

INTRODUCTION

This issue is on one particular theme; it contains seven contributions on the history of anti-Semitism. The reasons why this subject deserves special interest hardly need to be substantiated at length. A sufficient reason might be that anti-Judaism, from time to time erupting in bloody pogroms, runs through the whole of European history from late Antiquity to the present. But the crucial reason must surely be our decidedly negative judgment of this tradition, which found its terrible climax in the Holocaust. It is quite clear in this case that our interest is determined by a moral judgment so obvious that we do not even try to hide it.

Karl Kautsky, asked by Polish comrades to give his opinion on the shocking Jew-baiting at the Bessarabian town of Kishinev in 1903 expressed his conviction that full emancipation of the Jews was a prerequisite for overcoming anti-Semitism; for full emancipation necessarily would lead to assimilation, i.e., the dissolution of Jewry as an alien group. Kautsky referred in the first place to the Russian Empire, in the Western areas of which nearly half of all Jews lived at the time.

After 1917 that prerequisite, as far as most European countries were concerned, was fulfilled. Nevertheless, in the centre of Europe anti-Semitism, which for Kautsky had been only “a product of the desperate struggle of declining social strata”, received an enormous impetus at precisely that time. Especially in Germany, first due to the frustrations and the distress resulting from the lost war, then to the world-wide economic depression, anti-Semitism developed its own dynamism, which contributed not a little to the victory of Nazism. During the Second World War Nazi Germany pushed anti-Semitism to its extreme, thereby even subordinating the requirements of the war to the so-called “final solution”, i.e., the physical extermination of the Jews.

The fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War has occasioned divergent reflections. But one thing should be beyond question: the destruction of the Third Reich put an end to one of the most horrible crimes in the history of mankind. Therefore it is quite natural that this anniversary has given renewed impetus to the search for the various antecedents of that crime – a search that is inspired by our concern about the future as well. After all, the Holocaust has demonstrated clearly enough that the achievements of modern civilization offer no protection against a rapid descent into darkerst barbarity. Who, even in 1935, despite the Nuremberg Laws, could have foreseen the Holocaust?

Kautsky was possibly right in expecting the definitive overcoming of racist prejudices only on the “dissolution of the races in a unitary

mankind". Anyway, that aim still seems a long way off. We think here not only of the various ethnic conflicts that accompany the process of post-colonial nation building in the Third World, or of the racial conflicts in South Africa and the USA. In Europe, too, racist tendencies, due to the current unemployment, seem to gain new strength. They are now directed above all against immigrants from the former colonies and foreign workers previously brought in *en masse*. But even some anti-Semitism is smouldering on. It often emerges in the form of coarse criticism of the State of Israel (which, of course, is not to say that every criticism of Israeli policy can be regarded as evidence of anti-Semitism).

Although anti-Semitism cannot yet be discounted, exclusive concentration on it might involve some danger: anti-Semitism, at present hardly the most threatening variety of racism, in the past took such a cruel form that, compared with it, other varieties of racism might seem quite innocuous – too innocuous to hold our attention. As against that there is the hope that the case of anti-Semitism, just because of the horrific consequences to which it led, might bring greater sensitivity – not only towards new anti-Semitic tendencies, but also towards any form of racism.

In compiling this issue it is not uniformity which has been aspired to, but rather, as far as the restricted space permitted it, diversity. The seven contributions differ in length, approach and character, and refer to different periods and countries.

Dik van Arkel in his contribution, the translation of an article previously published in the *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, sketches a model which seeks to explain the growth of anti-Jewish stereotypes since late Antiquity. In this model, presented in detail in a book due to be published shortly, the central concept is a specific one of social distance, which is calculated on a method developed by Van Arkel for this purpose. It is one of the rare instances of an "attempt at a hypothetical-deductive method in historical research".

In the following article Herbert A. Strauss informs us in brief about a research project of the Centre for Research on Anti-Semitism in Berlin. The interest is focused on the tradition of anti-Jewish stereotypes in popular culture, whereby it is assumed that these stereotypes did not necessarily signify a clearly anti-Semitic attitude, but in any case formed a soil upon which subsequently militant anti-Semitism could develop. The description of this project, for which the methods of various branches of the humanities and the social sciences have been employed, gives at the same time the framework in which the following case-study by Rainer Erb has been realized. It deals with a decree of 1836 by the Prussian King Frederick

William III. This decree, which pertained to four Westphalian districts, is an early instance of such a recourse to traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes – in this case in order to veil the real causes of rural distress after the agrarian reforms.

Similar assumptions are at the root of Alina Cala's contribution, which is a translation of two chapters from her as yet unpublished thesis from Warsaw University. Cala's contribution treats the beginnings of anti-Semitism in the Kingdom of Poland in the last decades of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the 'sixties, next to the emancipation of the peasants, the emancipation of the Jews, who formed about 13 per cent of the population of the Kingdom at the time, was the second great social problem. The solution of both problems was called for by the Polish patriots, who sought to gain as broad as possible support for the imminent insurrection; the actual solution, for precisely the opposite motive, was brought about in the early 'sixties by the Tsarist authorities. The reforms then accomplished, which abolished the barriers of social ranks, opened the way to the formation of a modern nation. But this process took place at a time when the national existence seemed to be increasingly menaced by a brutal policy of Russification. Therefore modern Polish nationalism had a defensive character. It did no longer place its hopes upon "romantic" struggles for political independence, but rather upon the economic development of the country, thereby pinning its faith in the first place upon the "people" (*lud*). For the "people", however, who were to be mobilized for the national cause, in the economic sphere the "alien" appeared in the first place to be a Jew or a German. The intelligentsia, too, felt under increasing competition from assimilated Jews. Under these circumstances anti-Semitism could fulfil an integrating function. All the more so as it did not involve any risk, for the Tsarist authorities, pleased by this possibility to channel social unrest, actively favoured anti-Semitism. Cala's contribution deserves attention, not least for the reason that in Polish historiography the subject has been rather taboo until now. In the first part she sketches the traditional image of the Jews in Polish society, and in the second part the process of anti-Semitism becoming a constituent element of the nationalist ideology.

In the following contribution Nancy Green deals with a development which led in the opposite direction, i.e., the overcoming of anti-Jewish stereotypes in the French socialist movement before the First World War. Green traces this development back to an event and to a process. On the one hand, she traces it to the Dreyfus Affair, which, revealing the reactionary character of anti-Semitism, forced the French socialists to adopt a definite attitude in favour of human rights (be they abstract), a Jew (be he bourgeois) and the Republic (be it bourgeois, too). On the other hand, she

traces it also to the changes in the social structure of French Jewry brought about by the Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, due to which the French socialists became aware of the existence of a Jewish proletariat.

After this article, which brings us into the more specific field of the IISG, there comes a study by Jack Jacobs on the views on the question of Karl Kautsky, the most prominent Marxist theorist of the Second International, who, by the way, fully supported the position of Jaurès in the Dreyfus Affair. According to Jacobs, Kautsky's views on the Jewish question were in a sense particularly influential, as they were even shared by many of those who opposed him on other questions. Jacobs is critical of the opinion held by Edmund Silberner, amongst others, that Kautsky's attitude was in fact anti-Jewish. Certainly, Kautsky advocated assimilation and was opposed to Zionism, which counteracted it, but he rejected any attempt to secure that aim by force. If, however, social democracy was to come out against all racial discrimination, the Jewish proletariat for its part had to enter the united class struggle of the international proletariat. Due to the solidarity of the class struggle, which set common tasks, the gulf which traditionally divided the Jews from their non-Jewish environment would disappear. – Kautsky lived to witness the victory of Nazism in Germany as well as the *Anschluss* of Austria, but not the Holocaust; he died some months before the outbreak of the Second World War, in October 1938, in his exile in Amsterdam. His wife, Luise, died six years later, in December 1944, in the concentration camp of Auschwitz.

The Holocaust, the destruction of the Third Reich and the founding of the State of Israel, argues Herbert A. Strauss in the concluding contribution, put an end to the history of anti-Semitism as it had existed until then. In this contribution, the slightly revised text of a lecture given at the Gesamthochschule Bochum (West Germany) in 1984, Strauss reviews different approaches that have been employed in research on anti-Semitism, and evaluates them from the point of view of their influence upon defence designs against that prejudice. He thus introduces to the research on anti-Semitism, which, after Auschwitz, cannot be value-free, a pragmatic calculus.

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