Studies in Antisemitism

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**Antisemitism Through the Ages**

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Published for the  
Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
by  
PERGAMON PRESS  
OXFORD - NEW YORK - BEIJING - FRANKFURT  
SÃO PAULO - SYDNEY - TOKYO - TORONTO

4. The Committee's secretary, Lucien Wolf (1857-1930) was the moving spirit in the struggle against the Hungarian Numerus Clausus law. On this and the Jewish laws which followed, see Hungary and the Jews, pp.41–46.

5. For the petitions and other relevant material concerning the intervention with the League of Nations, see The Jewish Minority in Hungary (London, 1926).


7. The principal political and military organization of the extreme right in Hungary in the 1920s. It stood behind the White Terror and was the main bearer of antisemitism in that period; see Hungary and the Jews, pp.133–136.

8. The connections between the Hungarian and German extreme right-wing movements go back to the early 1920s; see Johann Weidelin, Die ungarsche Antisemitismus, (Schorndorf, 1962), pp.39–42. The "Awakening Magyars" also strove to spread their ideology in the western countries, and published a pamphlet entitled Antisemitism in Hungary Budapest, 1920). This is a printed memorandum presented by the Association to the representatives of Britain and the United States in Budapest.

9. Count P. Teleki (1879–1941) was prime minister in 1920–1921, when the Numerus Clausus Law had been enacted, and again in 1939–1941. For his views on Jews and the Jewish question, see Hungary and the Jews, pp.133–136.

10. The reference is to the Second Jewish Law (see below), which was then debated in Parliament. Teleki participated in its preparations and drafted its preamble. The Law was enacted when he was prime minister.


12. Born in 1899, Szilasi was put on trial as a war criminal and executed in 1946. See The Jewish Minority in Hungary, p.165. Endre was secretary of state in the Ministry of the Interior after the German occupation and directed the ghettoization and subsequent deportation of the provincial Jewry. After the war he was tried and executed.

13. In the 1939 general elections the Arrow Cross Party gained 42 out of 260 mandates, and together with other right-wing groups, the extreme right parties in Parliament totalled 49 mandates. They received their votes mainly from workers and the lower middle class.

14. It took place in Vienna on November 20, 1940, when Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan. See Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D vol. 11, p. 635.
only those scholars studying the subject from a sociological perspective, but also certain historians conclude that Nazi antisemitism, in decisive measure, was a reaction to the contradictions and dissatisfaction evident in German society since the middle of the previous century. They totally, or almost totally, ignore the heritage of the conflict between Christianity and Judaism and the later stages in the development of antisemitism. Thus, for example, the German historian, Friedrich Meinecke, in the short section which he devotes to the Jews and antisemitism in his work on Die deutsche Katastrophe (“The German Catastrophe”), written toward the end of his life, claims:

The Jews, who were inclined to enjoy indiscretely the favorable economic situation now smiling upon them, had since their full emancipation aroused resentment of various sorts. They contributed much to that gradual depreciation and discrediting of the liberal world of ideas that set in after the end of the nineteenth century. The fact that besides their negative and disintegrating influence they also achieved a great deal that was positive in the cultural and economic life of Germany was forgotten by the mass of those who now attacked the damages done by the Jewish character. Out of the anti-Semitic feeling it was possible for an anti-liberal and anti-humanitarian feeling to develop easily – the first steps toward National-Socialism.2

Another German historian of repute, Gerhard Ritter, does not blame the Jews for their easy and ostentatious wealth, but argues for the existence of an “instinctive hate” of the Jews. In his opinion, these “instincts” were stronger in Germany than in the other western European countries but, on the other hand, were not as strong as in Eastern Europe. This hatred became politically linked even prior to 1914 but the antisemitic movements of that period were short-lived in the postwar period, however, antisemitism became strong again due to many aggravating circumstances, especially the immigration of eastern European Jews, which helped in the formulation of National Socialism.3

Hannah Arendt, in her book The Origins of Totalitarianism, attacks the premise of the existence of perpetual antisemitism, with the Jews as the permanent scapegoat. To her, modern antisemitism is a result of a decline in the importance of the national state, the competition of the Jews and the middle class in the developed nations of Europe, and also of the fact that the Jews are a propertied group but lacking political power and authority; all of which, according to Arendt, attracts the scorn and hate of the masses.4 In his essay The Non-Jewish Jew, Deutscher claimed that Marx was right in defining the Jews as “the bearer of the money-economy,” the . . . “Jewish religion as the religious reflection of a bourgeois thought process,” and he saw the essence of the tragedy in that “as a result of long historical development, the European masses were used to identifying the Jews, above all, as a nation of commerce, stock-market brokering, money-lending, and the amassing of money.”5 Incidentally, Deutscher does not stop at determining the factors which nurtured antisemitism, but also says that antisemitism and the Holocaust pushed the Jews in the erroneous direction of seeking an escape from their situation by establishing a national state of their own. Though, he feels, they are not to be blamed for this longing, a result of the wrong done them by the world, the reality of the times in which the Jews have begun to build their state – when the day of the national state is over, when the national state is declining and crumbling and retrogressive in character – dictates that the Jews are devoting themselves to their national independence and are enthusiastic about it despite the fact that “from an historical point of view it is obsolete.”6 Throughout the essay, Deutscher discusses Jewish radicals and those of Jewish origin such as Marx, Lassalle, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and even Freud and others whose intellectual lives and personal identities were formed, as he puts it, on the frontiers between nationalistic cultures and groupings. This gave them the ability to see the long view and move society forward away from all the limitations of conservative, particularistic frameworks. He goes on to analyze the causes of antisemitism and the Holocaust and points out lessons, erroneously as it were; but he does not bother to note, nor even hint, that a number of his heroes caused inestimable harm to their compatriots, the Jewish nation, which they often reviled and, at best, completely denied. This avoidance is characteristic. In the eyes of their detractors, these revolutionaries who pretended to be saviors of mankind remained Jews and, albeit unintentionally, added a very significant and powerful dimension to modern antisemitism and the Jewish tragedy in Europe.

Is there a common denominator in these various conceptions briefly reviewed here and, if so, what is it? Meinecke does not feel that after the Emancipation the Jews ceased being a separate human entity in the German state, and does not see that the attempt to indicate them as a separate and different body in circumstances of complete equality, as it were, is a flaw from the liberal point of view. Furthermore, Meinecke attributes provocative characteristics and actions to the Jews; and even though, in his opinion, the masses ignored certain positive aspects of the Jews’ activities in Germany, the hatred was a reaction based upon real, negative foundations and was reinforced by a fortuitous conjunction of circumstances. Both Arendt and Deutscher – though they start from different yet not dissimilar points of view – describe the Christian-Jewish confrontation as a conflict against a background of real socioeconomic events and developments in which the Jew played a negative or subordinate role.

And yet, the radical antisemitic claims which gave modern antisemitism its zealous, terroristic nature, such as racism, a description of all Jews as a group of conspirators scheming to gain control of the world under the leadership of the “Elders of Zion” or by the dissemination of radical ideas, revolutionary chaos, and communism – these claims are rooted in the realm of fantasy, not in a framework of concrete social conflicts. This does not mean that there is no reality to the economic competition between Jews and non-Jews or that it is of no consequence in the development of antisemitism. There is also no ignoring
the specific traits of the Jews or their dealings which are liable to cause anti-Jewish sentiments. But all of these in no way whatever provide the basis for the ideational load, the dynamics and the ruthless force of National Socialism's hatred. There is no doubt that the ideas upon which the picture of the Jews was based in Nazi eyes, their dissemination and their power, were not restricted to contemporary conflicts, but drew upon inciting motifs and libels of the past.

Hitler's excellent biographer, Allen Bullock, defines the Nazi leader's antisemitism, which all agree was decisive in the shaping and spread of National Socialist hatred of the Jews, as follows:

In all of the pages which Hitler devotes to the Jews in "Mein Kampf" he does not bring forward a single fact to support his wild assertions. This was entirely right, for Hitler's anti-Semitism bore no relation to facts. It was pure fantasy; to read these pages is to enter the world of the insane, a world peopled by hideous and distorted shadows. 7

Occasionally one hears among Jews and non-Jews alike that the Holocaust – and perhaps the entire National Socialist period – is a deviation in European history, an eclipse, a madness which struck the modern world. True, this thesis is not generally put forth by people involved with historical analysis, but it has made its way in popular perceptions and in fiction. Not long ago I chanced upon an official publication, guidelines for information officers in the Israel Defense Force, containing two approaches – historical and metahistorical – one alongside the other, as legitimate ways to explain the essence of the Holocaust period. 8 From this point of view, it makes no difference whether one tends to attribute the ahistorical dimension of the Holocaust to the murderous manifestations of its perpetrators, or tends to see the fate of the victims and their sufferings as a phenomenon which should be excluded from the regular historical process. In either case, from this point of view the period is described as an event outside of human history and society. It is impossible to understand the sources, nor is there any point in trying to understand them or the background to the development of the events and ideas which led to the catastrophe; there is no lesson to be learned from what happened during that period, not for the Jew nor for contemporary society.

In other, rarer, instances, one hears a hint of "justification and acceptance of the judgment" coming from those who are searching for the theological meaning of the period or clinging to rigidly deterministic explanations. I do not intend to go further into such views or dwell upon those explanations which see the Holocaust with all of its horrors as containing a purpose hidden from the human mind. In my view, such interpretation deprives human beings of a conscious, active role in the adventures of their lives and determination of their destiny, and turns not only the victims themselves but the murderers as well into instruments moved by power orchestrating processes beyond our understanding.

2. **Why the Holocaust was not Foreseen**

From time to time, even people guided by an historical approach question whether Nazi antisemitism is only a stage in the evolution of antisemitism, or if we are perhaps facing a reality which, though it grew and came to fruition against an historical background, has a nature and dimensions which allot it a place apart and is essentially unique. Ben-Zion Dinur, in one of his works, brings us a sketch of "Five Beginnings from the Day of Mourning and Outcry" in which a philosopher, a Hasid, an historian, an author, and a soldier participate. The historian in the group, who undoubtedly expresses Dinur's opinion, says, among other things:

Did this evil really come upon us suddenly? Have we not for generation after generation been sitting upon smoking volcanos, and every time the earth quakes beneath us and the volcanos spew forth their flame which destroys us, we stand shocked and dumb-founded, because we shut our eyes to seeing and proclaim loudly again and again that the volcanos are long extinct, that it is not smoke issuing from their craters but rather the morning mists which cover them and are no danger at all? "Suddenly!" Is this the first frightful holocaust which has come upon us in the thousands of years of our exile and wanderings? Did not great Jewish centers fall "suddenly" and cover with their ruins hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Jews, old and young, women and children – who became as if they had never been? Did not these centers, by their fall, seal the chapter of the life's works and soulful tribulations of tens of Jewish generations who entombed their bodies and souls in the walls of "Pithom and Raamses" throughout the world? . . . 9

One can conclude from Dinur's words that he sees the history of the Jewish people in exile as a recurring drama of delusion and destruction, toil and servitude in foreign fields with eyes closed to the horror lying in ambush. Therefore, the Holocaust is just another manifestation in the dialectic process of slumber and sudden awakening which always takes its toll of innumerable victims and possessions amassed through the generations. And though there are many who subscribe to the view of Jewish postexilic history as the rise and fall of population centers which adapt and are self-confident until the outbreak of wrath and ruin caused by their non-Jewish neighbors – the question remains as to whether Dinur's bitter and sharp indictment of his compatriots for not having sensed the approaching Holocaust of our time is not more an expression of searing pain in face of the immense catastrophe and loss than a sober, systematic analysis. It has already been noted that the breast-beating and the attributions of blindness and guilt are in great measure the result of shock and an attempt at hasty soul-searching. 10 It has been proved that wise distant observers, as well as those actually in the countries affected by the Holocaust, did
not foresee nor imagine what the future held, and certainly did not conceive of programmed and unrestrained murder. A Dutch historian, Louis de Jong, who has been dealing for years with his country's history during the war and the Nazi occupation, noted that "for most people the Nazi extermination camps became a psychological reality - and even this not yet entirely - when they ceased to exist and perhaps precisely for that reason." Dinur himself wrote, after dealing with the character of World War II as a total war which caused an immense loss of life and destruction:

Nevertheless, what happened to us is unique and totally different. Something unprecedented in the world. It had never before happened that "open season" should be publicly proclaimed upon the blood of an entire people. In front of the entire world we were read out of the human race. In front of the entire world we were taken out to death and destruction by every manner and means. Let us see things as they are and let us not blur them. This is not like anything that ever happened in the darkest days of the Middle Ages of which the German chroniclers write simply and succinctly: "In this year all the Jews in all the cities of all of Germany were burnt." 12

At the opening of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, Salo Baron stated as the considered opinion of an expert historian:

... that the Nazi movement not only turned the wheels back, that is, the wheels of modern progress which championed greater emancipation, greater freedom, and greater equality, but it brought the world new and unprecedented fundamentals different from the entire two-thousand-and-more year history of antisemitism.13

Whereas Jacob Katz pointed out that as the information about what was taking place in the ghettos and the death camps filtered out to the free world:

... it penetrated the world's consciousness that we were facing events far beyond the limits of our old concepts garnered from history. For Auschwitz and Treblinka there were no historical parallel, nor was there any related philosophical or theological system able to encompass and absorb them.14

The German historian, K. D. Bracher, notes that "Die Judenpolitik des Dritten Reiches ist ein Phänomen sui generis."15

Let us now see what the factors were that prevented the contemporaries from sensing the approaching storm and danger. First, one must consider the fact that the evil came out of Germany. It is well known that racist and political antisemitism had struck root in Germany and spread. It is common practice now, after the fact, to collect opinions and slogans and trace the antisemitic legislation in Germany, and the impression is of a unidirectional line of development, becoming increasingly acute until its climax in the Nazi régime. Furthermore, those who have retraced the growth of anti-Jewish manifestations in Germany have found that the programs proposed by the earlier extreme antisemites already included all the elements later carried out in the National Socialist campaign of persecution: discrimination, expulsion, and eventual extermination.16 On the other hand, scholars expert in German history have often claimed that the prominence of antisemitism, especially in its racist form, as a fixed and growing component of German culture and political thought, does not reflect the complex and multifaceted reality and offers a simplistic picture instead of explaining complex facts and development. And indeed, the political map of Germany during the Weimar Republic and the years prior to the Third Reich was marked by the radicalization of both the Right, with the increase of National Socialist power, and of the Left, with the strengthening of communism. The very fact that the Nazis rejected and concealed important parts of German culture and erased the names of its creators because, as they put it, they were foreign to the German spirit, is indicative of the selective, purposive system which adopted only that which agreed with, or at least did not contradict, the Nazis' conceptual world. It is doubtful that, prior to the forceful rise of National Socialism, antisemitism can be considered to have been a dominant factor in Germany's conceptual and cultural spectrum, with the exception of marginal groups. One must also bear in mind the great gap between the verbal slogans and crude expressions of scurrilous antisemite literature and the systematic acts of murder of the Nazis. Shaul Esh, in his article "Between Discrimination and Extermination," pointed out that there are investigators and writers who have found "proofs of the extermination idea" in Germany and Austria as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, and notes in connection with these manifestations:

We suspect that all of those digging that deeply for antisemitism - even the most bitter and extreme of its expressions - tend to ignore the vast difference between words and thoughts on the one hand, and programs worked out to the last detail, on the other.17

On the same matter, Jacob Katz writes:

It is not only the half-century which separates Dühring from Hitler but also the psychological abyss between the man of the spirit, cut off from the world of action, giving free play to his thoughts and illusions, and a wilful, unbridled person prepared to realize these fantasies.18

From German society we turn to the German Jews. The Jews of Germany, perhaps more than any other Jewish group in Europe, were prepared to pay a
very high price for emancipation. Most of them had left their traditional lifestyle and blurred their identity and heritage in order to be full Germans. These changes which took place among the German Jews should be seen not only as a reaction to outside pressures or as an acceptance under duress of conditions imposed as prerequisites to equal rights, but also, and perhaps primarily so, as an honest desire to be absorbed into the German nation and its culture. Ludwig Bamberger thought that "The Jews did not reach, nor even approximate, so great a measure of a common life and identification with any people as they did with the Germans. They were thoroughly 'Germanized' not only in Germany but far beyond its borders."19 "The unfortunate love of the Jews for Germany and its culture" was famous, and when the Nazi period took hold, there were not a few instances of suicide as a result of frustration and inability to accept the expulsion from participation in German national life. Orthodox Jewry, which had sought to preserve the tenets of the faith and the Jewish way of life, was also outstanding in its civic loyalty, and demonstrated a very close connection with German nationalism and loyalty to German interests. Analyzing the protracted Jewish-German symbiosis, at a 1966 conference in Brussels dealing with the complex of post-Holocaust relationships between the Jews and the Germans, Professor Baron said: "For a thousand years, the German and Jewish peoples were so closely related that despite the injuries and suspicions, they are seen as twins in the eyes of the historian."20

Paradoxically, Germany was seen by the Jews of other lands, especially by the east European Jews, as a country in which the Jewish position was sound both economically and socially, where all were accustomed to obeying the law and respecting it. Therefore, not only was full confidence placed in the legal position which the Jews had achieved in Germany as a fact of life, but the prevalent opinion among Jews was that the process of expanding the dimension of equality and rights was constant, progressive, and irreversible. The attempts to block or impinge upon Jewish rights were seen as the necessary birth-pangs of the historical development of emancipation, or as temporary reversals ultimately doomed to failure. The Jews tended to adopt liberal ideologies and placed their trust in liberal principles even when forces championing freedom of the individual, liberalism, and justice were clearly in retreat.

It is true that most of the known antisemitic spokesmen during the period of political antisemitism, such as Von Treitschke, on the one hand, and Stöcker, on the other, concentrated on levelling specific claims and accusations against the Jews: They are not fit to be part of the German culture and society and represent alien and corrosive elements; they should be removed from their positions of authority and influence in public, cultural, and economic life; the east European Jews must be prevented from pouring into the Third Reich and recent arrivals should be removed. However, they still did not dare to demand the outright repeal of Emancipation. That is to say, those who spoke openly in terms of the "expulsion" or "liquidation" of all of Germany's Jews were for the most part seen as eccentrics challenging the accepted social norms or speaking for relatively youthful circles whose extremism was rejected even by the right-wing parties which had adopted "moderate" antisemitism as part of their general platform. Many in Germany relied upon the fact that the Jewish community was declining demographically (in the eight years prior to Hitler's rise to power, for example, the number of Jews in Germany had declined by forty thousand due to a mortality rate greater than the birth rate, emigration, and the abandonment of Judaism), and that therefore the Jews were not to be seen as a troublesome problem for, in one way or another, they would disappear in the foreseeable future.

3. The Doctrine of Racism

The central component of the National Socialist ideology in general, and of the Nazi version of antisemitism in particular, is racism. This became the determining factor in their theoretical formulations and in great measure created the dynamic for the implementation stages of the anti-Jewish policy in the Third Reich and occupied countries.

Ever since the mid-nineteenth century, there has been a widespread tendency in Europe to examine individuals and define human groups and their histories according to their racial origin and separate racial essence. We know of the attempts to classify population groupings by the Social Darwinist system. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the followers of Herbert Spencer tried to apply the Darwinian principles of conflict in nature to their contemporary society. Such concepts were intended to provide the seal of approval and authorization for free competition, the existence of class differences, and even the neglect of disabled or hereditarily afflicted people by organized society and its institutions. Social Darwinism also granted imperialists the desired legitimation for ruling over peoples supposedly inferior from a racist viewpoint.21

From an historical perspective we must clearly differentiate between racist trends intended to explain and perpetuate social contrasts and imperialistic tendencies, from historical/philosophical racist concepts in which the history of nations is the arena, and the conflict is between racial blocs struggling for material and idealistic rule of the world. However, the combination of theories representing race as a determining factor in history, and racism in a perverted Darwinist version, succeeded in giving racism the weight of a theory built upon a scientific basis.

Let us now dwell briefly upon the role of the race factor in history. A few of the scholars who have investigated the introduction of racist theory into modern antisemitism have distinguished between Gobineau's concept of racism and that of its later disseminators, especially H. S. Chamberlain.22 In his treatise on the inequality of the races, Gobineau tried to convince his readers that the French aristocracy was the outgrowth of a pedigreed racial stock superior to the country's masses and thereby was the expression of a specific tradition in France.23 Therefore, Gobineau's racial theory had a clear class significance
and sought to legitimize the extra privileges of birth and the aristocrats’ authority to rule. Withal, Gobineau’s claims were basically apologetic. He was aware of the fact that the Revolution had radically changed France and that there was no restoring the past, hence his brooding pessimism and his clinging to times past and gone forever. Gobineau’s ideas had little response in France itself, but in Germany racism gained a circle of devout adherents.

Chamberlain’s concept is different. According to him, the Germans, who constitute an admirable racial bloc, contributed the decisive share in the formation of European culture and the building of modern civilization. The racial antithesis confronting the Germans and the Aryan race are the Jews. The Jewish race is the embodiment of sterility, absence of imagination and creative force, but its ability and its wiles are directed toward undermining the position of the master race, destroying its achievements, and causing unrest and rebellion against it. According to him, in the nineteenth century there was a great penetration of Europe by Jewish elements and Jewish-Semitic domination became strong. The “Aryan” race, superior by virtue of its physical characteristics and spiritual qualities, was constrained to do battle in order to overcome the destructive influences of the Jewish race. Chamberlain sees the main danger of the modern period in the alliance of the Jews with the revolutionary radicals threatening the world. In contrast to Gobineau’s spirit of resignation to the inevitable and its acceptance, the ideational motifs which Chamberlain cites as being at “the foundations of the nineteenth century” are in the nature of a call to arms for the racial forces, and contain a strong faith in the victory of the Aryan race. In contrast to the apologetic strain in Gobineau, who addresses the conservative circles and their devotees, Chamberlain is seeking to recruit the masses.

Racism was not confined to discussions of the place and contribution of the races in human society and of the essential interracial contrasts. It soon became linked with people’s appearance, their facial contours, the structure of their limbs, the movements of their body, and the like. George Mosse writes:

Theories of racial distinctions were to be comprehended not only in a mystical sense; on the contrary, they could be made popular through the use of stereotypes. The Aryan was distinguished by a physical form that typified the Germanic idea of beauty; the Jew was his very opposite. Symbolically, ... the two represented the polarization of God and the devil.

Since the start of this century, following the essay contest sponsored by Alfred Krupp on the topic: “What can be learned from Darwin’s theories for use in developing domestic policy and state legislation,” an all-encompassing racist world-view (Weltanschauung) began to crystallize in Germany. This constellation was the result of a combination of components – the ideology of racism; a loose, broad interpretation of Darwinism’s significance for the organization of society; and the actual application of racist concepts to the body and soul of the individual.

The innovative and most sinister aspect of racism is its attribution of fixed behavioral and psychological patterns to biological structure and identifiable, biological indicators. If, indeed, the excellent and the inferior, the harmful and destructive, are carried within the body and blood of people of a defined racial origin, then there is little value in educational methods, in the concept of acquired characteristics, or in experiments of social improvement. The separation of the races and the preservation of their original form is a sort of imperative of nature which the human race must manage and direct. Human intervention working toward blending the races is liable, then, to damage the master race, diminish its value, and harm the purposes destined for it by nature.

There is no point in wasting words on the supposed scientific basis of the race doctrines developed from Gobineau to Hitler. Race is an accepted category for classifying the earth’s peoples into groups with similar, defineable, physical-natural characteristics. The racial blocs were divided by anthropologists into many major classifications and subclassifications; but the attempt to attribute common characteristics and a common psyche to these blocs, though it has found a place in popular perceptions, has had little acceptance among biologists though, here and there, some have also held these opinions. A person like H. F. K. Günther, a recognized authority on Nazi racist theory, rejected the existence of “the Jewish race,” whereas Hitler opened almost every discussion on Jewish matters with the assertion that the Jews are not primarily a religious community but a race. There is of course nothing at all scientific or rational in attributing to the “Jewish race” concepts about the essence of morality, political and ideational outlooks, or efforts to achieve domination of the world. (Perceptions and aspirations which are completely within the realm of the conscious are acquired by people, and can have nothing hereditary about them.) These theories of moral racial characteristics are at best, mythical concepts or form a part of nationalistic, political demagoguery which has adopted such theoretical concepts as a camouflage or out of sheer ignorance. Thus there is no basis for the term “Jewish blood” which is constantly repeated in Hitler’s writings and speeches and which is also used in the formulation of laws in the Third Reich. Actually, blood groups are generally spread among various racial groups and no solid proof has been found to connect physical characteristics, such as the color of hair or eyes, with blood groups. Even more is it impossible to speak of any relationship whatever between traits of the psyche in someone of a specific racial group, and the known blood groups. The concepts “Nordic” or “Semitic” do not designate racial blocs per se but rather linguistic groupings which share a common basis. Clearly, then, “the racist Weltanschauung” is nothing but a hodge-podge of prejudices and pseudo-scientific concepts which were exploited for evil and which penetrated historical thought, social life, and politics.
The crystallization of radical, nationalist perceptions and the spread of the racist world view were also influenced by original German thinkers, such as Spengler, who had abandoned liberalism and the striving after egalitarianism. They prophesied the "decline of the West" or, like Nietzsche, called for rebellion against the accepted norms and the Christian ethic fettering humankind, for the release of the inner impulses, and the worship of power. According to Nietzsche:

... whenever the German reaches the state in which he is capable of great things, he invariably raises himself above morals! And why should he not? Now he has something new to do, viz. to command - either himself or others! But this German morality of his has not taught him how to command! Commanding has been forgotten in it. 28

According to the racist world outlook, Judaism insinuated into the western world, mainly via Christianity but in other ways as well, beliefs and opinions on the essence of the human race, on people's accountability to their Creator and to each other, on ethical imperatives and social norms - and all of these contradict the laws of nature and the basic heritage of the "Nordic-Aryan" race. The concepts from the Book of Genesis on humanity created in God's image, on life as a sacred treasure, on mercy, and on the expectation that good will overcome evil - these were the beliefs and social perceptions which constituted the ideological common denominator of both the believers of the monotheistic faiths and the supporters of most schools of modern secular humanism. These concepts were interpreted by racism as offshoots of the alien Jewish spirit which is concerned with stifling the free and unhampered competition of humanity's racial blocs, with weakening the assurance and self-confidence of the master race, and robbing it of its preferential status on earth. The development of physical strength, courage, and a sense of mastery unfettered by mercy toward the weak and deformed as well as an affirmation of war - such views and behavior patterns constitute a return to the proper order of things as befits both innate human compulsions and instincts as well as the logical course of history. Perfecting the world and humanity, then, according to the racist perception, demanded the removal and banishment of the Jewish influence from the arena of Europe. The racists taught that the phenomena of mixed families and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews is a diabolical plot of the Jews who are thus attempting to damage the purity of the "Aryan" race, knowing that only the pure race is the carrier of the values and strengths which the master race embodies. Again, from a scientific point of view it has been determined that there is no such thing as a pure race and that it is a product of the racists' imagination. But the proponents of the racist theory, especially the Nazis, succeeded in forging the slogan of safeguarding racial purity and turned the Jewish threat lying in wait, as it were, for innocent young Germans, into a propaganda weapon which fired the imagination of the common people.

In sum, the conclusions of the racist doctrine led to a zealous struggle against the Jews. The Jews, as described by the racists, cannot free themselves of the accusations against them and of their faults. The possibilities of changing their vocations were barred to them if they were engaged in what was considered one of the despicable Jewish callings. They were prevented from ridding themselves of those provocative outlooks which were disseminating discontent in the poisoned nation. For the racist, there was no longer any point to the Jews' foregoing their traditional customs and adapting to the lifestyle of the environment. Even the radical and decisive step of changing one's faith - none of these could change or "improve" the Jews. On the contrary. Any step which the Jews took to distance themselves from their setting and come closer to the environment only increased the danger and was construed as a sign of tactics and scheming on their part. Since the dangerous and harmful elements in the Jews lie in their bones and blood as well as in their spirit and soul, their faults are fixed and unchangeable; they make the very physical existence of the Jews harmful and dangerous to other human beings. This definition of the Jews was the basis of the policy which led to the insane idea of total extermination in the days of the National Socialist régime.

Racism, therefore, is different from the antisemitic ideologies which preceded it. The difference is expressed not only in that it left Jews no escape. In fact, in its first stages racial antisemitism did not infect large masses, but it was outstanding for its zealfulness, and its propaganda was injected in many indirect ways. When the Nazis came to power, the racist doctrine became an official article of faith as a component of the policy of the ruling party and the state institutions. At this stage, racism became a universal disease. Gobineau had given expression to a sense of contempt and rejection regarding the Slavs, but when racism found its expression via the German government, a hierarchy of nations was established in which the Germans and the nations "close to them by blood" were destined to rule and preside over the "New Order," whereas the others would be the "hewers of wood and drawers of water," with no right of national or human freedom. 29 Antisemitism, which had existed in European society for many generations, became in its most extreme and perverted version an all-inclusive doctrine destroying principles of equality among nations and the human race. Though racism, in its beginning, was a theory which included all human beings and was not clearly anti-Jewish, it has been proven beyond a doubt that only when it turned its barbs against the Jews in particular and was presented as a form of antisemitism, did it spread and acquire many faithful adherents. And, as stated, after the triumph of Nazism and especially during the war, racism became a destructive system of political ideas which threatened to undermine the foundations of the civilized world, the position of the nations, and the individual in human society.
4. Hitler's Racist Ideology

Let us now deal with the nature of the racist-antisemitic perception of Adolf Hitler. In the twenties and thirties of this century, many sought to trace the subjective motivations for the Nazi leader’s blazing, obsessive hatred of the Jews. There is no conclusive evidence for the premise that contacts with Jews in the stages prior to his political rise, a searing personal injury, or disappointment in everyday life, are what kindled the zealous, constant, flame of hatred. Hitler himself, in Mein Kampf, claimed that he knew no Jews at first hand nor had he imbibed antisemitic feelings in his home or in his youth. According to him, this hate grew as a result of his observations as he crystallized his ideational development in Vienna. Chance encounters in the streets of the capital with Jews wearing long garments caused him to ask himself whether these are Jews; then, on second thought, whether they are Germans. As he puts it, he discovered their two-faced role, of paralyzing German-nationalist desires and introducing cosmopolitanism, which was infiltrating the Viennese central press, owned and influenced by Jews. Thus he came to understand the nature of the Jewish leadership of the Austrian Social Democratic party which managed to lead the German workers astray and harness them to foreign international political programs.30

Hitler’s biographers think that he adopted his ideas about the Jews, and shaped his hatred of them, from his obsession with reading the cheap pamphlets and popular antisemitic gutter literature which was widespread in Vienna at the beginning of the century.31 In any case, it may be possible, then, to give credence to Hitler’s words that “in Vienna, he learned to hate the Jews.”

It is generally accepted that Hitler’s ideological-political teaching was eclectic, that is, that he took the main points of his doctrine from the views of others and tailored them to the social and political circumstances of his time. He succeeded in making racism part of the plank of a populist political party, thus putting antisemitism at the center of both political ideology and political action. Walther Hofer, a Swiss scholar, makes the point that “without antisemitism the entire structure of the National Socialist Weltanschauung collapses. The doctrine of the racial enemy belongs to National Socialism in an essential way, just as the doctrine of class struggles is identified with Bolshevism.”32 Nolte points to the fact that Hitler focused his various and contradictory accusations leveled against the Jews in the various antisemitic ideologies, and argued that their origin is in the Jewish race.33 Many researchers have underscored the fact that Hitler adhered to antisemitism throughout his political career, from his first steps in the arena (the first political document of September 1919) until his end in beleaguered and destroyed Berlin in April 1945 (his words in his will about preserving the race, and the Jewish enemy as “the poisoner of the nations”).

Hitler was often confronted by the conflict between his declared ideological principles on the one hand, and his realistic political interest on the other. In such instances he was sometimes forced to compromise or to retreat from the ideological line. This is the only way one can understand his pact with Stalin, or Japan’s inclusion in the broad political-ideational coalition.34 Only as regards the Jews and racial antisemitism was Hitler unprepared for compromise or discussion except for temporary tactical deviations, such as tempering the blatant show of antisemitism for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.35 Eberhard Jaeckel, in his work on Hitler’s Weltanschauung, points out that after the 1923 Munich “putsch” and his stint in jail, a change took place in Hitler’s political premises and his tactics directed toward gaining power, but “the conceptions of racial policy remained surprisingly constant.”36 In the stage prior to his gaining power and in the first years of the Third Reich, Mussolini strongly criticized Hitler’s racism and his extreme antisemitism. Il Duce was at that time considered the senior and experienced partner in the pair of leaders of Fascist Regimes, and he tried to restrain Hitler, because of his reservation in principle about the Aryan-Nordic myth, and the fear that world Jewry might use its strength to harm Fascism. Mussolini offered to mediate between the Jews and the Nazi leader and a number of times raised the Jewish question in his contacts with Hitler and his coterie. In the final analysis, however, Hitler was not influenced by Mussolini’s pleadings – on the contrary, Il Duce subsequently adopted the racist-antisemitic legislation.37

Now to some of Hitler’s basic ideas about the Jews. The matter of the Jews occupied Hitler incessantly and he constantly returned to it in writing and in his speeches: in Mein Kampf and in his second, unpublished book, in Hitler’s Secret Conversations or Hitler’s Table Talks, and in his many speeches and discussions with statesmen and assistants.40

According to Hitler, the Jews are not a religious community nor a nation in the accepted sense of the term, but a race. The structure of a religious community helps the Jews to organize and demand rights of the nations among whom they dwell. Jews are not fit to establish a state of their own and maintain it because they lack the ability to work and to create, and they are especially far removed from nature and agriculture which is the nurturing infrastructure of the human strength of the nation. The Jews have no creative ability of their own and adopt as theirs the achievements of the creative Aryan race, and therefore they are clearly an element of secondary importance. The ability of the Jews lies in preserving their racial purity, in penetrating into the arteries of the economic lives of foreign nations, and in the spreading of ideas which advance their goals. The Jews aim at world domination through economic power and political enslavement. “The Jew as a race,” said Hitler in a 1923 speech, “has eminent powers of self-preservation, but as an individual he possesses no cultural gifts. He is the demon of the disintegration of peoples, he is the symbol of the unceasing destruction of their life.”41

The parasitic Jews living among the nations were never able and never desired to assimilate or to blend into their host nation. “As a matter of fact,” says Hitler, “the Jew can never become a German however often he may affirm that he can. If he wished to become a German, he must surrender the Jew in
him. And that is not possible: He cannot, however much he try, become a German at heart, and that for several reasons: first, because of his blood; second, because of his character; thirdly, because of his will; and fourthly, because of his actions. "The great danger in the Jew disguised as a non-Jew is in the violation of the blood; blood was like a fetish to him, the essence of the person and the secret of the nation's vitality and power. "All great cultures of the past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning." . . . for men do not perish as a result of lost wars, but by loss of that force of resistance which is contained only in pure blood." 

Hitler further claimed that, as a rule, the Jewish race wants to rule the nations. Jews made their way among the nations of Europe as business people and brokers, and in the course of time gained "a monopolistic position in commerce and finance." Then the Jews sought equal civic rights, and when that was given them they asked for special rights. In modern times the Jews became active in politics and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion reflects the worldwide Jewish conspiracy. The Jews do not wage their campaign openly but conceal their designs behind theories and various and conflicting political movements such as capitalism and liberalism on the one hand, and socialism and communism on the other. They combined all of these in order to blur their authentic racial-nationalistic characteristics and to set up humane, international interests and values in their stead. Within this all-encompassing framework of theories, doctrines, and political organizations, Jews of different backgrounds - people of great wealth on the one hand, and renowned revolutionaries on the other - function with one mind and toward one goal. According to Hitler, the Jews had already gained some of their ends in a few European countries and had achieved a complete victory in Bolshevist Russia. The Germans, who are the most laudable and least damaged racial branch among the European nations, bear the responsibility of fighting to the end against the Jews. Time is of the essence, for the contest between the "Aryan" race and the Jewish race has reached a decisive stage. Hitler saw himself as the man of destiny upon whom rests the mission of leading the "Aryan" race to victory. However, should the Jews realize their plot and succeed in gaining world domination, all will end in total disaster which will include the Jews, because after the object upon which the parasite feeds is destroyed, the parasite can no longer sustain itself. This mix of untenable opinions and prejudices fed the spiritual world of the leader of the National Socialist Party and created an eschatological world-view with him as the uniquely gifted one appointed to save the world from destruction and to establish firmly the naturally chosen master race as savior and ruler.

This is not the place to discuss at length the subject, interesting in itself, of Hitler's duality: on the one hand, a captive of an ideologically dogmatic perception replete with fantasies and stubborn, irrational opinions; on the other hand, a clear-eyed, skilled statesman who knew how to operate with agility and shrewdness in critical situations. Of course, in Jewish policy matters it was mostly the first Hitler who spoke and acted, the Hitler wedded to the racist ideology.

From the Nazis' rise to power, their Jewish policy was conducted along two tracks: the concrete and the abstract or long-range ideological. They moved along the first track in the implementation of the anti-Jewish laws and measures. However, in the background, beyond the matter at hand, there was always the general, ideologically significant system with the need for an absolute or "final solution" of the Jewish question. In the various stages, this solution was not actually clearly defined, but it was clearly more radical than any step actually being taken, each of which was only a piece, as it were, of the overall solution.

Those who review the history of the Third Reich sometimes posit that the program for the physical extermination of the Jewish people was clarified and prepared by the Nazis from the very outset of their assumption of power, and that they perpetrated their evil design step by step until the act of total murder. As has been stated, a careful study of the Nazi policy of the first years reveals that it was not always single-tracked and clear. In any case, the abundant documentation at our disposal proves with certainty that the program for the murder of the Jewish people as a realistic method for the "solution of the Jewish problem" was not raised until 1941.

On the other hand, it is absolutely imperative to invalidate the opinion, heard from time to time even now, that the antisemitism of Hitler and the Nazis served at first only as an effective propaganda point, and later on as a factor in establishing the regime, and as a diversion from the real problems besetting Germany. In no way, shape, or manner is this opinion acceptable, and the secret documentation available to us, revealing the innermost thoughts of Hitler and the Nazi elite, indicates that racial antisemitism and the "Jewish problem" occupied the leaders of the regime and the Party as a most central problem. (In addition to Hitler's "table talk," this is revealed in Goebbels' diaries, in Frank's daily work-log and others). The opposite is the case. The very private expressions were always sharper and more extreme than those used publicly. Furthermore, it is known that Hitler and his henchmen adhered to the antisemitic line and made it ever harsher even after they were solidly in power and no longer in need of demagogic propaganda. The truth is that the Nazis continued their anti-Jewish campaign not only when it was no longer of any use to them but even when it harmed them and compelled them to conduct the
murder campaign in utmost secrecy, hiding it as much as possible even from
the knowledge of the Germans themselves. In the “final solution” phase of the
Jewish problem, people who were working under slave conditions for the Nazi
war effort were murdered and at a time when the Third Reich was faced with a
constantly growing labor shortage.

In the above-mentioned political document of September 1919, Hitler em-
phasized that he was not on the side of emotional antisemitism’s being ex-
pressed by outbreaks of rioting, but that he was for “rational antisemitism,”
that is, for putting into effect a continuous, persistent anti-Jewish line bearing
the character of a system leading by a planned process to the complete solution
of the problem. 46 This does not mean that Hitler recoiled from the vulgar anti-
semitism of Der Stuermer or from the “Crystal Night” initiative. What it does
mean is that sporadic anti-Jewish actions or persecutions from below were not
Hitler’s final aim; he sought to provide the anti-Jewish campaign with a format
of political activity leading to a planned “solution” of the Jewish question.

5. Nazi Measures against the Jews

Let us now turn to the main stages in the National Socialist policy on the
Jews in the 1933–1945 years.

During the first stage, from the time the Nazis came to power until 1938, a
system was put into effect against the Jews of legal discrimination, of removing
Jews from the community of citizens with rights, from public office, from cul-
tural life, and finally, even from the economic life of Germany. During that
period, Germany’s new rulers were interested in the emigration of the Jews,
but the economic policy which kept the Jewish emigrants from taking their
possessions with them slowed the pace of the exodus. Another most important
factor which prevented emigration on a much larger scale was the controlled
quota policy of immigration of the United States and other overseas countries,
as well as unemployment and fear of economic crisis in the European countries.

The great Arab revolt” and the restrictions on entry to Palestine imposed by
the Mandatory Government limited that possibility.

In the second stage, which began with a series of severe anti-Jewish edicts
and the strengthening of Nazi Germany’s political status in 1938, Jewish
matters were turned over to the S.S. and the German police, the voluntary
emigration became a forced one, and legal discrimination was to a great extent
replaced by violence. After the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, a
further development in Jewish policy occurred. The new situation was charac-
terized by two basic changes: With the annexation by Germany of most of
Poland and a series of west European countries, the number of Jews within its
jurisdiction rose very greatly; on the other hand, the chances for emigration
departed completely. As a result, the suggestions for a solution of the Jewish
problem, especially their removal from the Third Reich, centered on the idea
of concentrating the Jews in the east, in the area which in the past had belonged to

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