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Introduction

"The Jew is by temperament an anti-producer, neither a farmer, nor an industrialist, nor even a true merchant. He is an intermediary, always fraudulent and parasitic, who operates in trade as in philosophy, by means of falsification, counterfeiting and horse-trading. He knows but the rise and fall of prices, the risks of transportation, the incertitudes of crops, the hazards of demand and supply. His policy in economics has always been entirely negative, entirely usurious. It is the evil principle, Satan, Ahriman incarnated in the race of Shem, which has already been twice exterminated by the Greeks and by the Romans, the first at Tyre, the second time at Carthage."

"As soon as society succeeds in abolishing the empirical essence of Judaism, the huckster and its basis, the Jew, will become impossible, because his consciousness will no longer have a corresponding object, because the subjective basis of Judaism, namely practical needs, will have been humanized, because the conflict of the individual sensual existence with the generic existence of man will have been abolished. The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism."

"Nowadays, in England at any rate, if anyone says anything against the Jews he is immediately accused of prejudice, of race hatred, of heaven knows what. The Jew press, which is very strong in this country, cries out against 'the malinger' to some purpose. Now, we wish to say plainly that, though we admire many Jews, and are as strong as any Jew can be in favor of Dreyfus, there is nevertheless a great deal to be urged against them. Whilst not excusing in the least degree the ruffianism of the Roman Catholic Church, or the infamy of the French General Staff, we do aver that the Jews have themselves to thank to a great extent for the bitter feeling against them existing among Frenchmen. They are exceedingly purse-proud when wealthy, very arrogant, very unscrupulous, and very clannish. Their influence on the press is almost wholly bad. Dreyfus himself owes much of his unpopularity to his intellectual pride and aloofness. Nothing would teach them the danger of parading their pecuniary strength and close race sympathies."

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More Information

You may think that these negative comments about Jews must have flowed from the pens of right-wing polemicists. However, in reality, each originated from a major left-wing thinker or publication: the first is drawn from the well-known French utopian socialist Pierre Joseph Proudhon's *Cesarisme et Christianisme*; the second appeared in the final passage of Karl Marx's *Zur Judenfrage*; and the third was published on the front page of the August 26, 1899 edition of *Justice*, the chief newspaper of the British Social Democratic movement.

Anti-Semitism, as it existed historically in Europe, is generally thought of as having been a phenomenon of the political right. To the extent that 19th- and early-20th-century leftist movements manifested anti-Semitism, their involvement has often been painted as a mere fleeting and insignificant phenomenon. This tendency to associate historic anti-Semitism with the right, and to assume that the left has had no significant connection with anti-Semitism, is not surprising. One can point to how traditional Christianity, which has typically been associated with the political right, served for centuries as a wellspring of anti-Semitism. Judaism, after all, represents a rejection of many Christian teachings, and Jews have over the years been spuriously accused of various anti-Christian crimes, such as responsibility for the death of Christ. Moreover, the Nazis, who have left such an indelible mark on European history with their genocidal brutality against the Jews and others, were according to most accounts a right-wing political movement. Any historic association between leftism and anti-Semitism might additionally be presumed an aberration simply on the basis of the apparent logical inconsistency between the left's profession of egalitarian ideals on the one hand and any discrimination against a minority group on the other.

But what has been the relationship between anti-Semitism and the political left? When, a little more than 100 years ago, the German socialist August Bebel referred to the lingering legacy of leftist anti-Semitism as "the socialism of fools," he conceived of leftist anti-Semitism as nothing more than a marginal tendency.[1] Most scholars of anti-Semitism continue to hold the view that 19th- and early-20th-century anti-Semitism in the West remained peripheral to the left, though they do concede that the left has flirted intermittently with anti-Semitism (e.g., during

[1] According to Leon Poliakov (*The History of Anti-Semitism: Suicidal Europe, 1870–1933*, vol. 4, trans. George Klin [Philadelphia, 1977], footnote, p. 543), the phrase "Socialism of Fools" often attributed to Bebel was first uttered by the Viennese socialist Kronawetter.

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More Information

the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, the Cold War, and the Second Intifada). For them, modern anti-Semitism emerged and became a major tenet of the political right.[2] Take for instance the assessment of the German sociologist Paul Massing's writing in 1949 in the aftermath of the Holocaust. For Massing, "the socialists never wavered in their stand against all attempts to deprive Jews of their civil rights. They treated with contempt the anti-Semitic agitators and the groups behind them. They never gave in to the temptation – considerable at times – to gain followers by making concessions to anti-Jewish prejudice."[3] More recently, the historian Walter Laqueur has echoed Massing's judgment in asserting that until the end of the Second World War, the principal sponsors and carriers of anti-Semitism were Nazi, fascist, and extreme right-wing movements, and that there was little open anti-Semitism on the left. Laqueur argues that as early as the French Revolution, the left – the heirs of the Enlightenment – embraced liberty and the fight against inequality, and that throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the left struggled on behalf of the oppressed and exploited against their oppressors and exploiters. Consequently, according to Laqueur, the left as a whole could not possibly have been anti-Semitic. Although cognizant of the anti-Semitic utterances of prominent 19th-century leftists such as Fourier, Marx, and Lassalle, Laqueur attributes these statements to psychological resentment rather than to engrained ideological conviction.[4]

In recent writings, Alvin Rosenfeld and Bernard Harrison have helped direct our attention to the modern-day recrudescence of anti-Semitism, most notably since 2001. However, both Rosenfeld and Harrison appear to see the left's central role in this revival as a relatively new phenomenon. Rosenfeld writes: "And why should the old lies about the Jews be making a reappearance just now and from such an apparently unlikely segment of the Western political spectrum?" Harrison likewise remarks: "For the past century and more, the Left has been the main

[2] One of the more prominent advocates of the special relationship between anti-Semitism and the political right is Poliakov (Poliakov, *History of Anti-Semitism*).

[3] Paul W. Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1949), 151; see also Robert S. Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews, and Israel* (Lincoln, NE and London, 2012).

[4] Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford and New York, 2006), 125, 171–72. Interestingly, Schoenfeld, who we would place in the "leftwing anti-Semitism as a marginal tendency" camp, traces the roots of the left-wing strain to the Enlightenment (Gabriel Schoenfeld, *The Return of Anti-Semitism* [San Francisco, 2004], 4).

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More Information

reservoir of principled opposition to anti-Semitism."[5] Embracing the belief that left-wing anti-Semitism is a new phenomenon, scholars have pointed to the emergence of new left-wing ideologies such as antiglobalism, radical feminism, and internationalism as key factors to explain the appeal of anti-Semitism to the left.[6]

On the other hand, a few scholars, including Edmund Silberner, George Lichtheim, Julie Kalman, Robert Wistrich, Jack Jacobs, David Cesarani, and Michel Dreyfus, see the relationship between the left and anti-Semitism as more than a brief and insignificant phenomenon associated with the birth pains of the European labor movement.[7] For them the relationship is pronounced: a left-wing anticapitalist anti-Semitism, they argue, constitutes a specific brand or variant of modern anti-Semitism. Jacobs describes the historical leftist position on the Jewish question as a rainbow, ranging from indifference to hostility depending on each individual's family background, national context, and historic era.[8] Silberner, Lichtheim, and Kalman describe how early-19th-century French socialists, including Leroux, Toussenel, Proudhon, and Blanqui, targeted the Jews as the embodiment of the new industrial feudalism and the spirit of Mammon. Wistrich, meanwhile, draws on the contributions of Silberner and Lichtheim to emphasize the intertwining of anticapitalist and anti-Jewish themes in the writings of prominent 19th-century socialists. In particular, Wistrich points to left-wing antipathy toward Jewish emancipation and the role that Jews allegedly played in the rise of bourgeois liberalism.[9]

This book seeks to examine more fully the role that the historic European left has played in developing and espousing anti-Semitic views. The book complements William Brustein's earlier volume, *Roots*

[5] Alvin Rosenfeld, Forward to Bernard Harrison's *The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel, and Liberal Opinion* (Lanham, MD, 2006), x, xi; Harrison, *Resurgence of Anti-Semitism*, 2.

[6] Laqueur, *Changing Face of Antisemitism*, 148–49.

[7] Robert Wistrich, "Socialism and Judeophobia – Antisemitism in Europe before 1914," *Leo Baeck Institute: Year Book* 37 (1992):111–45; Edmund Silberner, *Kommunisten zur Judenfrage: Zur Geschichte von Theorie und Praxis des Kommunismus* (Opladen, 1983); David Cesarani, *The Left and the Jews: The Jews and the Left* (London, 2004); Julie Kalman, *Rethinking Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, UK, 2010).

[8] Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "the Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York and London, 1992), 2–3.

[9] Edmund Silberner, "Anti-Jewish Trends in French Revolutionary Syndicalism," *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (1953); George Lichtheim, "Socialism and the Jews," *Dissent*, July–August (1968); Robert S. Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews, and Israel* (Lincoln, NE and London, 2012), 180.

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More Information

of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust, which documents the history of right-wing anti-Semitism in Europe over roughly the same historic period.[10] This work draws upon a range of primary and secondary sources, including the analysis of left- and right-wing newspaper reportage, to trace the relationship between the political left and anti-Semitism in France, Great Britain, and Germany from the French Revolution to the Second World War.

Our study will attempt to answer several critical questions regarding the relationship between the left and anti-Semitism including: Was the left anti-Semitic? What tropes did the right inherit from the left at the end of the 19th century? What explains the left's apparent disengagement from anti-Semitism at the end of the 19th century? Did left-wing anti-Semitism vary from country to country, and, if so, why?

Our central proposition in this book is that the relationship between the left and anti-Semitism has been much more profound than previously believed. In short, we seek to disprove the null hypotheses that (a) the historic European left played virtually no role in the promotion of anti-Semitism within politics and political discourse and that (b) it has always been the political right that has espoused anti-Semitic ideology and developed the anti-Semitic arguments, or tropes, that have long influenced Western society's understanding of Jews. Here we go further than that group of scholars who have perceived the relationship between the left and anti-Semitism as more than a brief and insignificant phenomenon in that we argue that an anticapitalist anti-Semitism was only one of the forms that left-wing anti-Semitism took on during the 19th century. We agree that an anticapitalist anti-Semitism (which associated Jews with, or blamed Jews for, the ills of the modern capitalist system) has historically played a very important role on the left, especially on the socialist left. However, it was insufficient to explain the widespread repugnance of the left toward Jews. We propose that two additional anti-Semitic arguments have, at various times and places, enjoyed great popularity on the left. These are the tropes (i.e., culturally available ways of thinking about Jews) that the Jewish religion is antiprogressive and that Jews are excessively exclusivist or separate. Wistrich, it can be noted, has recently characterized the left's stance toward Jews as having shifted from one of historic ambivalence to, more recently, betrayal.[11] We cannot agree,

[10] William I. Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK and New York, 2003).
[11] Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal.*

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More Information

in part because we find that ambivalence hardly captures the deeply engrained antipathy with which many on the European left regarded Jews throughout most of the 19th century.

We argue that three historic trends or movements each promoted the 19th-century left's espousal of a different anti-Semitic argument. The *first* of these historic trends was a push by various thinkers, beginning during the Enlightenment and continuing through the 19th century, to move the Christian faith in a more liberal, rationalized direction. One perhaps counterintuitive outcome was that the Jewish religion, and Jews themselves, became a key target. A recurring argument was that traditional Christianity (including the Catholic Church and other forms of Christian orthodoxy) was too influenced by Hebrew scriptures, which were stigmatized as backward and barbaric. Traditional Christianity, some suggested, was also infected by an empty and authoritarian "Jewish" ritualism. An anti-Semitic view of the Jewish religion – one that depicted Judaism as particularly antiprogressive – was thus disseminated by those who sought to question the authority of traditional Christian orthodoxy. And bound up in this critique of the Jewish religion was typically a stigmatization of Jews themselves.

The *second* movement was that of nationalism, which in its early phase was associated with liberals and radicals rather than with the established order. Left-wing nationalism generated varying consequences for Jews across our three countries of interest. It fostered the most hostility against Jews in German lands, where early liberal and radical nationalists criticized the excessively exclusivist character of Jews. The argument that Jews were excessively exclusivist was sometimes used simply to attack Jews as disinclined to or incapable of the appreciation of universalistic values. But the trope gained a new power when incorporated within the German (and to a lesser extent, the French) nationalistic framework. In Britain, by contrast, nationalism did little to promote left-wing anti-Semitism in the early 19th century. Moreover, we find that later in the 19th century, the British left articulated an anti-jingoist anti-Semitism that represented a near inversion of more standard nationalist anti-Semitic arguments. We argue that this cross-national variation can be attributed in part to the varying nature and salience of nationalist thought in our three countries of interest.

The *third* movement was that of socialism. As a group, 19th-century socialists played an important role in generating and espousing a dangerous anticapitalist anti-Semitic discourse. They depicted Jews as the greedy and materialist personification of capitalism and more generally of the moral corruption that many saw as inherent in bourgeois modernity.

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Excerpt
More Information

Significantly, we find that the left in France, Germany, and Britain took some steps over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to distance itself from anti-Semitism. The French and German right, meanwhile, increasingly adopted a radical anti-Semitic rhetoric heavily informed by ideas formerly associated with the left. We here perform a particularly close analysis of left- and right-wing newspaper coverage from a series of "critical discourse moments" within the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during which Jews figured heavily in the public political discourse in each of our three countries of interest. This analysis allows for a deepened understanding of the left- and right-wing discourse of the period. We conclude that for the most part the French, German, and British left were not motivated to begin to distance themselves from anti-Semitism by any *prise de conscience*. Members of the left did not wake up one day and realize that discriminating against any minority group, even the Jews, was wrong. Rather, the left of this period, by which we primarily mean the socialistic left, was influenced to distance itself from anti-Semitism by forces that acted both to change socialists' understanding of the meaning of "the Jew" (from oppressor to oppressed) and to alter calculations of how the left could best achieve its political goals.

Before proceeding, it is well to note what we mean by the terms "left" and "right" and how we define anti-Semitism. Our understanding of the terms left and right is highly dependent on context. At any given point in history, the contested status quo was shaped by prior political victories that altered the political terrain, and, by extension, the meaning of left and right. So, for example, a political position that was left-of-center in a particular country at one historical period might be considered as a right-of-center position fifty years later. Cross-societal variation also means that "right" in one country might be considered "left" in another and vice versa. Despite the contingent nature of the terms, the dichotomy and antagonism between left and right has served as an important organizing feature of European politics and political discourse since at least the genesis of the terms during the French Revolution. We follow in part from Norberto Bobbio in understanding the left as constituting those figures or movements that have sought to increase societal equality and the right as those whose political goals are in conflict with or in direct opposition to this aim.[12] This conflict over equality (however defined) has been played out at various times over political, economic, and social

[12] Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, trans. Allan Cameron (Chicago, 1997).

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Excerpt
More Information

issues. Our focus here is on those left-wing movements and factions that were committed to radical change, rather than on those segments of the left that were more centrist or moderate. For the late 18th and early 19th centuries, this has meant focusing on liberal and especially radical political movements. By the late 19th century, however, a liberal political position was much more middle-of-the-road. For the period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we focus our attention on the political discourse of the socialistic left. For our definition of anti-Semitism, we draw on Brustein's previous research where anti-Semitism is defined as "hostility (as expressed in sentiments, attitudes, or actions) to Jews as a collectivity rooted in the general population."[13]

This book begins with a preliminary chapter that explores how French, German, and British Enlightenment thinkers of the late 17th and 18th centuries thought and talked about Jews. This chapter helps inform the discussion that follows because the Enlightenment thinkers in many ways created the foundations for left-wing thought about Jews that would come afterward. We then turn to the main subject of this book, which is the history of left-wing discourse about Jews from the French Revolution to the Second World War. Each of our three countries – France, Germany, and Britain – is given its own extended chapter, which allows for attention to both country-specific context and cross-national variation. These chapters are followed by a conclusion, which summarizes the arguments made in the main body of the book. The conclusion also includes a consideration of the contemporary left in our three countries of interest. We take up the question of whether left-wing anti-Semitism receded further during the period after the Second World War, or whether it has experienced a resurgence, as many claim today. The answer, far from clear-cut, is complicated by controversy over what should be considered as anti-Jewish hostility, as well as by a somewhat mixed record on the left itself. Various aspects of the contemporary political situation would tend to encourage the left to move in an anti-Semitic direction, suggesting danger and reason for caution. Ultimately, however, we see less evidence of left-wing anti-Semitism in Western Europe today than some others have claimed to observe.

[13] Brustein, *Roots of Hate*, 5.

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Excerpt
More Information

1

Before the Left: The Anti-Semitic Thought of the European Enlightenment

The understanding of Jews that developed among the Enlightenment thinkers of the late 17th and 18th centuries in many ways set the stage for the left-wing thought about Jews that would come afterward.

The Western European Enlightenment movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries represented an important departure from earlier ways of thinking. The Enlightenment thinkers questioned traditional modes of thought and offered a new and more scientific way to analyze humans and society. The movement, indeed, is sometimes associated with the dawning of modernity itself.[1] And their thought was intellectually foundational to, especially, later leftist thinkers: the principal heirs of the Enlightenment in the 19th century were the European liberal and social democratic movements. While Enlightenment thought took on distinctive forms in our three countries of interest – France, Britain, and Germany – the Enlightenment thinkers were united by a commitment to questioning old assumptions and developing new ways of seeing the world. In his 1784 essay entitled "What Is Enlightenment?," the German philosopher Immanuel Kant defined the Enlightenment as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage." Reason and individual liberty were to be the new

[1] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002).

The Enlightenment thinkers we discuss here questioned the old order and typically called for the extension of individual liberties (if not to Jews than to many others). In this way then they were precursors to the modern left. However, in 18th-century France and Germany at least, left and right did not yet function as a key organizing axis of political discourse in the way that it was to do in the 19th and 20th centuries. The terms "left" and "right" (or "gauche" and "droite") were not in fact coined until the French Revolution. The Enlightenment period can thus be considered as "before" the left.

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More Information

orders of the day. Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers believed that individuals must reject received belief and authority and instead use reason to understand the world.[2] There was a push, for example, to demonstrate the superiority of scientific thought over Aristotelian logic, which for centuries had been used to defend Christian dogma and the belief in a stagnant universe dependent on divine intervention. The Catholic Church also came under attack, not only by British and German Enlightenment thinkers of Protestant background but also by the *philosophes* of Catholic France, who accused the church of intolerance, fanaticism, supernaturalism, and superstition.[3]

Europe prior to the Age of Enlightenment had had a long history of hostility toward Jews and Judaism.[4] The dominant Christian society was not welcoming of Jews. A key religious objection was that the Jewish people had refused to abandon their religious beliefs and practices in favor of Christianity. Jews were accused of collective responsibility for the death of Christ as well as of various other crimes. The medieval European imagination viewed society as an integrated and fundamentally Christian entity. In a metaphor articulated by a number of medieval political thinkers, the king served as the head of the body politic; the representatives of the church were its soul; nobles and knights were its arms; and peasants were its feet.[5] There was no clear place for Jews within such

[2] Kieron O'Hara, *The Enlightenment: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford, 2010).

[3] Opposition to the Roman Catholic Church, rooted in Enlightenment anticlericalism, endured throughout the 19th century. It can be added that traditionalists within the Roman Catholic Church attacked Enlightenment thinking as a modern heresy and deployed its vast resources to enforce clerical censorship. Roman Catholic Church hostility to the Enlightenment persisted long into the 19th century. By contrast, the Reformist Churches, especially in Great Britain and Germany, displayed a good deal more sympathy for the Enlightenment. For many within the British, French, and German Protestant communities, the tales of not-too-distant Papist cruelties (e.g., the murder of Protestants during the reign of England's Queen Mary) inflicted on those adhering to the Reformist Church further strengthened Protestant attachment to the Enlightenment. See Donald Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 1968); R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1939); "Enlightenment", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, 2014); Bernard Glassman, *Protean Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in England's Age of Reason* (Atlanta, 1998).

[4] See William I. Brustein's *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge and New York, 2003) for a detailed explanation of the evolution of religious, racial, economic, and political forms of anti-Semitism.

[5] David C. Hale, "Analogy of the Body Politic," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip Wiener (New York, 1973), vol. 1, 68–70. The specific version of the body politic metaphor described here was articulated by John of Salisbury (*Policraticus: of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Carl J. Nederman [Cambridge, 1990], 65–67).

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