, however, the young Schoenerer had joined the liberal *Fortschrittsklub* (Progressive Club) in the Reichsrat as the representative of Waldviertel. He remained a liberal democrat until the late 1870s with a special interest in agronomy and the conditions of the peasantry in his locality. Schoenerer's disillusion with liberal capitalism and Habsburg dynastic policies began only in 1879, when the new Prime Minister, Count Taaffe turned to a Slav-clerical coalition to rule Austria-Hungary.

Hatred and fear of the Slavs had always been a central element in Schoenerer's outlook and following Taaffe's policy it came into the foreground. His turn away from liberalism was also reinforced by the pan-German idolization of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck who had abandoned the National Liberals in 1879. In Schoenerer's eyes, Bismarck

represented not only “blood and iron” but also social reform, the defense of the poorer classes and a powerful, “progressive” German Reich. Schoenerer and his followers identified overwhelmingly with the House of Hohenzollern and hated the Habsburg dynasty. Not by accident the movement called itself *deutschnational*, *deutschvölkisch*, or sometimes simply *völkisch* in order to stress its populist opposition to the supranational Habsburg ruling house. Later, it adopted the name of *alldeutsch* (pan-German) to underline its dream of *Anschluss* with Germany. The Austrian pan-Germans dreamed of reversing the *kleindeutsch* solution which Bismarck’s Prussia had imposed on a defeated Austria at the battle of Königsgrätz in 1866.

Schoenerer’s German nationalism was romantic, revolutionary, and altogether lacking in political realism, but it did correspond to a new mood among some Austro-Germans of the younger generation, especially after the unification of the German Reich in 1870-1871. Initially, Schoenerer did not attack the Jews, though in 1879, for the first time, he spoke out against the “semitic rule of money and phrases” which won him an enthusiastic response from university students.<sup>23</sup> The students (*Burschen*) were indeed the most aggressively antisemitic group in the Empire and it was their ultranationalism which converted Schoenerer to a fully-fledged racial ideology.<sup>24</sup> The *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) in Vienna had begun to exclude Jews from membership in 1878 and the trend rapidly spread throughout the Habsburg Empire, affecting school associations, gymnastic clubs, and German societies. In the student community, pro-Prussian sentiment was especially strong after Austria’s defeat in 1866, and the *Ausgleich* (reconciliation) with Hungary. The patriotic German song, *Wacht am Rhein* (Watch on the Rhine) was the rallying-cry of the *Burschen*, whose anti-Austrianism had its roots in the anti-clerical Germanic romanticism of 1848.

Equally axiomatic for the Austro-German fraternities was the belief in a deep and fundamental racial antagonism between “Aryan” and “Semite.” Austrian fraternities adopted the antisemitic ideology of Eugen Dühring, pioneered in Germany, which postulated that Judaism was totally alien to the German spirit. In this respect, students in the *Ostmark* (Eastern marches of the Empire) were certainly more “radical” and racist than their German brethren in the “Reich.” The notorious Waidhofen conference of 1896 formalized their long-standing outlook, declaring that no German fraternity member could fight a duel with a Jew, since the “Semitic” student was racially *ehrlos* (without character). This type of racist bigotry was by no means confined to student fraternities and *Turnvereine* (gymnastic

associations). It was also popular with the academic community and the German-speaking professional middle class, especially in the Alpine provinces. Indeed, the nationalist faculty and students were the best index of the impact of Schoenerer's ideology in Austria and they remained loyal to their leader through thick and thin. It is worth noting that their pan-Germanism was fundamentally anti-Catholic as well as being anti-Jewish to the core. Long after he had become a racist antisemite, Schoenerer remained loyal to the anti-clerical program which since 1848 had favored civil education, lay marriage, and the destruction of Jesuit influence. Not for nothing was one of the best-known pan-German slogans: *Ohne Juda, ohne Rom, wird gebaut Germaniens Dom.* (The German cathedral will be built without Judah or Rome).<sup>25</sup>

Schoenerer's anti-clerical antisemitism was close to the atheist variety developed in Imperial Germany by Wilhlem Marr and Eugen Dühring and later given a populist, demagogic flavor by the Hessian agitator Otto Böckel. The original 11-point Linz Program of 1882 (the cornerstone of the German national movement in Austria) had been drawn up by two young assimilated Jews, Heinrich Friedjung and Victor Adler, before Schonenerer's antisemitism turned unreservedly racist. The Linz program declared war on the dualistic Austro-Hungarian State, on the hereditary rights of the Habsburg dynasty, and the historic unity of the Habsburg Empire. It called for the incorporation of Dalmatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina into Hungary and proposed autonomy for Galicia and Bukovina. The Linz program envisaged a rump Austrian State that would be predominantly German in character but still ruling over relatively large non-German populations in Bohemia and Moravia, Silesia, Carniola, Istria, Tyrol, and Trieste. German was to be the official *Staatssprache* used in the army, parliament, and for all administrative business. The social program (written by Victor Adler) was markedly democratic, calling for a broader male suffrage, progressive income tax, a tax on stock-exchange transactions, obligatory trade unions, the nationalizing of railways and insurance companies, the limitation of working hours and of child as well as female labor.<sup>26</sup> Only in May 1885 did Schoenerer add the infamous *Judenpunkt* to the Linz program, calling for the removal of Jewish influence from all areas of public life as "indispensable for realizing these reforms."

By the mid 1880s, Schoenerer had adopted the systematic ideological antisemitism which he now described as "the greatest achievement of the nineteenth century."<sup>27</sup> Since 1882, he had become a regular speaker in the

*Oesterreichische Reformverein* (Austrian Reform Association), the leading organization of Viennese antisemites. Although he broke with the *Reformverein* over the issue of dynastic Austrian patriotism, he was influenced as much by the anti-capitalist antisemitism of the artisans as he had been by the racial ideology of the students. In 1883, he decided to cast Friedjung and Adler aside. His *Deutschnationalen Verein* now began to follow the policy of the student fraternities in systematically excluding “non-Aryans”—i.e., Jews. It was also in 1883 that Schoenerer founded his extremist journal *Unverfälschte Deutsche Worte* (Unadulterated German words) which abandoned moderate German nationalism in favor of biological racism.

In 1884, though already an antisemite, Schoenerer was still able to combine German nationalism with social radicalism. Indeed, during the Nordbahn Controversy of that year, he briefly emerged as leader of the radical opposition in Austria. Sharply denouncing the fat incomes which shareholders derived from the Kaiser Ferdinand railroad, he accused the Rothschilds, who owned the franchise, of “transport usury.”<sup>28</sup> The long-suffering public, so he charged, had endured high tariffs on meat and produce brought to Vienna by rail because the Court and Ministers had bowed to corruption. Schoenerer’s campaign was even seen as “communistic” by the liberal *Neue Freie Presse*.<sup>29</sup> But it did succeed in fusing “progressive” socio-economic policies with populist antisemitism. Among university students in Vienna as well as in the provincial Austrian small towns and rural districts he was finding a responsive audience. Professional people, shopkeepers, craftsmen, teachers, and sections of the peasantry began to warm to this anti-establishment protest.

These insecure social strata responded enthusiastically to antisemitic appeals directed against finance capitalism and the rising labor movement. As in Germany during the 1890s, the “national” camp discovered in antisemitism the most cost-effective way to be simultaneously anti-liberal, anti-capitalist, and anti-socialist. In Austria, however, the pan-German variant of antisemitism was also anti-dynastical and unpatriotic. This was the critical point which separated Schoenerer from Karl Lueger and from more moderate shades of German nationalism in Austria. It gave an uncompromising, paranoid, and openly secessionist flavor to his movement which electorally proved to be its undoing. The German-speaking middle-class in Habsburg Austria was not ripe for such national extremism and open disloyalty to the dynasty. It preferred the more pragmatic nationalism of Otto

Steinwender and his “German Club.” Steinwender followed a long list of ex-followers of Schoenerer alienated by his authoritarian extremism and personal obduracy. They included Schneider, Pattai, Vergani, Lueger, Wolf, Friedjung, Adler, and Pernerstorfer—all of whom eventually abandoned Schoenerer as an impractical “Don Quixote.”

Whether they turned Christian-social, Nationalist, or Socialist, all of Schoenerer’s former colleagues rejected his intransigence towards the multinational Austrian State. His irreconcilable antagonism towards the Habsburg dynasty was a more important cause of Schoenerer’s growing isolation than his anti-Jewish rhetoric which had its parallels in all three anti-liberal camps from the mid-1880s though it was expressed in very different forms. Only in the Marxist camp was there any serious opposition to this scapegoating ideology, but it was equivocal at best and consistently avoided any defense of the Jews per se.<sup>30</sup>

Schoenerer’s brand of antisemitism was the most radical of the existing varieties in Austria. In comparison with the despised Czechs and Slovenes whom he nonetheless regarded as “Aryans” and in principle as only temporary enemies, the “fight against the Jews” was now a fundamental cornerstone of the pan-German outlook. This racial theory made no distinction between baptized and non-baptized Jews.<sup>31</sup> It was a position that made collaboration with political Catholicism more difficult. But in the early 1890s, the Christian-social agitators like Ernst Schneider, Gregorig, Father Deckert, and Father Abel, were as viciously antisemitic as Schoenerer himself. The *Deutsche Volksblatt*, edited by Ernst Vergani (a close collaborator of Schoenerer) was a racist-nationalist paper, even though it supported the cause of Karl Lueger and his Catholic populist movement.<sup>32</sup>

The dividing line between clerical and nationalist antisemitism in Austria was in fact less sharply drawn than most historians have assumed. Lueger, Schneider, Pattai, and Vergani were all converts to the Christian-social camp who had once shared a common platform with Schoenerer. They disagreed with him over the issue of *Anschluss* with Hohenzollern Germany, but they favored Austro-German ascendancy within the Habsburg Empire. With the exception of Lueger, they were all anti-clerical and racist antisemites driven into the Christian-social camp by opportunism and Schoenerer’s doctrinal intransigence. Significantly, it was the *schwarz-gelb* (black-yellow) loyalist Karl Lueger who proved to be the most skilful in manipulating the “Jewish question” as a weapon in his rise to power.

The genesis of Austrian antisemitism in the 1880s reveals a complex interaction of clerical, nationalist, and anti-capitalist themes. Schoenerer's pan-German variant was part of his program of irredentist nationalism which sought to break up the Empire along racial lines. The "unassimilable" Jews were depicted as the prime ideological enemy of the Germanic *Volk* already threatened from within and without by inferior and alien Slavic races. The Christian-social movement was far less Slavophobe, and reflected above all the economic *ressentiment* of the *Spiessbürger* (petty-bourgeois) against Jewish capital and high finance. The role of the Jews in Austro-liberalism and the industrial modernization of the Habsburg Monarchy gave a concrete social dimension to this lower middle-class protest. Unlike the pan-Germans, Lueger's party had the advantage of being rooted in an *indigenous* Austrian tradition of Judeophobia going back to Abraham a Sancta Clara,(a popular 17th-century preacher in Vienna) and the earlier medieval Christian demonology.

Both native and imported "German" varieties of Jew-hatred were helped by the weakness of the liberal-democratic tradition and the crisis of identity afflicting many Austro-Germans after 1848. Although the initial inspiration for anti-Jewish agitation may have come from Berlin, it swept to power in Vienna during the late 1890s under unmistakably Austrian Catholic colors. The key to this dramatic success lay in the personality and political astuteness of Karl Lueger, who since 1889, had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Christian-social party.<sup>33</sup> In a prescient article published in 1900, Friedrich Austerlitz, the editor-in-chief of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* tried to explain his extraordinary popularity:

The career of this former lawyer is truly one of the most interesting phenomena of our times: the key to following and understanding it is provided by a knowledge of the psychology of the petite bourgeoisie. Lueger enriched political science by a great discovery: he transformed democracy, a political orientation that was dying of boredom, into modern demagogery, into the art of fobbing people off with the appearance instead of the reality of the situation.<sup>34</sup>

Following Lueger's death a decade later, Austerlitz reaffirmed that he was indeed "the first bourgeois politician who recognized the importance of the masses in politics."<sup>35</sup> He reflected the socialist belief that with the passing of Lueger their time would now come. The Viennese mayor had unintentionally been a valuable precursor in preparing the road for their own ascent to power.



Friedrich Austerlitz  
Austrian National Library



But was Lueger to be seen as a proto-fascist leader, as a mentor of Adolf Hitler, and pioneer of “post-rational politics” in Austria?<sup>36</sup> Was he a populist radical or a traditionalist Conservative, a Habsburg loyalist who had restored the decaying fortunes of political Catholicism in Austria? Moreover, how can one reconcile his antisemitic demagogic with such an impressive record as the civic-minded architect of Viennese “municipal socialism”? Did he not expand the water supply, build schools, hospitals, and publicly-owned abattoirs? Did Lueger not transform the topography of Vienna, providing it with new city gas, electricity, tramlines, and railways, as well as a green belt, and a coherent architectural concept? These constructive achievements sit uneasily with his reputation as a “radical Rightist,” a model for later déclassé demagogues bent on rousing the atomized masses to a frenzy of hatred.<sup>37</sup>

There are those who have argued that Austria was the cradle of the “most strident and popular radical right-wing social movements that Europe was to see before the days of Hitler and Mussolini,” and that “the voters of the Empire were more polarized into radical right and radical left than the citizens of any other European nation.” Within this spectrum, Lueger’s Christian-Social Party appears as a classic representative of ultra-conservative Catholic rightism. The 1907 parliamentary elections in Austria, according to John Weiss, “marked the emergence of the first political genius of the radical right in Europe.”<sup>38</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that the young Hitler whose arrival in Vienna from rural upper Austria coincided with

Lueger's electoral triumph of 1907 should have been so vividly impressed by "handsome Karl," the Lord Mayor of the Imperial Capital.

The young Hitler came to see in Lueger the ideal type of a modern mass leader even if he remained critical of his mentor's pro-Austrianism and "an apparent antisemitism (*Scheinantisemitismus*) which was almost worse than none at all."<sup>39</sup> Hitler had no doubt that von Schoenerer (rather than Lueger) was "the better and more profound thinker," who correctly grasped the centrality of race and the "Jewish Question." He could identify much more with Pan-German hatred of the Habsburgs and their call for *Anschluss* with Germany than with the dynastic loyalty of Lueger's party. Nevertheless Hitler praised the Christian-Social party for "its shrewd judgment concerning the worth of the popular masses," its "practical wisdom, and particularly its attitude towards Socialism": Lueger had shrewdly grasped "the importance of the social question" and the need to appeal to the masses.

Hitler was undoubtedly impressed by Christian-social practicality and the flair for propaganda of Lueger and his lieutenants: "they were veritable virtuosos in working up the instincts of the broad masses of their adherents." He especially appreciated the tactical sense of Lueger, whose record as Mayor demonstrated the true genius of a great reformer." The concrete lessons to be learned were not related to ideology but to political praxis and technique. The aspiring demagogue had to win over to his cause those social groups "threatened with extinction." Only they could provide the shock troops with which to overthrow the old order. At the same time Hitler sharply criticized the Pan-Germans for their futile assault on the Catholic Church. This was a mistake which Karl Lueger had successfully avoided. Nevertheless, the Catholic antisemitism of the Luegerites was significantly different from that of the Nazis, as Hitler himself clearly recognized.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, there were also Christian-Social deputies like Ernst Schneider, whose statements sounded like a dress rehearsal for the diatribes of rabid Nazi antisemites like Julius Streicher. In 1901, Schneider had announced to the Austrian Parliament:

The Jewish Question is a racial question, a question of blood, a culture question which can only be solved by blood and iron as hundreds of thousand of years of ancient history taught not only our people, but all peoples, and you will not escape this truth.<sup>41</sup>

Lueger saw no need to discipline such extremists in his own party even though his own attitude was more moderate and a matter of political calculation. The Catholic mayor cultivated an aura of reasonableness, culture,

charm, and concern for his public image. He was the very opposite of a fanatic. He generated around himself precisely that atmosphere of *Gemütlichkeit* (affability) which has come to be seen as classically Viennese.<sup>42</sup> Under his inspiration, even Jew-baiting could appear as no more than “an excellent means of propaganda and of getting ahead in politics...the sport of the rabble,” as Lueger confided in private. According to Sigmund Mayer, a leading figure in the Vienna *Kultusgemeinde*, Lueger once told him:

I like the Hungarian Jews even less than the Hungarians but I am not an enemy of our Viennese Jews; they are not so bad and we cannot really do without them.... The Jews are the only ones who always feel like being active.<sup>43</sup>

Lueger was no more an ideological antisemite than he was a pious Catholic, though he exploited both ideologies very effectively in propagating his message. A number of left-wing and liberal writers linked this “opportunistic” character of Lueger’s antisemitism with the social psychology of the Viennese petite bourgeoisie and its confused backlash against an “underdeveloped” Austrian capitalism. Thus Wilhelm Ellenbogen, physician, Jewish intellectual, and a leading Austrian socialist, argued in 1899 that Lueger’s Jew-baiting was pure fraud and had nothing to do with the “deep-rooted Jew-hatred” inspired by the Catholic church and which had long existed in Austria.<sup>44</sup> The new political antisemitism, he insisted, flourished against the background of provincial backwardness, superficiality, and the Austrian tendency to trivialize everything,<sup>45</sup>

that Viennese *Gemütlichkeit* which is almost synonymous with good-natured weak-mindedness, but which, as is well known, may just as easily turn malevolent; phenomena which have for centuries been cultivated by the priests and princes of Austria.<sup>46</sup>

Ellenbogen, like other leading Austrian socialists, regarded economic antisemitism in Vienna as the “socialism of fools,” an attempt to manipulate and direct the frustrated and disorientated *Kleinbürger* into a mythical struggle against “Jewish capital.” Lueger, the condottiere of this petty bourgeois crusade against big capital, who claimed to speak in the name of the oppressed Christian *Volk* (the tailors, grocers, shoemakers, depressed artisans, peasants, and small businessmen)—this would-be dragon-slayer of “Jewish capitalism”—was simply delivering the city of Vienna to the big bankers and to clerical rule. Ellenbogen described him as the

archetypal, ambitious demagogue...equally well equipped with wit and pathos, an almost amoral frivolity with regard to political principles, ruthless or pliable as the occasion demands....<sup>47</sup>

His “apparent antisemitism,” like the rest of his politics, was built on an unstable coalition of socioeconomic interests. Christian socialism was a movement that “lives from negation and the sins of its opponents.” Other socialists, like Friedrich Austerlitz, made a similar point. Lueger, they suggested, had not invented antisemitism but had given it political expression, in order to exploit genuine mass grievances against liberal hegemony.<sup>48</sup>

The *Scheinantisemitismus* of Lueger was consonant with the theatricality, the attitudinizing, and oratorical flair for mass politics which he had brought to his role. As the perfect embodiment of the Viennese common man in the age of democracy, Lueger reflected all the contradictions and dissonances of the heterogeneous groups that made up the Christian-social party at the turn of the century. His anti-Jewish demagogic was ultimately as empty as the claim to be simultaneously radical and a Habsburg loyalist, a Germanophile and a Czechophile, centralist and an autonomist. Austerlitz observed: “He only attacks the Jews, that is, the attack has no specific goal, it is an end in itself, and degenerates into demagogic.”<sup>49</sup> This Marxist criticism was intended, of course, to expose the fraudulent, hypocritical, playful character of Lueger’s posture toward the Jews. It appears decidedly questionable after the horrors of the Holocaust.<sup>50</sup> Karl Lueger’s famous remark “Wer a Jud ist, das bestimme ich!” (I decide who is a Jew) with which he answered attacks on his association with wealthy Jews, epitomized his pliable, unprincipled, and cynical approach. It belonged to an age when it was still possible to be an antisemite in public and a “friend of the Jews” (*Judenfreund*) in private. One of Lueger’s biographers, Kurt Skalnik, put the most benign face on this tendency when he claimed that Karl Lueger would be vindicated before the verdict of history:

In 1880, 1890, 1900, life ran inside such a well-defined order, that one could afford, among other political escapades, to play with antisemitism, without at the same time breaking the principles of civilized humanity and falling into a daemonic abyss.”<sup>51</sup>

Jewish reactions to confirmation of Lueger’s election as Mayor of Vienna in 1897 do not suggest that the community viewed this event merely as a “political escapade.” The prospect that, as the *Neue Freie Presse* put it on 30

May 1895, “Vienna should be the only great city in the world whose administrator is an antisemitic agitator” was alarming to the Jewish community, as it was for different reasons to the Imperial government, the church hierarchy, the Magyars, and sections of the Austrian aristocracy. Like the Jews, the Austrian establishment of the time had good reason to distrust the social radicalism of the Lueger movement, of which mob antisemitism was clearly a major component. For the Jewish community, however, the threat was more direct. The initial program of the *Vereinigte Christen* had demanded the elimination of Jews from the civil service, medical and legal professions, and small businesses, as well as the abolition of peddling. In 1897 this plebian movement had triumphed in Vienna in large part owing to its immensely popular antisemitic program. Inevitably this was a cause of great concern. No one familiar with the press of that period, with the parliamentary debates in the Reichsrat, or those in the City Council or the Lower Austrian Landtag can fail to be struck by the aggressive intensity of fin-de-siècle Viennese antisemitic rhetoric and the panic which it initially engendered.<sup>52</sup>

Admittedly, the immediate effects were surprisingly limited. There was no concerted attempt to strip Austrian Jews of their civil rights; there was no expropriation of Jewish wealth (indeed Lueger frequently consulted with Jewish businessmen in order to carry out his ambitious municipal programs); and there was relatively little violence against individuals in Vienna itself. There was certainly nothing to compare with the pogroms in Galicia in the summer of 1898 or the unrest in Bohemia the following year during the Hilsner ritual murder trial. The antisemitic efforts to boycott Jewish businesses were a singular failure in Vienna (though more successful in Polish Galicia), and in both the economic and cultural spheres, Lueger’s Christian-Social rule did not undermine the very substantial Jewish presence. Apart from legislation against peddlers and the sacking of some Jewish stenographers from municipal service—cheap gestures to satisfy Lueger’s more rabid followers—the new Mayor’s practical moves indicated a desire for reconciliation with the wealthy Jewish elite rather than open confrontation. Social Democrats and Pan-Germans came in for a barrage of insults no less hostile than that previously directed at the “Judeo-Liberals.”

Nevertheless Jews could hardly feel secure or comfortable with the twisted image of their activities fostered by Christian-Social antisemites. Lueger may have partially succeeded in taming and domesticating Viennese antisemitism with a heavy dose of Austrian *Gemütlichkeit*, but in the universities, among

the younger generation and the immigrant *Ostjuden*, the pressures were real enough. It was no accident that Jewish nationalism grew steadily in precisely these social strata after 1900. Even among the prosperous Jewish middle class and the assimilated big bourgeoisie in Vienna—which was arguably more alarmed by Herzl's Zionism than it was by Lueger's antisemitism—there was a sense of malaise. Things were no longer so secure. World-weariness, resignation, and a flight from reality that smacked of demoralization, characterized the aesthetic climate of “Young Vienna” (*Jung Wien*)—a modernist school of literature dominated by assimilated Jews.<sup>53</sup>

The *deeds* of the Lueger years may look tame compared to the 1930s, but the *verbal* assault on Jews was by no means innocuous. The most serious consequence was the long-term cultural and political legitimization of antisemitism in Austrian public life. Anti-Jewish activities, organizations, movements, boycotts, and verbal slander became normal and even respectable. Precisely because Karl Lueger was the most popular mayor that Vienna had ever known, his behavior and mannerisms were liable to be imitated. His antisemitic rhetoric could and did become a necessary ingredient for aspiring followers who looked to him as a role model.<sup>54</sup> Equally, the nature of Lueger's constituency and his hold over it was such that he simply could not abandon the anti-Jewish propaganda which had helped him to climb to power. Moreover, in the Christian-social party there were diverse *Mittelstand* groups for whom the Jews provided most unwelcome economic competition. They included shopkeepers, merchants, artisans, school teachers, clerics, but also *Hausherren* (landlords) and middle-ranking government officials. The central core of this party was the urban *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie), the middle section of Viennese society which remained remarkably faithful to pre-industrial values and the *Bürger* political culture it had inherited from Austro-liberalism.<sup>55</sup> Lueger himself was a typical product of this lower *Bürgertum*, which had come to reject the liberal order.

Political Catholicism emerged in the 1880s as the ideological vehicle for endangered strata in the Austro-German *Bürgertum*, protesting against the liberal political pieties that had sacrificed them to the “Moloch of Capitalism.” The two most antisemitic groups in the coalition of interest that eventually made up the Christian-Social party—depressed artisans and Catholic clerics—were also especially important in the mobilization of cadres, the winning of mass support and ultimately, of official respectability. Antisemitism was both an integral part of the protest movement seeking to

affirm the social status of the lower *Bürgertum* and a lever to bring down Austro-liberalism.

Christian socialism was a perfect instrument for traditional *Mittelstand* aspirations long neglected by the Austrian Liberal party. Its success was predicated on the skillful adaptation of an older pre-1848 political language to a new class situation, the blending of cultural traditionalism with the desire for radical change, of social conservatism with modern mass politics. Its historical function was clearly to stabilize and reunite bourgeois society against the rising Social-Democratic threat. The impressive cultural and political strength of the working classes organized in the internationalist Social Democracy obliged the Christian-Socials to forge a greater degree of social homogeneity within the Austrian *Bürgertum*. Under Lueger's charismatic leadership—patriarchal, authoritarian, but also conciliatory—the Viennese German middle class consciously began to identify themselves with the Christian *Volk* of Austria. This powerful new force was culturally no less *bürgerlich* than classical liberalism, but ideologically anti-liberal, anti-Marxist, antisemitic, and above all, social-Catholic in orientation.

Antisemitism crystallized as *the* integrating ideology of the Viennese lower middle classes, making possible the unification of previously fragmented strata within the Austrian *Bürgertum*. It had the populist appeal of appearing to be anti-plutocratic, anti-corruptionist, and “democratic” to Lueger's Viennese and lower Austrian constituency without threatening the foundations of the bourgeois order or the Habsburg *Rechtsstaat*. Opposing the international and “Jewish” character of capitalism did not entail the overthrow of private property, the family, or the broader social system. This was a political lesson that Adolf Hitler would never forget from his Vienna years.

The Catholic church provided an essential cover of respectability and tradition permitting the Christian-Socials to be accepted as *the* Conservative party in Austria. Antisemitism in its traditionalist Catholic form was admirably suited to this goal, helping to unite white and blue-collar types, bourgeois and artisans, landowners and peasants, lower and middle-ranking officials, as well as teachers and clerks in one fighting anti-liberal movement. Lueger's skilful mix between Catholic tradition and modernity showed him to be a master in composing “collages made of fragments of modernity, glimpses of futurity and resurrected remnants of a half-forgotten past.”<sup>56</sup> The politician who began his career as a left liberal and radical democrat transformed himself into an antisemitic popular tribune who conquered

Vienna and “then organised a great party with its stable base in the countryside.”<sup>57</sup> Lueger was no ideologue, and—unlike Hitler—certainly no fanatic, least of all on the Jewish issue. He was a quintessentially Viennese politician who understood the potential uses of bourgeois social disaffection and adopted the new corporatist theories of Baron Karl von Vogelsang as a means of welding together a broad anti-liberal coalition. Antisemitism proved to have great political value above all as a battering ram against laissez-faire capitalism and Marxist social democracy.<sup>58</sup>

After 1897, the Christian-Socials became the political party of the Austro-German bourgeoisie mobilized against the “Red Menace.” Its antisemitism switched from anti-capitalism to anti-Marxism. The interwar rivalry between the clerical statesman, Ignaz Seipel, and the Austro-Marxist intellectual, Otto Bauer, had its precedent in the conflict between Lueger and the Jewish-born leader of the Austrian Social Democrats, Victor Adler.<sup>59</sup> The “Red Peril” became the focal point of Christian-Social anxieties. It began to take on hysterical proportions in the 1920s, when a socialist-dominated Vienna (with a large Jewish population) confronted the conservative provinces under the sway of clerical ideology and anti-Marxist propaganda in what was already a very truncated Austria.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between different epochs, not least with respect to the “Jewish Question.” Luegerite antisemitism operated within the framework of a conciliatory, supranational Habsburg dynasty which was not hostile to Jews per se; *mass* violence within this political system was still the exception, despite the serious constitutional crisis of 1898. Economic life was not yet trapped in the disastrous cycles of depression, inflation, and mass unemployment of the post-1918 era. Most importantly, the stabilizing influence of the *Rechtsstaat* and a political culture based on law was still intact. These structural factors were serious barriers to the translation of antisemitic rhetoric in Vienna from words into deeds during the Habsburg era.

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that Lueger’s immense charisma gave a special weight to antisemitism in Austrian public life which it might otherwise not have enjoyed. Under his influence it acquired deeper roots in Austrian political parties, in the press, and official propaganda, thereby smoothing the path to its disastrous impact in the 1930s.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Lueger did not dislike Jews personally should not divert attention from the more serious implications of antisemitic politics.<sup>62</sup> A supreme *arriviste* and master politician, Lueger discovered in political antisemitism a magic

formula that could milk all the fears and insecurities of the Austrian middle classes. It was his prestige which made Austrian antisemitism truly respectable (*salonfähig*) and therefore all the more dangerous. In the last two decades of his life, Judeophobia was an integral part of Lueger's political activity, his speeches, and electoral campaigns; worse still, he did nothing to sanction or control the "exterminationist" vocabulary of rabidly antisemitic lieutenants like Ernst Schneider, Hermann Bielohlawek, or the Christian-social priest Josef Scheicher. In a speech to the Vienna municipal council in December 1902, Bielohlawek insisted: "We want to destroy (*vernichten*) the Jews, we are not ashamed to say it."<sup>63</sup> A year earlier, Schneider had gleefully predicted a time when Jews would be "killed and burned." Monsignor Scheicher delivered speeches in the lower Austrian Landtag which were no less genocidal in their implications. None of this incitement elicited a word of disapproval from Dr. Karl Lueger.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, he defended some of the more fanatical Christian-social antisemites, including Father Deckert, to whom the mayor even awarded a special medal.<sup>65</sup>

In all of Lueger's hate campaigns against journalists, liberals, socialists, freemasons, or Magyars, linking them with "the Jew" was a constant and central thread. Hence his generous use of antisemitic amalgams like *papierne Juden* (paper Jews), *Judenliberalismus*, *Judensozi*, *Judenfreimaurer* (Jew-masons), or "Judeo-Magyars"—a slogan which probably won him thousands of votes thanks to the deep unpopularity of Hungarians in Vienna. Such verbal aggression which depicted the Jews as a negative, parasitic, and destructive element, anticipated Nazi rhetoric. So, too, did Lueger's fundamental slogan before his election in 1897—that Austria was entirely under "Jewish rule" (*Judenherrschaft*).<sup>66</sup>

Even as mayor, Lueger could at times be very threatening towards the Jewish community. In a notorious speech of 4 December 1905, following the revolutionary agitation in Russia, Lueger specifically warned the Jewish community of Vienna

not to admit the Social Democratic revolutionaries. I warn the Jews, most expressly; for the same thing could perhaps happen as in Russia.

We in Vienna are antisemites, but we are certainly not inclined to murder and violence. But if the Jews should threaten our fatherland, then we will show no mercy.<sup>67</sup>

These intimidating remarks were greeted with great applause. A few days later in a municipal council session, Lueger identified not only the leaders of

the 1905 Russian Revolution as almost exclusively Jewish, but also those who headed the Austrian Social Democracy:

It may well be that one or the other of the gentlemen is baptized...but it is certain that many are absolutely authentic Jews.... [T]he one who is supposed to be baptized—Dr. [Victor] Adler—is undoubtedly recognizable to anyone as a Jew.<sup>68</sup> Lueger not only defended this act of incitement as “completely correct” and patriotic but even insisted that never in his whole life had he committed any injustice towards a Jew. Indeed, he had protected the Viennese Jews “very often...against the will of my party.”<sup>69</sup> It is difficult to know if Lueger was sincere about this apologia, but there is certainly ample room for skepticism. Ultimately, however, his motivation is less important than his public role in consolidating a Christian-social, antisemitic tradition that would continue to inject its venom long after the end of his mayoralty. Only the limits imposed by imperial authority, the rule of law, and Kaiser Franz Joseph’s personal repulsion at extremist antisemitism prevented more violent manifestations of bigotry and discrimination against Jews before 1914.

The Lueger era sowed the seeds for the more vicious Christian-social and pan-German Jew-baiting of the First Austrian Republic. One acute observer, who perceived the writing on the wall as early as the Austrian elections of April 1895 was Theodor Herzl: He saw Lueger waving to the crowd outside a polling booth in the fourth district of Vienna and noted in his diary:

A man next to me said with tender warmth but with a quiet voice: “That is our Führer!” Actually, these words showed me more than all declamation and abuse how deeply antisemitism is rooted in the hearts of these people.<sup>70</sup>

#### NOTES

1. See P. G. Pulzer, “The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria,” in *The Jews of Austria*, ed. by Josef Frankel (London 1967), 429-43.

2. John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. The Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897* (Chicago 1980) provides a comprehensive analysis of the link between artisan distress and the rise of economic antisemitism in the Austria of the 1880s.

3. On Canon Rohling and Eisenmenger, see Jakob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction* (Cambridge, Mass. 1980).

4. Dirk van Arkel, *Antisemitism in Austria* (Leiden 1966), 20.
5. Ibid., 27.
6. Joseph Deckert, *Der ewige Jude "Ahasver"* (Vienna 1894) and idem, *Semitische und antisemitische Schlagworte in Doppelbeleuchtung* (Vienna 1899).
7. Thomas G. Masaryk, *Die Notwendigkeit der Revision des Polnaer Processes* (Vienna 1899).
8. William A. Jenks, *The Austrian Electoral Reform of 1907* (New York 1950).
9. Idem, *Austria under the Iron Ring 1879-1893* (Charlottesville, Va. 1965), 18.
10. Ludwig Brugel, *Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna 1922), 3: 293.
11. Paul Martin, ed., *Technische Führer durch Wien. Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein* (Vienna 1910), 563.
12. Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens* (Vienna 1933), 203.
13. See Van Arkel, *Antisemitism in Austria*, 27-30.
14. As a disciple of Friedrich Schlegel and Adam Müller, Vogelsang revived the medieval concept of a *Ständestaat* in which workers were to be rewarded with a “just wage” and protected by the State from exploitation.
15. See Otto Bauer, “Das Ende des Christlichen Sozialismus,” *Der Kampf* (1910-1911), 4: 393-98.
16. Wiard Klopp, *Die sozialen Lehren des Freiherrn von Vogelsang. Grundzüge einer christlichen Gesellschafts- und Volkswirtschaftslehre* (St. Pölten 1894), 631.
17. Ibid., 132, 190.
18. Ibid., 194.
19. Friedrich Funder, *Von Gestern ins Heute* (Vienna 1952), 25.
20. Adam Wandruszka, “Die Drei Lager,” *Geschichte der Republik Österreich*, (Vienna 1954), 292ff.
21. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London 1967), rev. ed., 238.
22. Carl E. Schorske, “Schoenerer,” in *The Responsibility of Power* (London 1968), 235ff.; Andrew G. Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools. Georg Ritter von Schoenerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley 1975).
23. Ibid.
24. E. Pichl, *Georg Schoenerer und die Entwicklung des Alldeutschstums in der Ostmark* (Oldenburg 1938), 1: 85.
25. Ibid. 2: 320; Paul Molisch, *Geschichte der deutschnationalen Bewegung in Österreich von ihren Anfängen bis zum Zerfall der Monarchie* (Jena 1926).
26. E. v. Rudolf, *Georg Ritter von Schönerer. Der Vater des politischen Antisemitismus* (Munich 1936), 87.

27. For the Linz Program see Pichl, *Georg Schoenerer*, 1: iiiff.; Klaus Berchthold, ed., *Österreichische Parteiprogramme 1868-1966* (Munich 1967), 198-203.
28. Pichl, *Georg Schoenerer*, 1:251; Berchthold, *Österreichische Parteiprogramme*, 203-204.
29. Jenks, *Austria under the Iron Ring*, 141-57.
30. Van Arkel, *Antisemitism in Austria*, 145-64.
31. See Robert S. Wistrich, “Victor Adler: A Viennese Socialist against Philosemitism,” *Wiener Library Bulletin* 27, n.s. no. 32 (1974): 26-33; idem, “Socialism and Antisemitism in Austria before 1914,” *Jewish Social Studies* 37 (Summer-Fall 1975): 323-32.
32. Van Arkel, *Antisemitism in Austria*, 88-90.
33. See Robert S. Wistrich, “Karl Lueger and the Ambiguities of Viennese Antisemitism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 45, nos. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1983): 251-62.
34. Friedrich Austerlitz, “Karl Lueger,” *Neue Zeit* 2 (1900-1901): 38.
35. Austerlitz, “Die Wahlen in Wien,” *Neue Zeit* 29, no. 1 (1911): 310.
36. See Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (London 1980), 118-20, 132-33 on post-rational politics.
37. John Weiss, *Conservatism in Europe 1770-1945: Traditionalism, Reaction and Counter-Revolution* (London 1977), 119.
38. Ibid., 118. In point of fact, Lueger’s career, far from “emerging” in 1907, was virtually finished. The classification of his movement as belonging to the “Radical Right” is problematic. I prefer to see it as a populist brand of political Catholicism.
39. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London 1939), 95.
40. See Karl R. Stadler, “Austria,” in *European Fascism*, ed. by S. J. Woolf, (London 1968), 88-110; A. Wandruszka, “Österreichische politische Struktur,” in *Geschichte der Republik Österreich*, ed. by H. Benedikt (Vienna 1954).
41. *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Reichsrates*, 17th Session (22 Oct. 1901), VII-VIII, 7,044.
42. For a shrewd assessment of Lueger in this context, see Ilse Barea, *Vienna* (London 1966).
43. Sigmund Mayer, *Die Wiener Juden: Kommerz, Kultur, Politik 1700-1900* (Vienna 1917), 475.
44. Wilhelm Ellenbogen, “Der Wiener Antisemitismus,” *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 1 (Sept. 1899): 18-19.
45. Ibid., 419.
46. Ibid., 421.
47. Ibid., 422.
48. Austerlitz, “Karl Lueger,” 40-41.

49. Ibid., 43.
50. For a systematic analysis of Austrian Social Democratic attitudes to Lueger and Christian socialism in general, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London 1982), 250-98.
51. Kurt Skalnik, *Dr. Karl Lueger: Der Mann zwischen den Zeiten* (Munich 1954), 82.
52. For example, see Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 281-82.
53. These tendencies are well reflected in Arthur Schnitzler's classic *Zeitroman*, which deals extensively with the "Jewish Question"; see his *Der Weg ins Freie* (Vienna 1907).
54. A point made by John Boyer, "Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 26 (1981): 139-40.
55. See Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna*, an important contribution to understanding the class background of Christian socialism and its cultural origins.
56. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 120.
57. Ibid., 133.
58. Ibid., 143-44.
59. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews*, 250-98; idem, "Austrian Social Democracy and Antisemitism, 1890-1914," *Jewish Social Studies* 38 (Summer-Fall 1975): 323-33.
60. See Boyer, "Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews," 137, where he slightly overstates the point. Also see Earl Edmonson, *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics 1918-1936* (Athens, Ga. 1978), on the primacy of anti-Marxism rather than antisemitism in post-1918 Austro-fascism.
61. Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger. Mayor of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit 1990), 171-207.
62. John Boyer, "Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 13, 26 (1981): 126-27, takes a more benign view. It is worth noting that Lueger's first mentor and close collaborator in liberal-left municipal politics (before he became an antisemite) was the Hungarian Jew Ignaz Mandl. Mandl himself indulged in antisemitism in the late 1870s.
63. See Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 174, 354.
64. Josef Scheicher, *Aus dem Jahre 1920—Ein Traum* (St. Pölten 1900), 60, wrote about killing "300 Jews and 20 Aryans in one day" in Vienna and eliminating thousands more in Poland and the Ukraine.
65. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 176.

66. *Protokolle*, 7 Dec. 1892, 8300.
67. Quoted in Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 200.
68. *Amtsblatt*, no. 99 (12 Dec. 1905), 2610. Victor Adler, the founder of the Austrian Social Democracy, converted to Protestantism at the age of 26.
69. *Ibid.*, 2611.
70. *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. by Raphael Patai (New York 1960), 1: 244.

## CHAPTER 14

### **Adolf Hitler: The Making of an Antisemite**

Karl Kraus once described fin-de-siècle Austria as “an experimental station for the end of the world.” This is especially true of Vienna, the capital of this multi-ethnic state and the cosmopolitan heart of the supranational dynasty which ruled the Habsburg Empire. Even as it became the source of an extraordinary explosion of cultural creativity, Vienna was also incubating in its womb the seed of the Nazi catastrophe that would overtake Central Europe and its Jewish population in the 20th century.

In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler tells us that as a boy he had taken part “in the struggle of nationalities in old Austria,” learning to distinguish sharply between the “black-yellow” dynastic patriotism (loyalty to the House of Habsburg) which he totally repudiated and the pan-German nationalism (black-red-gold) which he wholeheartedly embraced. In his teens, Hitler vividly recalled, “Heil was our greeting, and instead of the imperial anthem we sang *Deutschland über alles*, despite warnings and punishments.”<sup>1</sup> Hitler would never abandon this ultra-nationalist German radicalism of his youth with its subversive, revolutionary struggle against the Habsburg State. But he was shrewd enough to grasp the serious tactical errors which his pan-German predecessors had made. Thus, he argued that the German nationalists had neglected the “social question” and the need to win over the broad masses. The frontal assault on the Catholic Church by the Pan-German leader, Georg von Schoenerer, had been a huge mistake and his followers wasted much of their energy in a futile parliamentary struggle. Schoenerer was a spent force politically by 1907, when the 18-year-old Hitler first settled in Vienna. But pan-German hatred of the Habsburgs, Slavophobia, and racist antisemitism did leave a deep impression on the young man from Linz. These core beliefs were all too evident in Hitler’s diatribes against the *Völkerbabylon* (Babel of peoples) of Austria-Hungary and the hybrid character of Vienna which doomed it in Hitler’s eyes to self-destruction. In *Mein Kampf*, he declared himself to be truly sickened

by the whole mixture of Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Serbs and Croats, and everywhere, the eternal mushroom (*Spaltpilz*) of humanity—Jews and more Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Turn-of-the-century Vienna (“this ancient site of German culture”), so Hitler tells us in his semi-autobiography, had been corroded by a “foreign mixture of peoples,” by the “poison of foreign nations gnawing away at the body of our nationality.”<sup>3</sup> But was there a more personal source of such xenophobia and antisemitic prejudice? Did the adolescent Hitler become a Judeophobe only *after* his arrival in the Imperial capital in 1907 or had he imbibed his racism earlier as a teenager in Linz or even from his parental home? Were these hatreds the product of personal failure and the humiliation growing out of his degraded social status in Vienna? Surely it was significant that the Habsburg metropolis represented in Hitler’s memory “the most difficult if also the most thorough school of my life”—a source of undying hatred but also of political education.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler’s Vienna was not only the glittering, hedonistic and “decadent” capital of a declining European Great Power but also—by his own account—the cradle of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Yet, at the time, Hitler was a Nobody, not even a member of any political party, movement, or organization. Not surprisingly, there are more than a few gaps and contradictions in the version of these years which appeared in *Mein Kampf*—a narrative written in prison and published in 1924, a year after the failed Munich *putsch*, when Hitler was already a prominent German politician.

Some historians have tended to discount or play down the importance of prewar Vienna in the formation of Hitler’s manic and deadly antisemitism.<sup>5</sup> Others, like Brigitte Hamann, who does not seriously doubt that Austria was the matrix of Hitler’s personality and politics, rightly suggest that his attitude to the Jews in pre-1914 Vienna was more ambivalent than he implied.<sup>6</sup> Her research demonstrated that the “fanatical antisemite” and would-be “artistic genius” who was desperately scratching out a living by painting watercolors and meticulous picture postcard views of Vienna, was largely dependent on Jewish middlemen and art-dealers to buy them. Hitler’s closest partner in his “art-production” of those years, was a Hungarian Jew, Josef Neumann, with whom he enjoyed a close relationship. Hitler’s relations were also reasonably good with other Jews in the doss-house for the homeless where “he had joined the tramps, winos, and down-and-outs in society’s basement.”<sup>7</sup>

According to one eyewitness of the period, Reinhold Hanisch, Hitler occasionally expressed admiration in his Viennese period for the tenacity of

the Jews in preserving their “racial cohesion” against continual persecution.<sup>8</sup> He even registered distaste for the medieval blood-libel charges against Jews, repeatedly provoked by Catholic clerics in turn-of-the-century Austria. He also despised the hypocrisy of Christian-social demagogues in denouncing “Jewish usury,” while ignoring parallel forms of Christian exploitation. The young Hitler seems to have praised the music of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Offenbach as well as the lyricism of Heine’s poetry.<sup>9</sup> His boyhood friend, August Kubizek (who traced Hitler’s antisemitism back to Linz and his father’s house) apparently recalled that when they were living together in Vienna, Hitler took the defense of Gustav Mahler. The composer, a converted Bohemian Jew who rose to the dizzying pinnacle of being appointed Director of the Imperial-Royal Hofoper in 1897, had become the object of incessant racist attacks in Vienna which eventually drove him to America. It seems that the young Hitler admired Mahler’s renditions of Wagnerian opera and did not share the bigoted views of the composer’s antisemitic adversaries in Vienna.<sup>10</sup>

Even the decisive role which Wagner played in Hitler’s imagination as prophet, seer, and artistic genius, did not automatically make him an antisemite. True, watching Wagner’s early opera, *Rienzi*, at the Linz Opera House, may well have convinced the young Hitler that he was predestined to lead the German people from servitude to freedom.<sup>11</sup> In Linz, Vienna, or later in Bayreuth, listening to Wagner’s operas almost always intoxicated and bewitched Hitler, transporting him into a mystical universe of Germanic myth, of drama and spectacle, titanic struggle and salvation, victory and death.<sup>12</sup> Wagner’s themes of betrayal, sacrifice, redemption, and heroic death were what hypnotized him. He passionately identified with heroes like Rienzi, Tannhäuser, and Siegfried as he did with chaste saviors like Lohengrin and Parsifal. But in his Viennese years there is no hard evidence that Wagner’s Judeophobia had turned Hitler on.

Subsequently, Adolf Hitler would point to Wagner as one of the key sources for understanding National Socialism and provided his own convoluted racist interpretation of works like *Parsifal*. The similarity between the hysterical views he put forward in *Mein Kampf* on the “parasitic” role of Jews in modern culture and those of Richard Wagner are obvious enough.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Wagner’s bigotry cannot by itself explain why Hitler was drawn to an antisemitic world-view. There is an interesting parallel here with Theodor Herzl, who drew poetic inspiration from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* while composing his *Judenstaat* in Paris in the spring of 1895. Twelve years

earlier, in 1883, Wagner's death had sparked a pan-German and antisemitic student demonstration in Vienna led by Hermann Bahr, which prompted Herzl's exit from the German-Austrian student fraternity, Albia. Despite the importance of this traumatic episode in his "conscious" mind, Wagner's operas had no intrinsic causal connection for Herzl to the issue of antisemitism. Wagnerism, for Herzl as for Hitler, had more to do with the power of myth, theatricality, make-believe, and fascination for the mass spectacle. Wagnerian opera appealed to the love of the grandiose, to secret yearnings for empowerment, and the promise of the self-made hero who mysteriously embodies the unconscious impulses of the *Volksgeist*.

So when did Hitler become an antisemite? August Kubizek insisted that when he first met the fifteen-year-old Hitler in Linz, "his antisemitism was already pronounced"; for example, when they passed a little synagogue in Linz, young Adolf allegedly told him that "this should not be there."<sup>14</sup> At the Technical School in Linz, according to Kubizek, Hitler's pan-German teachers "made no bones about acknowledging their hatred of the Jews in front of their pupils...."<sup>15</sup> In Kubizek's recollection, his adolescent friend was already a passionate follower of Schoenerer, fully aware of the *political* aspects of the "Jewish Question" well before he set foot in Vienna. Similarly, his hatred of the Czechs was already palpable in Linz as part of his general pan-German credo. Hitler's experiences in Vienna might well have deepened both his anti-Jewish prejudices and his Czechophobia but they did not give birth to them. Kubizek went further still in his memoir, asserting that Hitler's pan-German antisemitic world-view was identical with that of his father—despite the latter being an Austrian customs official and loyal servant of the Habsburg State. This claim stands in clear contradiction to Hitler's own account, which presented his father as a "liberal." Not only that, but he claimed in *Mein Kampf* never to have even heard the word "Jew" pronounced at home while his father was alive. In a curriculum vitae sent to an unknown recipient in 1921, the 32-year-old Hitler wrote as follows: "though I came from a fairly cosmopolitan family, the school of harsh reality turned me into an antisemite within a year."<sup>16</sup>

The Nazi leader spoke in *Mein Kampf* of his "conversion" from "weak-kneed cosmopolitan" to hardened antisemite as the most difficult and momentous "soul-struggle" of his entire life. He retrospectively attributed this conversion to the "visual instruction of the Vienna streets"—to the victory of his head over his heart, and of reason (*Vernunft*) over sentimentality. In *Mein Kampf*, the adoption of antisemitism as a *Weltanschauung*

turns on his dramatized encounter with a sinister-looking caftan Jew in Vienna's *Innere Stadt* who represents the complete antithesis of the German-Austrian Catholic Gentile.

Once as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought. For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed that man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form: Is this a German? ... Wherever I went, I began to see Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity. Particularly the Inner City and the district north of the Danube canal swarmed with a people which even outwardly had lost all resemblance to Germans....<sup>17</sup>

The ghetto Jew that Hitler describes here is almost certainly hassidic—probably a recent Orthodox Jewish immigrant from Galicia—one of around 50,000 *Ostjuden* who in 1908 would have made up approximately one quarter of Vienna's Jews.<sup>18</sup> Hitler certainly encountered many such caftan-clad Jews in the Brigittenau district of Vienna where his men's hostel was located. In Linz, on the other hand, as Hitler himself recalled, there were no *Ostjuden* at all.<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, there were few Jews of any description and those whom he did know, like the Hitler family doctor, Edouard Bloch, must have seemed thoroughly German to him. The young Hitler very much respected the charitable and kindly Dr. Bloch who had treated his mother Klara until her early death in 1907.

Dr. Bloch was born in 1872 in Frauenberg near Budweis in Southern Bohemia. In the 1890s, he studied at the medical faculty of Prague University before moving to Linz to establish a general practice in Upper Austria in 1901. The city in which he settled at the age of twenty-nine would remain his home until the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria which resulted in his departure for the United States in 1940. He first met young Adolf Hitler in 1907 when his fifty-year-old mother Klara came to see him, complaining of intense pains in her chest. The diagnosis of a malignant (cancerous) growth, was, at that time, a certain death sentence, which could only be temporarily delayed by radical surgery. In his notes for an autobiography (posthumously published in 2002), Dr. Bloch recalled that after the operation on Klara, he drove to the apartment of the Hitler children, discussed the results with them, "and specially sought to console young Adolf, who was totally shattered." After their mother's illness, he continued to treat the whole family, including Adolf, "frequently

for several illnesses of short duration.” Bloch stressed that the 17-year-old Hitler “was in no way different from other young people.” He was however “his mother’s darling and idolized her.”<sup>20</sup> No one at the time (to use Dr. Bloch’s words) “could suspect in the least that someday he would embody all that is wicked.” On 21 December 1907, the Hitler family came to Bloch’s office, the day after the funeral, to thank the Jewish physician for all his efforts. “Adolf Hitler pressed my hand,” Dr. Bloch reports, “and said: ‘I will be eternally grateful to you, doctor.’”<sup>21</sup>

Subsequently, when the orphaned Hitler moved to the Habsburg capital, Bloch received two cards from his former patient. The first, with a view of Vienna, read: “Most cordial greetings from Vienna, your always grateful Adolf Hitler.” The second postcard showed a monk holding a glass with bubbling champagne and was inscribed “Cheers, Happy New Year.” The message below read: “The Hitler family sends you their most cordial greetings for a Happy New Year. In eternal gratitude, Adolf Hitler.”<sup>22</sup> After the *Anschluss* these postcards aroused the interest of the Gestapo who visited him in Linz and took away the documents for “safekeeping.”

Bloch was cordially treated by the Gestapo and the Nazi authorities in Linz, evidently on Hitler’s orders. He apparently regarded Dr. Bloch very much as an “exception Jew” and this fact was known to his Austrian followers even before Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933. There is a particularly striking passage in Bloch’s memoir:

Hitler used to receive his loyal followers from Upper Austria in his summer residence at the Obersalzberg, located on the frontier between Bavaria and Salzburg and easily accessible from Linz. During one of these gatherings Hitler asked, “How is my old family physician Dr. Bloch? Is he still practicing? Yes, he is an exception, an *Edeljude*. If all Jews were like that, there would be no Jewish problem.” Again, the favorite phrase of the Jew-haters! Of course, several of my patients, all members of the illegal [Nazi] party, repeated the comments of the “Führer” verbatim to me.<sup>23</sup>

Driving triumphantly through Linz on 12 March 1938 following the German invasion of Austria, Hitler seems to have asked about Dr. Bloch after his arrival at City Hall.<sup>24</sup> The local *Mitteilungen des deutschvölkischen Turnvereins Urfahr* (Linz) wrote the following lines about the family doctor:

The physician Dr. Bloch, who still lives in Linz, treated Frau Hitler conscientiously and with compassion, despite her poor situation. For

his readiness to help and for his sympathy, Adolf Hitler gave Herr Dr. Bloch a landscape he painted.<sup>25</sup>

After the *Anschluss*, and until his departure for America, the Gestapo instructed Bloch's landlord and various local Nazi officials to treat him as an "Aryan," sparing him the humiliation, degradation, and ridicule inflicted upon other Jews in Linz. According to his memoir, he was repeatedly asked if he was really a Jew. "They wanted to make me an "Honorary Aryan" so that I could pursue a brilliant career."<sup>26</sup> Despite his refusal of this offer, Dr. Bloch was allowed to hold on to his apartment, enabling him to help other Jews in distress; he could keep his passport and telephone, he was given a ration card for clothing, and did not have to stand in line for food. Upon his emigration, Dr. Bloch even received a warm testimonial from the young Nazi doctor responsible for public health in the Gauleitung Oberdonau, Dr. Wimmer.<sup>27</sup>

These marks of favor stood in stark contrast to the fanatical antisemitism which Hitler imposed as state doctrine and public policy in Germany and Austria. Dr. Bloch was also helped by former patients in Linz who continued to frequent and assist him, despite being Nazi party members. Thus he could send weekly food packages to some of his sick co-religionists in Vienna and lodge Jews who had nowhere else to stay in his apartment. His memoir provides a vivid personal account of the "misery and misfortune of my brothers...the depth and gravity of their pain."<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Bloch was well integrated in Linz, but no assimilationist. From his father he had acquired extensive knowledge of Jewish history and he imbibed a marked love of Judaism from his pious and charitable mother. As a young man, he had suffered from antisemitism at the *Gymnasium* in Budweis and then at the German University of Prague in the 1890s.

It was not that easy for a Jewish doctor to find a place in the clinic because a number of professors knew how to make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Jews to get into their clinics. These were the antisemitic university teachers. Their attitude became obvious not only during university examinations but also in the filling of vacant teaching positions.<sup>29</sup>

Linz had long been a hotbed of German national antisemitism, yet Dr. Bloch appeared to suffer relatively little from its effects, once he had established himself there in 1901. It was noticeably less violent than the incitement during his university years in the Czech lands.

Within a year of his arrival in Linz, Bloch was elected to the executive council of the local *Kultusgemeinde*. His co-religionists evidently esteemed his Jewish learning, religious life-style, humanitarian attitude (he served pro bono as a doctor for the poor), and rhetorical abilities.<sup>30</sup> Though not strictly Orthodox, he regularly went to the synagogue and in every way sought “to uphold the ethical laws of Judaism.”<sup>31</sup> In 1910, Dr. Bloch was accepted into the B’nai B’rith lodge “Wien” in Vienna. In his emphasis on the humanitarian side of Judaism, Dr. Eduard Bloch was close to the outlook of a much better-known contemporary physician and member of the Viennese lodge, Sigmund Freud. However, *Obermedizinalrat* Bloch felt no hostility towards Judaism as a religion, regarding the Torah as a “precious diamond whose innumerable facets reflect the temporal and the eternal.”<sup>32</sup> It was, he wrote, the “eternally greening tree of life” which contained “magnificent ethical laws that shall become the guiding star of our earthly existence.”<sup>33</sup>

The thirty-five-year-old Jewish physician from Bohemia was clearly not the “assimilated,” Europeanized Jew, briefly evoked in all the existing biographies of Hitler. Though a Torah-true Jew, unbendingly loyal to his community and faith, he was fully conversant with German and classical culture. He was, indeed, the exact opposite of the alien-looking caftan Jew depicted in *Mein Kampf*—a creature who looked and smelled *different* (“you could tell these were no lovers of water”). Hitler’s *Ostjude* was the quintessential stranger, whose “otherness” raised the troubling question “Who is a German?”—a source of constant anxiety for outsiders from the Austrian backwoods. This existential doubt seemed particularly acute in a racially mixed city like Vienna. In Brigittenau itself, around 1910, nearly 80% of the population in the district were (like Hitler) new immigrants from the provinces; only 17,200 out of the 71,500 inhabitants in the area where he temporarily resided could even claim Vienna as their legal residence.

Hitler’s hysterical response to the semi-mythical *Ostjude*, it must be said, has a somewhat forced ring to it. The “primal scene” which he describes either never happened that way or was distorted by him for propagandist effect. Psychologically, however, it does reflect the characteristic trauma of the *déclassé* from the provinces disoriented by metropolitan life, threatened by class struggle, feminism, modernity, liberal democracy, and the “nothingness” of becoming a miserable drop-out. The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, rejecting his application in 1908, had ended his dreams of becoming a professional architect or painter. A few months earlier, he had lost his beloved mother. Moreover, it was apparent by 1909 that he was

unwilling and unable to secure a regular job in Vienna. Engulfed by an overwhelming sense of personal failure and latent paranoia, the down-and-out young Hitler began to indulge in tirades of hate against the whole world, especially the “ethnic babel” of the Vienna streets and the foreign-looking Jews.<sup>34</sup>

Many years later, in 1931, Hitler still expressed a visceral hatred of Vienna with his special revulsion reserved for its “judaization” and racial miscegenation. In an interview with a German newspaper editor, he warned:

There can be no true racial policy which does not safeguard our biological Aryan roots. We intend one day to give this ideological principle the force of law. Even today our youth is crying with good reason: Germany awake, down with Jewry! In Vienna I learnt to hate the Jews. Any license given the Vienna Jews was tantamount to an increase in the number of destructive parasites.... Vienna has turned itself into the metropolis of decay and filth. People there sponsor books opposing the reawakening of Germany. Obviously we shall burn this rubbish and have a clean-up in Vienna as in Berlin.<sup>35</sup>

After the Nazi seizure of power, Hitler confided to Hermann Rauschning that “Slav mestizos” and Jews had overrun Vienna which was “no longer a German city.”<sup>36</sup> With the advent of the *Ständestaat* (the Christian corporate State) in 1934, it was evident to him that “the priests and the Jews ruled Austria”; they would have to be expelled if the easy-going, lazy, and *gemütlich* Austrians were ever to be effectively incorporated into a Greater German Reich. Hitler recalled his father’s warning words that Vienna before 1900 had been ruled by a liberal clique, “a mongrel crew which had collected in the capital” and frustrated any prospect of a genuine pan-German policy.<sup>37</sup> In March 1938, Hitler himself denounced and ended this gigantic historic “aberration,” by forcibly annexing Austria to the bosom of *Grossdeutschland*. In a speech in Linz, he hailed the *Anschluss* for returning “that part [of the Germanic tribes] which in the course of our history had lost its connection with the Reich.”<sup>38</sup> This “second unification” of Germany in 1938 obliterated the name of Austria from the map, to be replaced by the Nazified term of *Ostmark*. Hitler divided the country into seven *Gaue* (districts or regions) with “lower Austria” being reduced to the appellation “lower Danube.”<sup>39</sup> All manifestations of Austrian patriotism were systematically suppressed by the Nazis. Cosmopolitan, “judaized,” and “slavicized” Vienna was ruthlessly downgraded as a *Weltstadt* (world city) for having betrayed the cause of *Deutschtum*. Nor was it an accident that

during the war years after 1939, Hitler repeatedly spoke of his plans to transform Linz into a great capital of art which would replace Vienna as “the new metropolis on the Danube.”<sup>40</sup>

Hitler’s antisemitism originated in no small measure from this narrowly provincial and anti-modernist hatred for Vienna. It was also influenced by the *Angst*-ridden racist philosophies developed in the Habsburg capital by writers as diverse as the Teutomaniac Englishman Houston S. Chamberlain, the polyvalent mystic Guido von List, the eccentric occultist Lanz von Liebenfels, and extremist pan-German followers of Schoenerer. These racist authors fulminated with horror and indignation against the big city, multiculturalism, the melting-pot, miscegenation, soulless modernity, and the sterile, abstract rationalism with which they associated the Jews.<sup>41</sup> Like Hitler, all of these bigoted dilettantes had only the vaguest notion about the extraordinary creative vitality of fin-de-siècle Vienna against which they so venomously railed. The reader of *Mein Kampf* will find no references by its semi-literate author to the works of modernist “Jewish” writers and artists like Schnitzler, Zweig, Beer-Hoffmann, Altenberg, Karl Kraus, Schoenberg, or Freud; and no glimmer of appreciation for avant-garde “Gentile” artists and architects like Otto Wagner, Klimt, Schiele, or Kokoschka. For Hitler, modernism was a closed book. He remained to the end a petty-bourgeois philistine in his aesthetic tastes, an inveterate addict of the monumental, neoclassical Ringstrasse style of architecture, and a morbid hater of the artistic avant garde.<sup>42</sup>

A particularly striking feature of Hitler’s Judeophobia was his intensely puritanical reaction against the prevailing hedonism in sexual mores. It was in Vienna that he had discovered the scale of female prostitution for the first time, as well as other social problems like housing shortages and mass destitution. Disgusted by “white slavery,” vice, and homosexuality, terrified by the danger of infection and venereal disease, deeply repressed in his own sexual drives (there were no women in Hitler’s life in Linz or Vienna), he exhibited a typical Victorian prudery in such matters.<sup>43</sup> Soon he was following in the footsteps of other Viennese antisemites before him and echoing the lurid reports in the antisemitic *Deutsches Volksblatt* that invariably linked Jews with sexual scandals, perversion, prostitution (“commercial love”), and syphilis.<sup>44</sup>

Kubizek describes in his memoir how the sultry eroticism of Habsburg Vienna clashed with young Hitler’s self-imposed, monk-like asceticism. In the sexual sphere, according to Kubizek, he would always exercise the

“utmost self-control,” never letting himself go and observing a strict moral code. The young man from Linz was literally obsessed with purity in body and soul. He constantly lectured Kubizek on the need to keep “the flame of life” unsullied and to encourage young people to produce healthy children for the survival of the *Volk*.<sup>45</sup> He would rage at the immorality and decadence around him, blasting Vienna as a den of iniquity that would have to be radically purged in the future. Under the influence of misogynist crackpots like the defrocked priest Lanz von Liebenfels, whose *Ostara* pamphlets were almost certainly part of his reading diet, Hitler came to see sexuality and lust as a dangerous weapon in the hands of inferior breeds. He shared von Liebenfels’s obsession that “lower races”—encouraged by the Jews—were seeking to corrupt and destroy the moral fiber of the “heroic” and incomparably creative white Aryan peoples.<sup>46</sup>

Hitler clearly internalized in Vienna some of the most lurid fantasies that would subsequently shape his apocalyptic antisemitism—ideas that included a “Jewish conspiracy” to bastardize the “Aryan” Germans through sexual permissiveness, intermarriage, prostitution, and the deliberate spreading of syphilis.<sup>47</sup> There are passages in *Mein Kampf* where Hitler describes with feverish indignation how in the streets of the Leopoldstadt (a Viennese district whose population was one-third Jewish) “one could witness hideous sexual proceedings that most German people could not even imagine.”<sup>48</sup> The Jew, so he concluded from his own outings to Vienna’s red-light districts, was the “cold-hearted, shameless, and calculating director of this revolting vice traffic in the scum of the city.”<sup>49</sup> Hitler’s repressed sexuality and his obsession with the possibility of tainted blood in his own family gave a sharper, more fanatical and irrational edge to such racist delusions.

There was, however, a calculating, *political* dimension to Hitler’s Judeophobia which derived from witnessing the success of Karl Lueger, the immensely popular Christian-Social Mayor of Vienna between 1897 and 1911. In Lueger, the young Hitler found his first model for leading the masses, though he detested the Habsburg patriotism and political Catholicism of the Viennese mayor.<sup>50</sup> When it came to issues of race or the “Jewish Question,” Hitler had no doubt that Schoenerer was “the better and more profound thinker.” Nevertheless, he admired the Christian-Social party for its “practical wisdom, and particularly its attitude toward socialism,” for “its shrewd judgment concerning the worth of the popular masses,” and for grasping that the political clout of the upper classes was waning.

[Lueger] devoted the greatest part of his political activity to the task of winning over those sections of the population whose existence was in danger.... He was also quick to adopt all available means for winning the support of long-established institutions, so as to be able to derive the greatest possible advantage from those old sources of power.<sup>51</sup>

Lueger, unlike Schoenerer, understood the great benefits that he could derive from cultivating the Catholic Church and winning the support of the urban lower clergy, country priests, nuns, and the still disenfranchised women of Austria. Hitler approvingly noted the flair for political propaganda displayed by Dr. Lueger and his lieutenants—"they were veritable virtuosos in working up the spiritual instincts of the broad masses of their adherents."<sup>52</sup> The Christian-Social party and its popular tribune demonstrated an astute tactical sense and remarkable intuitive understanding of human psychology. As Hitler saw it, Karl Lueger provided an important example for the German national renaissance through his skilful orchestration of mass politics, religious symbolism, and mobilization of the *Mittelstand* against a common enemy.

The elegant, handsome mayor of Vienna was the first democratic politician in Europe to successfully divert the economic discontents of artisans, craftsmen, small businessmen, shopkeepers, tailors, and shoemakers into antisemitic channels. It turned out that the anxieties of *der kleine Mann* could be magically dissipated by one simple catchword—"the Jew is to blame."<sup>53</sup> In a ferocious parliamentary speech of February 1890, Lueger revived this traditional scapegoat, denouncing the "power of the Jews," and even calling them "beasts of prey in human form."<sup>54</sup> He lashed out against their "domination" of big business, the metropolitan press, and municipal politics—proclaiming himself the liberator of the Christian *Volk* of Vienna, struggling to throw off the alien "Jewish yoke."<sup>55</sup> Lueger's followers repeatedly fulminated against "stock exchange Jews," "press Jews" (*Judenpresse*), the "ink Jews" (Jewish journalists), and immigrant "peddler Jews." Modernist art and women's liberation were also targeted as being "Jewish" to the core. The Christian-Social Mayor was particularly violent in his attacks on the "Judeo-Magyars." He consistently referred to Budapest as "Judapest"—a way to capitalize on popular Viennese antipathy towards the Hungarians—a loathing almost as intense as the prevailing antisemitism.<sup>56</sup>

By the time Hitler arrived in Vienna in 1907, Lueger's party directed most of its fire against the Jews and Austrian Social Democrats. In this political battle, the Christian-Social party relentlessly harped on the prominent

leadership role of Jewish intellectuals at the head of the Austrian labor movement. Antisemitism was a crucial lever in this anti-Marxist campaign. It was a highly successful tactic for Lueger in integrating the Christian-Social *Bürgertum* into a common front against “Reds” and Jews.<sup>57</sup> There is no doubt that the young Hitler (despite his distaste for political Catholicism) learned much from Lueger in the use of such demagogic ploys. After all, the Viennese Mayor was the first European politician to have proven the electoral efficacy of antisemitism as a battering-ram against the liberal social order and Marxist Social Democracy. Nevertheless, though admiring Lueger’s tactical skills and endorsing his anti-Marxism, Hitler despised the “apparent antisemitism” (*Scheinantisemitismus*) which in his view typified the Christian-social movement. He insisted that the half-hearted approach of Lueger to the “Jewish Question” lacked any firm ideological foundation. Baptism permitted Jews to preserve their property and wealth through the mere sprinkling of holy water. Moreover, the clerical prejudices underlying this form of antisemitism had no “scientific” justification in Hitler’s eyes. Lueger was, moreover, a shallow opportunist more interested in voters than in principle. It was merely a means to achieve power but not a goal in itself.

When the 24 year old Hitler left Vienna for Munich in 1913 in order to evade military service in the Austro-Hungarian Army, he described himself not only as an unrepentant pan-German, but as an “absolute antisemite” and a “mortal enemy of the entire Marxist world-view.” It was in Vienna, so he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, that he had “obtained the foundations for a philosophy in general and a political view in particular which later I needed to supplement only in detail, but which never left me.”<sup>58</sup> In retrospect, he came to view the great Habsburg metropolis as the graveyard of German ethnic homogeneity. No less significantly, Hitler had become convinced of the bond between the Jews and Marxist Social Democracy—a connection he first made in prewar Vienna. This was a highly relevant lesson in post-1918 Germany once fear of communism and hatred of the Jews became major factors in national politics.

The down-and-out bohemian artist of Habsburg Vienna was not, of course, the Hitler of History. In 1913 nobody, least of all the tramps in the Viennese doss-house could imagine the inhibited, highly temperamental drop-out as the future Führer of the Greater German Reich. No more than Count Berchthold, the arrogant Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary could conceive that a shadowy Russian exile called Herr Bronstein, playing chess at the Café Central in Vienna, would in October 1917—under the name of Leon

Trotsky—become the chief architect (with Lenin) of the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>59</sup> Hitler, no less than Mussolini, Lenin, and Trotsky, would have remained a marginal outsider without the carnage of the First World War. Nor could Hitler have ever reached his rendezvous with destiny without leaving Austria for Germany—the land which had focused all his hopes, aspirations, dreams, and political ideals ever since his adolescent years. He could never have risen to leadership without the “national humiliation” of German military defeat, the end of the Hohenzollern Monarchy, the Versailles Treaty, massive reparations, and the specter of Communist Revolution. In Germany after 1918 conditions had sufficiently ripened for a fully-fledged “Jewish conspiracy” legend—one in which Marxists, Jews, and pacifists could be accused of having stabbed the fatherland in the back. No less fateful was the apocalyptic atmosphere engendered by war, revolution, and violent counterrevolution—especially in Munich—which reinforced the horrors of mass death that had marked the First World War. This was the context in which Hitler would write in *Mein Kampf* that if “15,000 Hebrew corruptors” had been gassed as a preventive measure, “the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.”

Only in 1919 did the 30-year-old Hitler (then employed as a propaganda expert for the Reichswehr in Munich) publicly address the “Jewish Question” for the first time. It was the decisive year when he resolved to become a politician and commit himself to the salvation of Germany from “Jewish Bolshevism.” In Hitler’s eyes, the specter of Soviet Russia and an international Communist revolution (supposedly led by Jews) radically changed the configuration of international politics. The time was ripe for establishing a street-fighting, militant counter-movement to save Germany from chaos. A pseudo-messianic dimension—not evident during his Vienna years—now entered Hitler’s politics. It was undoubtedly linked to a new sense of providential mission and “chosenness” experienced after regaining his eyesight in the military hospital at Pasewalk at the end of 1918. This “miraculous” recovery from the effects of a gas attack seemed to trigger a mystical antisemitic chord in Hitler. In *Mein Kampf* he writes that in “defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.” The fate of the Jews had become the key to human history. The future of Germany and “Aryan” civilization would be determined by the battle against “Jewish” Marxism. Such messianic affirmations clearly suited the militant eschatological atmosphere of the early Weimar years much better than they fitted the fatalistic pessimism of late Habsburg Vienna. They reflected the



Adolf Hitler, 1921

Courtesy of Randall Bytwerk

AUS DER KAMPF BEGANN ...  
Aufnahme des Führers aus dem Jahre 1921, als Hitler endlich  
in immer gefährlicheren Versammlungen des deutschen  
Volks zum Widerstand aufgerufen

historic moment of 1918/19 in Munich which had first brought revolutionary Communists and anarchists to power and then produced a savage middle-class backlash against Jewish involvement in the upheavals. The panic-stricken conservative *Bürgertum* in Munich and the rural population of Catholic Bavaria would provide a natural constituency for the emerging Nazi movement.

The dramatic upheaval of 1919 helped turn Munich into an Eldorado of the radical Right. At the very moment when Hitler returned from the Great War to this “most German of all German cities,” Munich had mutated into a rallying ground for ultra-conservative Monarchists, anti-Republicans of every stripe, Bavarian separatists, extremist *völkisch* sects, and a bewildering variety of antisemitic leagues. The Nazis were initially only one small grouping in this motley parade of racists and reactionaries. Their “White” counterrevolution was to be the great *Revanche* against the short-lived Council of Workers and Soldiers led by the independent socialist Kurt Eisner (November 1918) and the answer to the Munich Soviet Republic of February 1919.<sup>60</sup> The Communist *putsch* was swiftly crushed by the Freikorps and military forces sent by the ruling Social Democrats from Berlin in the spring of that year. But the presence of Jewish intellectuals like Eisner, Gustav Landauer, Max Levien, Eugen Leviné, Erich Mühsam, and Ernst Toller in Munich or Leo Jogiches, Paul Levi, and Rosa Luxemburg in Berlin among the most prominent revolutionary leaders significantly hardened German antisemitism. This was one of the leitmotifs in Hitler’s early speeches on the “Jewish Question” which were filled with a new fanaticism.<sup>61</sup>

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Hitler became a genocidal antisemite some time between 9 November 1918 and May 1919 when the “White Terror” in Munich was finally victorious. By then, the *Judenfrage* had become an either-or issue of overriding importance for him—the neuralgic point of his political existence. 9 November 1918 was the date to which Hitler would constantly and obsessively refer on many subsequent occasions. It was *the* decisive experience, the matrix event which coincided in his mind with an unprecedented sequence of traumas; Germany’s defeat, the shame of military surrender, the end of the Monarchy, a Social-Democratic government in Berlin, and the threat of a Communist Revolution that would imitate the pattern of events in Soviet Russia and Hungary; only then came the decision to enter politics *in order to destroy the Jews*—who were made responsible for all of these national “disasters.” 9 November 1918 was for Hitler a *national disgrace* that had to be definitely expunged in order to wipe out the memory of “betrayal,” the stab-in-the-back by “internal enemies,” and the shameful Versailles Treaty which followed. For Hitler, the German defeat was forever linked with the Jews and Marxist revolution. The 9th of November was the seminal date that transformed all his prewar phobias about Jews into a lethal cocktail. In 1939, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Hitler told a leading Czech diplomat, that there would never again be another 9 November in German history—he would make sure of that by wiping out the Jews.<sup>62</sup>

As an angry young man in prewar Vienna, still dreaming of becoming a successful architect, Hitler’s racist credo may have seemed relatively harmless. All that changed once National Socialism became an organized



SS troops in Munich

Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem

movement with a political program, born out of the maelstrom of Communist Revolution and “White” Counter-Revolution that convulsed Munich in 1918–1919. It was in this cauldron of violence that a hitherto unknown, demobilized corporal found his voice and discovered an almost demonic gift for public speaking. The tone of his communications became ever harsher and more strident. In the beer-cellars of Munich a groundswell of *völkisch*-nationalist sentiment, anti-Marxism, and paranoid antisemitism began to propel the “Nobody of Vienna” forward and upward.

Nazism was the product of postwar German society on the edge of an abyss, threatened with extinction by the crushing burdens of reparations, rampant inflation, the “iniquitous” provisions of the Versailles Treaty, the threat of Communist revolution, and a chronic absence of national will or authority. What provided Hitler’s appeal with its dynamic edge was, however, less the objective situation than the intensity of the eschatological vision of impending doom and promise of ultimate redemption.<sup>63</sup> Hitler had become convinced that the resurgence of Germany and the destruction of the Jews were organically related processes. “There is no making pacts with Jews,” he declared in *Mein Kampf*, “there can only be the hard either-or.”<sup>64</sup> This *either-or*, which formed the central core of Hitler’s Nazi ideology was built on a fundamentalist and Manichean perception of the world. His struggle against the Jews was conceived from the outset as a war of the Forces of Light against a fiendish enemy, whose agents were alleged to be hell-bent on the destruction of Germany and the “Aryan” races. “The goal then was clear and simple,” as he told an audience in the Munich beer cellars

on 27 February 1925: “Fight the devil power that has hurled Germany into this misery. Fight Marxism as well as the spiritual supporter of this world pest and epidemic disease, the Jew....” There were only two possible outcomes in this life-and-death-struggle. “Either the enemy will walk over our corpses, or we will walk over his.”<sup>65</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler defined the task of National Socialism as one of opening the eyes of the people to “remind them again and again of the true enemy of our present-day world.” He demanded that the fight against the Jew in Germany become “a gleaming symbol of brighter days, to show other nations the way to salvation of an embattled Aryan humanity.”<sup>66</sup> In countless speeches he made it clear that to save the nation “the first thing to do is to rescue it from the Jew who is running our country.... We want to prevent our Germany from suffering, as Another did, the death upon the cross.”<sup>67</sup> From first to last, the war against the Jews—with its combination of Christian and neo-pagan motifs—was the most consistent theme of his career, “the master idea which embraces the whole span of his thought.”<sup>68</sup>

The Nazis undoubtedly inherited from the Christian Middle Ages their demonological view of Jews and Judaism as a satanic force and embodiment of universal evil.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike Christianity Nazism allowed no escape from Jewishness into conversion. The satanic evil was metamorphosed from a theological into an unchangeable racial essence. Biology became destiny. Unlike the medieval church, Hitler’s National Socialism knew no moral limits or boundaries. It did not require Jewish survival for eschatological purposes. On the contrary, it sought to spiritually *dejudaize* Christendom and make it physically *judenrein* (free of Jews). It is a fact that the perpetrators of Nazi crimes were without exception the baptized children of Christians. They grew out of a Christian culture which had over centuries nourished the anti-Jewish virus and was now unable to provide any antigens when the disease broke out in its most rabid anti-Christian form. However, the cruel truth is that, for all its underlying hostility to the established churches, National Socialism could not have emerged *without* Christianity and its accompanying anti-Jewish stereotypes.

This was particularly true in Catholic Bavaria, the cradle of the Nazi movement after the ill-fated Munich Soviet of 1919. Anti-Jewish religious traditions remained strong in the countryside and were typified by such popular festivals as the Oberammergau Passion Play which Hitler greatly admired. It was in this climate that Jesus Christ’s alleged “struggle against the Jews” became a model for the Nazi war against the materialistic “Jewish

spirit." It was "as a Christian," Hitler insisted, that he had a duty to see that society did not suffer the same collapse as the civilization of Antiquity, "which was driven to its ruin through this same Jewish people."<sup>70</sup> In April 1922, in Munich he had declared: "I would be no Christian...if I did not, as did our Lord 2000 years ago, turn against those by whom today this poor people is plundered and exploited."<sup>71</sup> Adopting the mask of militant Christianity, Hitler told his Bavarian audience:

In boundless love, as a Christian and a human being, I read the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in his might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was His fight against the Jewish poison. I realize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed His blood upon the Cross.<sup>72</sup>

The image of the stern Christ who "drove the enemies of every form of humanity out of the Temple of the Lord"—or of Jesus "the scourge," "the fist and the sword," appears frequently enough in these early Munich speeches.<sup>73</sup> No less prominent is the deicidal motif of the "Jewish hucksters" who killed "the great Nazarene."<sup>74</sup> In a speech in Munich in December 1926, Hitler even claimed Jesus as the first National Socialist.

The birth of the Man, which is celebrated as Christmas, has the greatest significance for National Socialists. Christ has been the greatest pioneer in the struggle against the Jewish world enemy. Christ was the greatest fighting nature, which ever lived on Earth.... The struggle against the power of capital was his life's work and his teaching, for which he was nailed to the cross by his arch-enemy the Jew. The task which Christ began but did not finish I will complete.<sup>75</sup>

Four years earlier he had sharply answered Count Lerchenfeld, a former Prime Minister of Bavaria, who had stated in a Landtag session that his feeling "as a man and a Christian" prevented him from being an antisemite. Hitler's reply was based on exactly the opposite premise. Precisely as a Christian he was *obliged* to be an antisemite;

I say my feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Saviour as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded only by a few followers, recognized those Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer, but as a fighter.<sup>76</sup>

Already in April 1921, Hitler had spoken of “the tragedy of the Germanic world that...Jesus was judaized, distorted, falsified, and an alien Asiatic spirit was forced on us. That is a crime we must repair.”<sup>77</sup> In his wartime table talk twenty years later, he was to return to the motif of the “Aryan” Jesus. In October 1941, for example, he described Christ as “a popular leader who took up his position against Jewry.” The Galilean, Hitler insisted, was not a Jew. His object was “to liberate His country from Jewish oppression. He set Himself against Jewish capitalism, and that’s why the Jews liquidated Him.”<sup>78</sup> On 13 December 1941—at a critical juncture in the Second World War—in the presence of Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, Goebbels, Terboren, and Reichsleiter Bouhler, Hitler reaffirmed: “Christ was an Aryan and St. Paul used his doctrine to mobilize the criminal underworld and thus organize a proto-Bolshevism.” In 1944, Hitler would again repeat the myth of the “Aryan Christ” as if it were fact:

Jesus was most certainly not a Jew. The Jews would never have handed one of their own people to the Roman courts; they would have condemned Him themselves. It is quite probable that a large number of the descendants of the Roman legionaries, mostly Gauls, were living in Galilee, and Jesus was probably one of them. His mother may well have been a Jewess. Jesus fought against the materialism of His age, and, therefore, against the Jews.<sup>79</sup>

This was a strange mixture of Catholic prejudice and sheer heresy. One might describe Hitler’s relationship to his boyhood faith as an atheist Catholicism without any trace of Christian ethics. In *Mein Kampf*, he recalled the early influence on him of the “mysterious artificial dimness of the Catholic churches,” the burning candles and incense. In his youth, he had perceived the Church as a past master in the arts of mass psychology and persuasion, gifts he later discerned in Karl Lueger and the Catholic populist party of late Habsburg Austria.<sup>80</sup> It was in prewar Austria that he first became convinced of the folly of open confrontation with the Catholic church—even though he deplored the way that it favored Slavic over German interests.<sup>81</sup> Hitler very deliberately avoided the pan-German hostility to Catholicism as a supra-national religion. He did not identify with the anticlerical *völkisch* movements in Hohenzollern and Weimar Germany. Unlike racist antisemites from a Protestant background such as Houston S. Chamberlain, Theodor Fritsch, or Alfred Rosenberg, who loathed Roman clerical dogma and intolerance, Hitler was more ambivalent. He even praised the hierarchical structure and authoritarian discipline of his childhood faith as

a model.<sup>82</sup> In the 1930s, Hitler told Hermann Rauschning that Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against German Catholics sixty years earlier had been a typically Protestant act of folly. Protestants simply did not understand the meaning of a church; their pastors were insignificant little people, and they did not have a great position to defend like Rome.<sup>83</sup> "The Catholic Church is a really big thing. Why, what an organization! It's something to have lasted nearly two thousand years. We must learn from it."<sup>84</sup> National Socialism was in his eyes the heir of Catholicism. "We, too, are a Church," Hitler insisted.<sup>85</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Nazi leader was persuaded that the fight against Ultramontanism waged by comrades like General Erich von Ludendorff (the bitterly anti-Catholic hero of the *völkisch* Right) was tactically disastrous. Those who introduced religious quarrels into the Nazi movement were "consciously or unconsciously" fighting for Jewish interests. They were worse traitors to their people "than any international Communist." For while Germans devoured themselves in religious quarrels, "the Jew destroys the racial foundation of our existence and thus destroys our people for all time."<sup>86</sup> The Jews themselves had never even constituted a religion but had always been "a people with definite racial characteristics."<sup>87</sup> Lacking any idealism or belief in a hereafter (an idea he picked up from his favorite philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer), Hitler was convinced that Jews were inherently incapable of religious faith. Economic, not ethical problems, the profitable life in this world and not the hereafter, was the essence of Talmudic teaching. Eighty years earlier, in 1844, Karl Marx—a Jewish convert to Protestantism (and founder of Communism)—had written something very similar.

Hitler's negation of Judaism in the early 1920s was strongly influenced by his spiritual mentor, the Bavarian Catholic poet and antisemite, Dietrich Eckart.<sup>88</sup> From Eckart he learned to see the universe in terms of an all-persuasive Gnostic dualism. There was a permanent battle between the forces of Light and Darkness, the spirit and the flesh, "Aryan" and Jew. Eckart's conviction that "the Jewish question is the chief problem of humanity, in which, indeed, every one of its other problems is contained,"<sup>89</sup> powerfully reinforced Hitler's radical antisemitism, giving it a more cosmic dimension. Eckart saw the Jewish menace as *the* key problem of German regeneration. Hitler looked up to him as a mystic, a seer, "an outstanding writer and thinker." He appropriated many of his ideas and sayings, expressing them in his own more direct and inimitably brutal manner.<sup>90</sup> In the early Hitler, one can find that strange but fateful combination of *völkisch* racism and Catholic mysticism, whose immediate source was Dietrich Eckart.

The Bavarian poet, like other traditionalist Catholics, regarded Christ as the incarnate revelation. The message of the Redeemer had, however, been overlaid and distorted by St. Paul with Jewish Old Testament teaching, from which all evils proceeded. It was the Jews who had deprived mankind of its soul through their cold materialism—the negation of the “Aryan” Christian belief in the immortality of the soul and eternal ideals. Building on the German philosophical heritage of Kant, Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, and the writings of the Viennese Jewish antisemite, Otto Weininger, Eckart presented the God of the Jews as “nothing but the projection of their innate essence.”<sup>91</sup> This jealous, vindictive, egoistic, and cruel God had promised the Israelites that “you shall devour all peoples”—a phrase that constantly recurs in Hitler’s speeches and was copied from Eckart. Jehovah was “the absolute master on earth, and they too have that in mind....”

Eckart regarded the spiritual *Verjudung* (judaization) of the German people as the central problem of the age. Capitalism, Bolshevism, and freemasonry were merely outward manifestations of this curse. In particular, he compared the situation of post-1918 Germany to that of the declining Roman Empire, whose collapse had been brought about by Jewry under the “cover” of Christianity.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, he saw salvation for the German *Volk* in a “positive” German Christianity mixed with national and socialist components. According to Eckart, early Christianity was built on the true communist principle of the “people’s community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*). National Socialism must revive the supremacy of the communal good over egoistic individualism, in opposition to the “Jewish” theory of laissez-faire liberalism—a mystification popularized by the German sociologist Werner Sombart and ardently embraced by Eckart.

The convergences between Eckart and Hitler were apparent in *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin*, a posthumously published conversation between the two men, which appeared in Munich in 1924. In this dialogue, Moses appears as the first leader of Bolshevism—the most recent form of an age-old Jewish conspiracy with its origins in the Old Testament and the exodus from Egypt.<sup>93</sup> According to Eckart and Hitler, the mass exodus of the Children of Israel as recounted in the Bible was the result of a revolutionary, terrorist assault on the Egyptian ruling classes, in which “Jewish-Bolshevik” agitators had successfully mobilized the Egyptian rabble. The slaying of the first-born of Egypt was supposedly part of a Jewish terror campaign aborted by “nationalist” Egyptians at the last minute—which led to the expulsion of the Jews together with the proletarian “rabble” (*Pöbelvolk*).

The conversations also dealt at some length with the problem of Christianity. Both Eckart and Hitler lashed out at St. Paul for his proto-Bolshevism:

He goes to the Greeks, to the Romans. And he takes them *his* “Christianity.” Something which can unhinge the Roman Empire. All men are equal! Fraternity! Pacifism! No more dignity! And the Jews triumphed!<sup>94</sup>

The Protestant Reformation, too, was interpreted as a Judeophile movement which *weakened* the German people by creating a denominational split in its ranks. Luther’s fight against Rome had been a truly fateful blunder which prepared the way for Jewry, instead of seizing the historic opportunity to unify the German people. Martin Luther was ultimately a victim of the Jews, who once again had managed to provoke fratricidal wars amongst the Gentiles. For this reason, the Jews responded positively to the Protestant Reformer, despite his later antisemitism.<sup>95</sup> Luther’s translation of the Old Testament into German had been a particularly disastrous action because it granted a Christian religious halo to the Jewish *Satansbibel*, thereby completely falsifying the meaning of the Scriptures.

Luther did eventually grasp the magnitude of his error and reversed his earlier call for tolerance. But it was already too late. The damage inflicted by his war on the Roman church had been done. Thus, while both Eckart and Hitler recognized in Luther a “great German” and a “powerful opponent of Jewry,” his career as a whole remained a terrible tragedy. Nor was Luther’s final solution to the “Jewish question”—to burn their synagogues, schools, and houses—of much help.<sup>96</sup> According to both Eckart and Hitler,

Burning them down would do us precious little good. Even if there had never been a synagogue or a Jewish school or the Old Testament, the Jewish spirit would still exist and exert its influence. It has been there from the beginning, and there is no Jew, not a single one, who does not personify it” (*der ihn nicht verkörperte*).<sup>97</sup>

The “Jewish spirit” (*der jüdische Geist*) would remain as a symbol of intellectual subversion and revolutionary upheaval. The Exodus from Egypt, early Christianity, the Reformation, and Bolshevism were all historical stages in its irresistible progress.

In the 1920s, Hitler would never have dared to openly proclaim that Christianity was an early prototype of “Jewish Bolshevism.” He knew this was political suicide. Instead, in appealing to Catholics, he emphasized

fervent nationalism, anti-Communism and his total opposition to Jewry, as well as an opaque “positive Christianity.” The Nazis claimed, for example, to be defenders of traditional religious values in Bavaria as well as representing the main barrier against godless Marxism. Hitler’s self-projection as a deeply religious figure and his conscious use of Christian imagery helped to reinforce this duplicity. Indeed, his core views on Christianity did not differ much from the violent anticlericalism of Rosenberg, Himmler, or Bormann. He believed that Christianity was basically finished, but for tactical reasons preferred to avoid any direct confrontation. He favored cultivating an outward veneer of preserving traditional German religious beliefs. Christmas and Easter would eventually become symbols of the “eternal renewal of our people” and the spirit of heroism and national freedom. Instead of worshipping the blood of the Savior, the masses would learn to “worship the pure blood of our people.” They would receive the fruits of the German soil as a “divine gift” and finally be liberated from clerical dogmas.

The peasant will be told what the Church has destroyed for him: the whole of the secret knowledge of nature, of the divine, the shapeless, the daemonic. The peasant shall learn to hate the Church on that basis.<sup>98</sup>

After the Nazi seizure of power, Hitler initially hoped that the Christian churches might join him in a common struggle against the Jews. In April 1933, in his first conversation as Reich Chancellor with the prominent Catholic Bishop Berning from Osnabrück, he explained that his own *Judenpolitik* was based on principles pursued for 1,500 years by the Catholic Church. Only in the modern liberal era had the Church begun to lose its capacity to discern the Jewish danger.<sup>99</sup> Subsequently, in a three-hour discussion in November 1936 with the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, Michael von Faulhaber, Hitler was much more emphatic. He demanded that the Catholic Church abandon its opposition to racial legislation. Hitler warned the Cardinal that if National Socialism failed to defeat Bolshevism, then it was all over for Christianity and the Roman Church in Europe. This was a shrewd political claim that convinced many Catholics in Europe to collaborate with Nazi Germany.

The decisive shift in Hitler’s attitude to the churches would come in 1937 at a time of growing radicalization in Nazi policy towards the Jews. Increasingly it seemed to the Nazi leadership that the Christian churches were “allies” of Judaism rather than of National Socialism. The churches still persisted, for example, in regarding the Old Testament as a major source of

Christian revelation; they had, after all, rejected the cult of the “Aryan” Jesus. In Protestant circles a small but militant opposition had emerged to the Nazi-sponsored *Deutsche Christen*. Moreover, in 1937, the Vatican had released its papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (With deep anxiety) which sharply protested Nazi totalitarianism and violations of the Concordat with the Holy See. Though German Catholic and Protestant leaders avoided expressing any sympathy for persecuted Jews, they did by and large oppose the assault on the Old Testament and on the Jewish origins of Christianity. They obviously deplored the more vocal public manifestations of Nazi neo-paganism. This passive opposition, while hardly threatening, was sufficient to convince Hitler that Christianity had been infiltrated by “Jewish” influences.

During the Second World War, as his *Table Talk* reveals, Hitler became a rabid Christophobe with a special hatred for St. Paul. Following his old mentor, Dietrich Eckart, he now saw in Paul a crypto-Marxist,—“the first man to take account of the possible advantages of using a religion as a means of propaganda.” The Jews had basically destroyed the Roman Empire from the moment that “St. Paul transformed a local movement of Aryan opposition to Jewry into a supra-temporal religion, which postulates the equality of all men among themselves and their obedience to the only God.”<sup>100</sup> Pauline Christianity and its offshoots in the Reformation and modern Bolshevism was the kiss of death to all empires. Roman decadence had provided an ideal terrain for St. Paul. “His egalitarian theories had what was needed to win over a mass composed of innumerable uprooted people.”<sup>101</sup>

Judeo-Christianity ominously subverted the natural order:

It constantly provokes the revolt of the weak against the strong, of bestiality against intelligence, of quantity against quality. It took fourteen centuries for Christianity to reach the peak of savagery and stupidity. We would therefore be wrong to sin by excess of confidence and proclaim our definite victory over Bolshevism. The more we render the Jew incapable of harming us, the more we shall protect ourselves from this danger. The Jew plays in nature the role of a catalyzing element. A people that is rid of its Jews returns spontaneously to the natural order.<sup>102</sup>

Hitler’s antisemitism was never primarily instrumental, though it was often influenced by tactical and political considerations. The idea of destroying the Jews had for several decades been central to his “world-view.” By the summer of 1941, conditions had sufficiently ripened to make its practical implementation a real possibility. But the deeper roots of this

“exterminationist” ideology go back to Hitler’s formative years in the ethnic cauldron of the slowly disintegrating multicultural Austro-Hungarian Empire. The seeds of Nazism were sown in the cosmopolitan melting-pot of early 20th-century Vienna where Hitler’s obsession with Jews as agents of decomposition and corruption first began to crystallize.<sup>103</sup> Vienna was the prologue and counter-revolutionary Munich the catalyst that launched Adolf Hitler on the twisted path to Auschwitz.

#### NOTES

1. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston 1943), 11, 16, 95, 141, 148; see also Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna. A Dictator’s Apprenticeship* (Oxford 1999), 236-52 for a detailed account of Schoenerer’s impact.
2. Ibid., 123.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 125.
5. See John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York 1997) and Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London 1999).
6. See Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, ch. 12.
7. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 55.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 52, 63.
10. See Gerhard Scheit and Wilhelm Svoboda, *Feindbild Gustav Mahler. Zur antisemitischen Abwehr der Moderne in Österreich* (Vienna 2002) for the racist opposition to Mahler in Austria.
11. August Kubizek, *The Young Hitler I Knew* (Boston 1955), 98-101.
12. Ibid., 183. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 41-43.
13. See Hartmut Zelinsky, *Richard Wagner. Ein deutsches Thema* (Berlin 1983); Joachim Köhler, *Wagner’s Hitler. The Prophet and his Disciple* (Oxford 2000).
14. Kubizek, *The Young Hitler*, 79.
15. Ibid.
16. Letter, 29 Nov. 1921, quoted in Werner Maser, *Hitler’s Letters and Notes* (New York 1974), 107.
17. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 55.
18. See Ivar Oxaal, “Die Juden in Wien des Jungen Hitler: Historische und Soziologische Aspekte,” in *Eine zerstörte Kultur. Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Gerhard Botz, et al, 2nd. ed., (Vienna 2002), 50-54.

19. At the Linz *Realschule* which Hitler attended as an adolescent, there were 17 Jewish pupils, 19 Protestants and 323 Catholics. See Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 16.
20. See Eduard Bloch, "Why I left Europe and What I Have Achieved in America" (Autobiography), *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook (LBIYB)*, 47 (2002): 219-45. The manuscript was only translated from German in autumn 2000 and never publicly released before 2002; the German original has been donated to the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.
21. "The Autobiography of Obermedizinalrat Eduard Bloch," ibid., 226.
22. Ibid., 227. Bloch also mentions that Hitler gave him a painting.
23. Ibid., 230. Bloch noted that Hitler had many followers in Upper Austria before 1933, especially in Linz, "for decades a stronghold of the *Deutschnationalen*," whose "antisemitic attitude was well known."
24. Ibid., 231.
25. Ibid., 226.
26. Ibid., 234.
27. Ibid., 237, The recommendation singled out his character, medical knowledge, and charity.
28. id., 236. The Linz Jews—except for Dr. Bloch—were forced to live in Vienna by late 1938—but had to travel back there to settle their affairs.
29. Ibid., 222.
30. Ibid., 229. "My burning love for Judaism, perhaps also my knowledge of Jewish history and literature, made me appear a suitable candidate for the post."
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 245. Near the end of his memoir, Bloch writes of the bright rays of the Torah which "illuminate our path even in the dark and dreary nights of our fate."
33. Ibid.
34. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 39.
35. Edouard Calic, ed., *Secret Conversations with Hitler* (New York 1971), 66-67.
36. Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York 1940), 87-88.
37. Calic, *Secret Conversations*. If true, this recollection contradicts Hitler's version in *Mein Kampf* of his father as a "cosmopolitan" liberal!
38. Speech in Linz on 7 April 1938, in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, ed. by Norman H. Baynes, (London 1942), 2: 1456-57. Hitler emphasized that only a "South German" [sic] could have returned the Austrian *Heimat* to the Reich
39. F. L. Carsten, *Fascist Movements in Austria: from Schoenerer to Hitler* (London 1977), 334.
40. Karl R. Stadler, "Provinzstadt im Dritten Reich," introduction to Gerhard Botz, *Wien, vom Anschluss zum Krieg. Nationalsozialistische Machtübernahme und*

*politisch-soziale Umgestaltung am Beispiel der Stadt Wien 1938/9* (Vienna 1978), 13-27.

41. See Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann der Hitler die Ideen gab: Von den religiösen Verirrungen eines Sektierers zum Rassenwahn des Diktators* (Munich 1958) for an account of von Liebenfels. On von List, see Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, and Jeffrey A. Goldstein, "On racism and antisemitism in occultism and Nazism," *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (Jerusalem 1979): 53-72.
42. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (London 1971), 79.
43. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 45.
44. Ibid, 65. See also Eduard Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery* (Oxford 1982) for the Jewish campaigns of the period against prostitution from which Jewish girls in Galicia particularly suffered. Hitler never mentioned Jews as victims of "white slavery" but solely as practitioners of vice.
45. Kubizek, *Young Hitler*, 226-27.
46. Kershaw, *Hitler*, 50.
47. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 338, 512.
48. Ibid., 59.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. See Robert S. Wistrich, "Karl Lueger in Historical Perspective," *Jewish Social Studies* 45, nos. 3-4 (1983): 251-62.
52. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (London 1939), 95.
53. Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 286.
54. *Stenographische Protokolle*, Haus der Abgeordneten, 13 Feb. 1890.
55. See Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger. Mayor of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit 1990), 209-32, 270-82.
56. See R. Kuppe, *Karl Lueger und seine Zeit* (Vienna 1933).
57. Robert S. Wistrich, "Sozialdemokratie, Antisemitismus und die Wiener Juden," in *Eine zerstörte Kultur*, 187-96.
58. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 125.
59. "Herr Bronstein from the Café Central," *Austria Today* 4 (1991).
60. Eisner was a Kantian intellectual, a pacifist, a Bohemian, a Berliner, and unmistakably Jewish in appearance—a combination guaranteed to inflame antisemitic feelings in the Catholic, conservative, and counterrevolutionary chaos of Munich and Bavaria in general. See David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked. Munich's Road to the Third Reich* (New York 1997).
61. For the role of the Jews in the German Revolution of 1918-1919, see Werner T. Angress, "Juden im politischen Leben der Revolutionszeit," in *Deutsches Judentum in*

*Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923*, ed. by Werner E. Mosse and Arnold Paucker (Tübingen 1971), 234-98.

62. It is a remarkable fact that the failed Nazi *Putsch* of 1923 took place on 9 November, as did “Crystal Night” (9 November 1938) when the synagogues of Germany went up in flames, prefiguring the “Final Solution.” The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989—heralding the reunification of Germany—also took place on 9 November.

63. See James M. Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement. A Modern Millenarian Revolution* (Palo Alto, Calif. 1980), for elaboration of this hypothesis.

64. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 206.

65. *Die Rede Adolf Hitlers in der ersten grossen Massenversammlung* (Munich 1925), 8.

66. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston 1943), 640.

67. Speech in Munich on 20 Apr. 1923, in *Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, 1: 60.

68. Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (London 1962), 407.

69. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven 1943); Robert Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust* (New York 2001).

70. Speech in Munich, 17 Dec. 1922, in Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924*, ed. by Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn (Stuttgart 1980), 770.

71. See Norman H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler* (London 1942), 1: 20.

72. Speech of 12 Apr. 1922 in *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924*, 623.

73. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924*, 781, 867 (2 Nov. 1922, 6 Apr. 1923); Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 336.

74. Speeches of 17 Dec. 1922, 10 Apr. 1923, in *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924*, 769, 877.

75. G. Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria 1923-1933* (London 1973). For Catholic views of Hitler and complicity in Nazi antisemitism, see John Cornwall, *Hitler's Pope* (London 1999); David Kertzer, *The Pope against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Anti-Semitism* (New York 2002); and Jeanne Favret-Saada in collaboration with Josée Contreras, *Le Christianisme et ses juifs 1800-2000* (Paris 2004), 254-341.

76. Hitler, *Speeches*, 12 Aug. 1922, 1: 20.

77. Kurt G. W. Ludecke, *I Know Hitler* (London 1938), 465-66.

78. Adolf Hitler, *Table Talk*, 76.

79. Ibid., 143.

80. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 108-109.

81. Ibid.

82. Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York 1966), 333.
83. H. Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York 1940), 54.
84. Ibid., 52.
85. Ibid., 53.
86. Ibid., 565.
87. Ibid., 306.
88. See Margarete Plenia, *Auf dem Weg zu Hitler. Der "völkische" Publizist Dietrich Eckart* (Bremen 1970).
89. *Auf Gut Deutsch*, 1 (1919): 18.
90. See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 687, for a tribute to Eckart; Calic, *Conversations with Hitler*, 51.
91. Ibid., 22.
92. *Auf Gut Deutsch* 2 (1919): 554.
93. See E. Nolte, "Eine frühe Quelle zu Hitler's Antisemitismus," *Historische Zeitschrift* 92 (1961): 584-606.
94. Dietrich Eckart, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin. Zwiegespräch zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir* (Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin—A Dialogue between Adolf Hitler and me) (Munich 1924), 6-7.
95. Ibid., 35-36.
96. On Luther's antisemitism, see the important study by Heiko A. Oberman, *Wurzeln des Antisemitismus. Christenangst und Judenplage im Zeitalter von Humanismus und Reformation* (Berlin 1981); Richard Gutteridge, *Open the Mouth for the Dumb. The German Evangelical Church and the Jews 1879-1950* (London 1976), 316-25.
97. Eckart, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses*, 46.
98. Quoted in Rauschning, *Voice of Destruction*, 55.
99. Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler, l'Europe et la Shoah* (Paris 2005), 171.
100. Adolf Hitler, *Table Talk*, 78.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid., 314-15.
103. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, 60-67.

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