

SOCIALISM AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

The relationship between socialism and anti-Semitism has been the subject of scholarly interest and debate for some time. In 1962 the publication of Edmund Silberner's *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage* sparked a historical controversy. The author claimed that anti-Semitic tendencies were not only present in modern socialism but that the reasons for this hostility to Jews were also similar in motivation and origin to bourgeois anti-Semitism. Silberner's controversial argument was frequently in evidence at the international symposium convened in December 1976 by the Institute for German History, Tel Aviv University on "Jews and the German Labor Movement, 1848–1918."

Participants were agreed that anti-Semitism stood in direct contradiction to socialist theory but they also recognized that many social democratic theorists, e.g., August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and Karl Kautsky, had underestimated its importance and danger. Reinhard Rürup (Berlin) presented the view that for a comprehensive historical judgment it was unimportant whether individual socialists or certain socialist groups occasionally expressed anti-Semitic opinions. Shulamit Volkov (Tel Aviv) seconded this position and defended German Social Democracy against undifferentiated accusations of anti-Semitism. She supported Rürup's thesis that there was an absence of social or psychological factors suggesting an anti-semitic orientation among Socialists. Neither speaker, however, explained the conflict between theory and practice, between the Social Democratic Party's official rejection of anti-Semitism and the hostility towards Jews by various SPD members.

Jacob Toury (Tel Aviv) argued in his paper, "Die Dynamik der Beziehungen zwischen Juden und Arbeiterbewegung im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts," that there was not necessarily an identity of interests between the goals advocated by German Jews and those advanced by the labor movement. He depicted the industrial working class as an emerging and newly self-conscious social class, the product of "declassed" socio-historical elements. German Jews, by contrast, represented an "advancing social stratum" that did not wish to "sink into the European proletariat." Because of these basically different sociological points of departure the large majority of Jews believed after 1848 that their future lay in realizing political equality—an equality clearly recognized as "individualist-bourgeois emancipation" and not as "human emancipation" in the sense of changing the fundamental economic system. Not until the rise of political and racial anti-Semitism after 1878 did this situation begin to change. With the attraction of more and more Jews to the labor movement, social democracy would, especially after 1893, take an important part in the fight against political anti-Semitism.

Nevertheless, the number of Jews who, as theoreticians, publicists, editors or parliamentary representatives, held leadership positions in the labor movement was, in absolute figures, not large. (Yet in comparison with the other German political parties the Social Democrats had easily the largest amount of Jewish members and leaders.) Susanne Miller (Bonn) reported that of the 111 Social Democratic Reichstag deputies elected in 1912 only 13 were of Jewish extraction. To what degree these individuals were in any way influenced by their Jewishness is, moreover, difficult to determine. In her paper on the "Haltung jüdischer Sozialdemokraten im Ersten Weltkrieg," she demonstrated that a Jewish background did not prove to be a decisive factor in determining political behavior. Talks by Charles Bloch (Tel Aviv/Paris) on Joseph Bloch, Elkana Margalith (Tel Aviv) on Gustav Landauer, Kurt Nemitz (Bremen) on Julius Moses, and Peretz Merhav (Kibbutz Bet Zera) on Rosa Luxemburg, all reinforced Miller's argument. Although pacifist, internationalist and humanist tendencies were sharply

defined in many leading Jewish socialists, there were also Jews who clearly represented the Social Democratic variety of German patriotism during the first world war.

Another subject discussed at the symposium was the relationship between socialism and Zionism. Shlomo Na'aman (Tel Aviv) examined the work of Moses Hess and his idea of a synthesis between socialism and Jewish nationalism, an important element in later Zionist developments. Jehuda Eloni (Tel Aviv) stressed that the main reason an understanding was never reached between the German Zionist Union (Zvfd) and the SPD after 1897 was because the Zionists around Theodor Herzl hoped to gain the support of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the German government for a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine. Playing upon sentiments voiced by Grossherzog Friedrich von Baden that by supporting Zionist aspirations "we weaken the subversive parties and undermine the international finance-power," Herzl attempted to secure government backing by declaring that Zionism would reduce the flood of Jewish youth to revolutionary movements. But a tactical accommodation between Zionists and Social Democrats on domestic political matters was also handicapped by the socialist doctrines of the class struggle and working class internationalism, as well as the theoreticians' tendency to discount the Zionists for their "petit-bourgeois utopianism." As Werner Jochmann (Hamburg) pointed out in his remarks on the relationship between the labor movement and Zionism from 1897 to 1918, differences in-principle foredoomed all attempts at cooperation to failure.

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Politics and Society, a new left academic journal, welcomes contributions on European and Third World labor history. Because its readers represent a cross-section of interests in the social sciences, articles with some general theoretical claims will be preferred to purely empirical ones. Contributions should be sent to Margaret Levi, Manuscript Editor, *Politics and Society*, Department of Political Science, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195.

The New Labor Review is a graduate students' journal dealing with Labor Studies. It publishes articles and essays on the labor movement in the United States and abroad, past and present, with special attention to labor economics, labor law, industrial sociology, and labor history. Manuscripts which also involve the role of labor in local elections or interviews with local labor leaders are especially welcome. For further information contact: Richard A. Kaplan, Managing Editor, *The New Labor Review*, San Francisco State University, Division of Cross-Disciplinary Programs in the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132.

The Maryland Historian is planning a special issue on the social and cultural history of the American worker for Fall 1977 publication. This issue will include examples of the best work currently being done in the field and would be suited for use in undergraduate and graduate social and labor history courses. *The Maryland Historian* is a semi-annual publication of the graduate students in the history department at the University of Maryland—College Park. The annual individual subscription rate is \$3 and the institutional rate is \$8 per year. For further information contact the Editor, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20742.