

**Social Democratic Responses
to Antisemitism and the *Judenfrage* in Imperial
Germany: Franz Mehring (A Case Study)**

PhD Thesis

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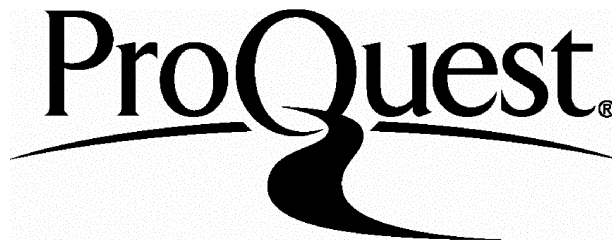
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Abstract

This thesis examines German attitudes towards Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, focusing on a dimension of political discourse typically noted for its resistance to antisemitism: Social Democracy. Most scholarship on the dealings of Imperial German society with matters Jewish tends to focus specifically on self-defined antisemites and overt manifestations of antisemitism. In contrast, this study examines how a broader set of prevalent perceptions of (supposedly) Jewish phenomena was articulated by theoretically more sophisticated Social Democrats.

Their polemics against antisemites frequently used the term 'antisemitic' simply to identify their party-political affiliation without necessarily confronting their hostility to Jews, let alone did it imply a concomitant empathy for Jews. While the party-political opposition of Social Democracy against party-political antisemitism remains beyond doubt, a genuine anathematization of anti-Jewish stereotypes was never on the agenda and the ambiguous stance of Franz Mehring (1846–1919) was in fact quite typical of attitudes prevalent in the party.

The first two chapters argue that neither Mehring's critique of 'philosemitism' nor his dealings with Marx's *Zur Judenfrage* made him as exceptional a figure among his peers as has generally been suggested. The third chapter addresses the criticism levelled at Mehring in 1903 for his support of the former antisemitic deputy, Hans Leuß, suggesting that the one issue that criticism did not hinge on was Leuß' stance on matters Jewish. The final chapter deals with an instance in which Mehring denounced Bernstein as an antisemite (1904). It not only illustrates how the attitude towards the person saying something detrimental about Jewry could be rather more decisive when it came to classifying someone as antisemitic than the content or context of the detrimental remark itself but also how pronouncements could address matters Jewish without it being in any way obvious to us that they do so.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABARS	Bebel, August. <i>Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften</i> 3 [ed. Anneliese Beske, Gustav Seeber et al.] Munich: KG Saur, 1995: 363–398. <i>Idem. Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften</i> 7–9 [ed. Anneliese Beske, Eckhard Müller] Munich: KG Saur, 1997.
AfS	<i>Archiv für Sozialgeschichte</i>
AGSA	Grünberg, Carl, ed. <i>Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung.</i>
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BIISH	<i>Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History</i>
BzG	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung</i>
BWABE	Blumenberg, Werner, ed. <i>August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels.</i> [Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen und österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung 6] London, The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1965.
BWABK	Kautsky, Karl Jr., ed. <i>August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky.</i> [Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen und österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung NSer. 2] Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971.
BWEBE	Hirsch, Helmut, ed., <i>Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels.</i> [Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen und österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung NSer. 1] Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970.
CEH	<i>Central European History</i>
DBJ	<i>Deutsche Biographisches Jahrbuch</i>
DZfPh	<i>Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie</i>
FES Schriftenreihe	Schriftenreihe des Forschungsinstituts der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FeuillNZ	Feuilleton section of the <i>Neue Zeit</i>
Fonds 201	Russian Centre for Preservation and Research of Modern Historical Documents (RCChIDNI, former IML/CPA), Fonds 201: Franz Mehring
Fricke	Fricke, Dieter. <i>Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1869–1917</i> 1–2. Berlin: Dietz, 1987.
GS	Mehring, Franz. <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> 1–15. [ed. Thomas Höhle, Hans Koch, Josef Schleifstein] Berlin: Dietz [1960 ff., 2 nd ed.] 1976.
GSA	Mehring, Franz. <i>Gesammelte Schriften und Aufsätze in Einzelausgaben.</i> [ed. Eduard Fuchs] Berlin: Soziologische Verlagsanstalt, 1929 ff.
GWU	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
HZ	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
IRSH	<i>International Review of Social History</i>
IWK	<i>Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung</i>
JbA	<i>Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung</i>
JCH	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
JHI	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
JSS	<i>Jewish Social Studies</i>
LBIYB	<i>Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook</i>
LVZ	<i>Leipziger Volkszeitung</i>
LW	Lenin, V. I. <i>Werke</i> 1–42. Berlin: Dietz, 1955–1973.
LYB	<i>Lessing Yearbook</i>
MEGA1	Marx, Karl, Engels, Friedrich. <i>Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe.</i> Frankfurt/Main: Marx-Engels Verlag, 1927–1935.
MEGA2	Marx, Karl, Engels, Friedrich. <i>Gesamtausgabe.</i> Berlin: Dietz, 1975 ff.
MEW	Marx, Karl, Engels, Friedrich. <i>Werke</i> 1–39. Berlin: Dietz, 1956 ff.
Montagsblatt	<i>Das neue Montagsblatt</i>

Nachlaß Quarck	Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn), Ältere Nachlässe: Marx Quarck.
ndl	<i>neue deutsche literatur</i>
NJMH	<i>Neue Jüdische Monatshefte</i>
NPL	<i>Neue Politische Literatur</i>
NZ	<i>Neue Zeit</i>
RLGB	Luxemburg, Rosa. <i>Gesammelte Briefe</i> 1–6. [ed. Annelies Laschitza, Günter Radczun et al.] Berlin: Dietz, 1982–1993
RLGW	Luxemburg, Rosa. <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> 1–5. [ed. Günter Radczun et al.] Berlin: Dietz, 1970–1975
SAZ	<i>Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung</i>
LBI Schriftenreihe	Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts
SMH	<i>Sozialistische Monatshefte</i>
SPW	<i>Sozialistische Politik und Wirtschaft</i>
ST	<i>Schwäbische Tagwacht</i>
TAJb	<i>Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte</i> ; previously: <i>Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte (Tel Aviv)</i>
WaM	<i>Welt am Montag</i>
WB	<i>Weimarer Beiträge</i>
ZfG	<i>Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</i>
ZfS	<i>Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung</i>
ZRGG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>

Introduction¹

The public debate unleashed in Germany in 1996 by Daniel Goldhagen's *Willing Executioners* owed its initial momentum and vehemence to the emphatic way in which he placed antisemitism squarely at the heart of his explanation of the Shoah and insisted on the primacy of antisemitism as the main motive force behind it. In doing so he not only rejected the structuralist argument but grappled with the false dichotomy that the juxtaposition of intentionalist and structuralist explanatory models had previously established. The intentionalist model tended to concede the significance of antisemitism as the (or at least a) central motive force behind the Shoah but located the determination to exterminate Jewry almost exclusively with the Nazi elites and portrayed the implementation of that intention as an imposed top-down process in which German society as a whole collaborated reluctantly and primarily under duress. The structuralist model, by contrast, redirected the focus towards the activities and experiences not only of the entire state and military apparatus at all its levels but also of German society more generally. The more complex and variegated picture of the Shoah's perpetration that consequently emerged invariably made the issue of the motive forces driving and facilitating the Shoah a more complex and variegated one too. This presents a real enough challenge, of course, but there can be little doubt that some historians, most notably perhaps Hans Mommsen,² pursued the structuralist path from the outset with the intention of dislodging antisemitism from its central function in any explanation of the Shoah. Instead, a form of discourse increasingly emerged that, as Alois Hahn has put it rather aptly,³ discusses the Shoah as if a reconstruction of the means by which the perpetrator acquired the murder weapon already offered a comprehensive explanation of the reasons for the murder.

Against this background, Goldhagen sought not only to reassert antisemitism as the crucial point of departure for any explanation of the Shoah but tried to do so in a way compatible with a notion of extensive societal responsibility for the perpetration of the Shoah. The Shoah was not only the intentional realization of an ideologically motivated project but that project, he argued, was one that the

¹ For an earlier introductory outline of my doctoral research cf. my paper: "Es ist überall derselbe Faden, den ich spinne." Annäherungen an Franz Mehrings Haltung zu Antisemitismus und Juden,' in Dieter Bähitz, Manfred Beetz, Roland Rittig (eds.), *Dem freien Geiste freien Flug. Beiträge zur deutschen Literatur für Thomas Höhle* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003): 129–154. Cf. also my entry on Mehring in Richard S. Levy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Antisemitism, Anti-Jewish Prejudice and Persecution* 1–2 (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, forthcoming). Hereafter Levy, *Encyclopedia*. In trying to comply as best I could with the word limit, I ultimately decided to give preference to the material presented and discussed in the main text and erased a substantial number of additional detailed bibliographical footnotes that would, to my mind, have been required to reference the thesis adequately.

² For an equally succinct and stark presentation of Mommsen's argument cf., for instance, his 'The Civil Service and the Implementation of the Holocaust: From Passive to Active Complicity,' in Michael Berenbaum, Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Washington, Bloomington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Indiana University Press, 1998): 219–227.

³ Alois Hahn, 'Dialektik der Aufklärung Revisited,' in Max Miller, Hans-Georg Soeffner (eds.), *Modernität und Barbarei. Soziologische Zeitdiagnosen am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1996): 156–174, here 169.

bulk of German society subscribed to and it did so with considerable enthusiasm at that.⁴ Only over time did it become clear to his supporters and detractors in the public forum alike, that Goldhagen had in fact entered into a zero sum game. The strong continuity he ascribed to eliminationist antisemitism in German society prior to the Shoah was complemented by an equally radical but quite inexplicable discontinuity in its aftermath. Almost overnight the spectre of democratic re-education had apparently beaten the eliminationist antisemitism previously integral to the make up of German society for centuries into retreat. As Goldhagen made this assumption more explicit and it thus became clearer that the preparedness to engage his stark portrayal of societal implication in the perpetration of the Shoah was in effect a cathartic exercise rewarded with a clean bill of health for post-war German society, the public debate soon sailed into steadier waters and Goldhagen turned from bogeyman to highly decorated pet.

The problem with Goldhagen's explanatory model is not so much that its portrayal of the implication of the bulk of German society in the perpetration of the Shoah is unduly stark or bleak. In this respect the merits of his book remain considerable. The real problems lie elsewhere. In granting post-war German society a clean bill of health he not only legitimised the increasingly aggressive calls to draw a final line beneath the critical examination of German society's responsibility for the Shoah. He also sanctioned the strategies actually developed after 1945 to deal with that responsibility although the bulk of those strategies in fact did more to minimize and evade than to explain and address the implication of much of German society in the Shoah. More importantly for our context here, however, his exclusive focus on the continuity of eliminationist antisemitism in German society prior to the Shoah is a reductionist one that grossly oversimplifies the questions it sets out to answer.

We need neither subordinate antisemitism as the central motive force behind the Shoah to other factors nor subscribe to assumptions of the 'what antisemitism really stood for' bent to appreciate that an account of eliminationist antisemitism and its development as an ideology in isolation will explain neither why nor how the Shoah could be perpetrated. Rather than *isolate* antisemitism as a phenomenon, we need to understand how it could become functional as so potent and integral an ideological force, how it was linked to other ideological and/or epistemological set pieces that partly resulted from, partly contributed to, a comprehensive mind set that could then, in its entirety, facilitate the perpetration of the Shoah.⁵

⁴ For an extremely interesting discussion of Goldhagen's undertaking cf. Steven E. Aschheim, 'Post-Holocaust Mirrorings of Germany: Hannah Arendt and Daniel Goldhagen,' in *TAJb* 26 (1997): 345–353, esp. 350–352.

⁵ For a similar line of argument cf. Detlev Claussen, *Vom Judenhaß zum Antisemitismus* (Darmstadt, Neuwig: Hermann Luchterhand, 1987), 8. Hereafter Claussen, *Judenhaß*.

As is the case with the notion of the German *Sonderweg* more generally,⁶ we need in this whole debate always to think in terms of both continuity and discontinuity and have to differentiate carefully between necessary and sufficient explanatory factors. Germany's development prior to 1933 clearly did put in place a specific set of conditions without which National Socialism would not have been a viable option at that particular juncture. But that does not imply that what then transpired followed necessarily or inevitably from that set of conditions. One may well be able to identify, individually, each and every one of the factors ultimately required to explain the Shoah as having played a role in other societies and historical contexts too. What that does not alter, however, is the singularity of the outcome, the Shoah itself, which was, as one can apparently not emphasize enough, after all a factual occurrence and not merely conceptual putty. It is the singularity of this factual outcome and not some arbitrary 'social-science developmentalism and unrequited whiggishness'⁷ that calls for a sufficiently specific explanation of the course of modern German history. Some denounce this contention as a form of 'moralizing insistence' and profess their hope that it 'has now surely run its course.'⁸ It is to this 'moralizing insistence', however, that I owe my decision to become a historian and it is this 'moralizing insistence' that ultimately underpins the research presented in this thesis.

It is not the notion, then, that each individual phenomenon characteristic of modern German history is peculiar in itself that leads to the assumption of a German *Sonderweg* but the need to trace the specific combination of the phenomena in question that facilitated this very specific outcome, the perpetration of the Shoah. Hence, neither the existence of rampant antisemitism in other societies nor the demonstration that antisemitism, to the extent that it can be analytically isolated as a distinct entity, follows the same basic ideological, rhetorical, and communicative patterns in Germany as it does elsewhere can dispel our problem: for an explanation of the specific *function* of antisemitism in German society the fact that there may be no such thing as a specifically German form of antisemitism in its own right is neither here nor there.

Prima facie, it might well seem that a world that could be neatly divided into antisemites and non-antisemites, as not only Goldhagen's scheme of things clearly suggests, would make our task inordinately easier. In fact, however, certainly as far as the situation in Imperial Germany is concerned, matters are far more complicated and the seemingly so tempting clear-cut juxtaposition of antisemites and non-antisemites can seriously impede our comprehension. It forces us to portray in black and white

⁶ For recent contributions to the extensive debate cf. for example Hans-Ulrich Wehler's modified re-statements, 'The German "Double Revolution" and the "Sonderweg", 1848–79,' in Reinhard Rürup (ed.), *The Problem of Revolution in Germany, 1789–1989* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000): 55–65 and 'A Guide to Future Research on the Kaiserreich?' [Review article] in *CEH* 29, 4 (1996): 541–572; critically: Georg G. Iggers, 'Nationalism and historiography, 1789–1996. The German example in historical perspective,' in Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, Kevin Passmore (eds.), *Writing National Histories. Western Europe since 1800* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999): 15–29 and Geoff Eley, 'Society and Politics in Bismarckian Germany,' [Review article] in *German History* 15, 1 (1997): 101–132. Hereafter Eley, 'Society'; also still useful for a first introduction are Jürgen Kocka, 'German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German "Sonderweg",' in *JCH* 23, 1 (1988): 3–16 and Dieter Groh, 'Der "Sonderweg" der deutschen Geschichte zwischen 1848 und 1945: Mythos oder Realität,' [1983, reprint] in *Idem, Emanzipation und Integration* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1999): 171–202.

⁷ Eley, 'Society,' 131.

a constellation actually characterized by various very murky shades of grey. It is more than evident that Imperial German society was pervaded by a set of perceptions of matters (supposedly) Jewish that was more than problematic in its own right without, however, necessarily reflecting fully-blown antisemitism.

If we take seriously Shulamit Volkov's suggestion that 'antisemitism was transmitted [...] to the Weimar period,' not so much via a direct continuity of organized antisemitism or explicitly antisemitic ideology, but primarily 'through the persistence of a cultural system of norms, vocabulary, and associations'⁹ that were not avowedly antisemitic, it immediately becomes evident that these shades of grey, as it were, are of the utmost importance for our understanding of this process of transmission. It is they that ultimately formed the prevalent set of perceptions of matters identified as 'Jewish' in Imperial German society and this more general set of perceptions, in turn, presumably did more in the long run to render German society susceptible to National Socialist antisemitism than the ideological or organizational continuity of pre-war political antisemitism in its own right.

If we limit ourselves to the more straightforward juxtaposition of antisemites and non-antisemites, we are invariably compelled either to demonize this entire spectrum of problematic perceptions of matters (supposedly) Jewish by classifying them as antisemitic or to exculpate them altogether by qualifying them as non-antisemitic. Either way we impede our ability to understand the dynamics and significance of these perceptions for the process rendering German society capable of the perpetration of the Shoah. It is precisely on these shades of grey, then, that this thesis will primarily focus. More specifically, it will examine the relevance and dynamics of these perceptions by checking for their impact on that sector of non-Jewish Imperial German society where we would least expect it to have gained ground: Social Democracy.

The historiography of Socialism's dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish

The issue of Socialism's dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish is, of course, by no means a new one. A relatively lively debate on the matter ensued especially from the mid-1940s to the early 1980s and Jack Jacobs subsequently 'revisited' the debate with a number of essays published together some ten years ago.¹⁰ Initially, interest in the matter presumably stemmed from two sources. On the one hand, German Social Democracy had, to say the very least, obviously not succeeded in immunizing the bulk of its constituency sufficiently against antisemitism for it to have presented a serious hurdle to the perpetration of the Shoah. On the other hand, Stalin's antisemitic campaigns and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Shulamit Volkov, [Review] in *TAJb* 9 (1980): 545–546, here 546. For probably the most succinct development of her argument to this effect cf. Shulamit Volkov, 'The Written Matter and the Spoken Word. On the Gap Between pre-1914 and Nazi Anti-Semitism,' [1985] in François Furet (ed.), *Unanswered Questions* (New York: Schocken, 1989): 33–53. Hereafter Volkov, 'Written Matter'.

¹⁰ Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "the Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York, London: New York University Press, 1992). Hereafter Jacobs, *Socialists*.

the antisemitic subplot of the East-European show trials in the early 1950s clearly reinforced the need to question the previously more or less automatic assumption that the political Left 'of course' opposed antisemitism.

The extant literature can be divided roughly into two strands. The more critical or pessimistic line extends from Edmund Silberner¹¹ and George Lichtheim¹² to Robert Wistrich,¹³ and Shlomo Na'aman too tended increasingly in this direction towards the end of his life.¹⁴ It maintains that the Socialist movement does indeed have a substantial problem to address in connection at least with its past dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish. Silberner in fact went even further. Focusing especially on early French Socialism and particularly its syndicalist spectrum, he tended to read the implications of this analysis into his evaluation of other strands of Socialism, hence arguing, at least on occasion, that Socialism had actually generated its very own antisemitic tradition. Needless to say, this more critical evaluation was also well in keeping with the conceptual endeavours of those, from Talmon to Sternhell, who argued that the Enlightenment project in its entirety was intrinsically totalitarian and that the orientation of the political Left and the political Right could hence be rendered virtually indistinguishable at certain junctures.

The other, more optimistic line of scholarship evaluating especially Imperial German Social Democracy's dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish began with Paul Massing,¹⁵ was propagated in one of Shulamit Volkov's earlier papers,¹⁶ and culminated in Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel's well-documented but highly problematic monograph published in 1978.¹⁷ Here it was argued that all its relevant shortcomings notwithstanding, Social Democracy had stood firm against antisemitism and that no one could reasonably have assumed that all the ambiguities and deficiencies that can indeed be demonstrated should have been representative of Social Democracy rather than marking the exceptions that prove the rule. Jacobs would seem to belong to this second group rather than the first, although his central proposition, as far as German Social Democracy is concerned, is not so much that its stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish was unproblematic but rather that such problems were negligible within the particular brand of Social Democracy in the tradition of Kautsky and Bernstein that Jacobs apparently identifies with. Moreover, he argues that Kautsky's and

¹¹ For a synthesis of Silberner's argument cf. Edmund Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1962). Hereafter Silberner, *Sozialisten*.

¹² Cf. George Lichtheim, 'Socialism and the Jews,' in *Dissent* [July–August 1968]: 314–342.

¹³ For Wistrich's general argument cf. Robert S. Wistrich, *Socialism and the Jews. The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (London, Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982). Hereafter Wistrich, *Socialism*.

¹⁴ Cf. especially the volume published posthumously by Shulamit Volkov: Shlomo Na'aman, *Marxismus und Zionismus* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1997). Hereafter Na'aman, *Marxismus*.

¹⁵ Paul W. Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1949). Hereafter Massing, *Rehearsal*. On Massing's background and the background of the *Studies in Prejudice* series of which Massing's study was a part cf. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* [1973] (Berkeley: University of California Press, [2nd ed.] 1996) 170–171 and chapter 7 'The Empirical Work of the Institut in the 1940's' (219–252).

¹⁶ Shulamit Volkov, 'The Immunization of Social Democracy against Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany,' in *TAJb* Beiheft 2 (1977): 63–81.

Bernstein's (relative) sensitivity for the situation of Jewry was directly linked to their more 'democratic' (presumably meaning something like 'less crypto-totalitarian') leanings and probably played a role in their developing these more 'democratic' leanings in the first place.¹⁸

In fact, both the more optimistic and the more pessimistic evaluation of Social Democracy's dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish share an underlying consensus. They agree on the fact that Social Democracy was the least antisemitic of the significant political camps in both Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic.

Yet while for some this is already the answer, for others this is only where the interesting questions begin. We have already stressed the importance of Volkov's contention that it was primarily 'the persistence of a cultural system of norms, vocabulary, and associations,' rather than a direct continuity of organized ideological antisemitism, that facilitated the transmission of antisemitism from the Imperial to the Weimar period. Against this background, Leuschen-Seppel's conclusion that (to quote Volkov's paraphrase in her review of Leuschen-Seppel's monograph), 'while the party was practically immune against antisemitism on the political level, it consistently succumbed to it on the cultural level,' most certainly signals a failure that 'must be seen as fatal indeed.'¹⁹

German Social Democracy and the Marxist project

In order to examine the relevance and dynamics of this 'cultural system' by checking for its impact on Social Democracy as the sector of non-Jewish Imperial German society we would least expect to subscribe to it, we do, however, need to define our focus more precisely. It should be a commonplace by now that neither 'the working class' nor 'the labour movement' can form our frame of reference here, nor even Social Democracy in its entirety.²⁰ In Imperial Germany, 'Social Democracy' was, after all, the generic term used to refer to the entire spectrum of organisations and institutions under the sway of the Socialist labour movement. This broad concept resulted from a number of factors, perhaps the most important being the simply breath-taking degree of disenfranchisement – political, social, and cultural – to which the German working class was subjected. As a result, Social Democracy replicated a wide-ranging net of institutions which in effect simulated the rights and integration refused their constituency within Imperial German society. As Peter Nettl,²¹ among others,²² has pointed out, the

¹⁷ Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich* (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, 1978). Hereafter Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*.

¹⁸ Cf., for instance, Jacobs, *Socialists*, 42, 58–59.

¹⁹ Shulamit Volkov, [Review of Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*], *TAJb* 9 (1980): 545–546, here 546.

²⁰ For some of the issues raised in the following discussion (though with a rather different outcome) cf. Jürgen Kocka, 'New Trends in Labour Movement Historiography: A German Perspective,' in *IRSH* 42, 1 (1997): 67–78.

²¹ J. P. Nettl, 'The German Social Democratic Party 1890–1914 as a Political Model,' in *Past & Present* No. 30 (April 1965): 65–95.

²² Probably the best-known discussion of this issue in the Anglophone sphere is that in Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture. Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

problem in this context is, of course, that this sort of subculture can ultimately come to hinge all too exclusively on the profound sense of disenfranchisement that led to its creation in the first place. In that case those who belong to that subculture are highly likely to seize the first best opportunity to substitute the real thing, in other words, integration into society, for the replicated sense of belonging offered by that subculture.

The term 'working class' I would suggest we use purely as a sociological category. Where we come across the use of the term as a political category, predicated on the assumption, firstly, that those belonging to this sociological category would best serve their own interests (and in fact those of humanity as a whole) by pursuing a certain course of political action and, secondly, that they are in fact highly likely or almost inevitably prone to act in the envisaged way, we need to examine carefully what exactly the interests ascribed to the working class are and how it is assumed that its members would become aware of these interests and subsequently go about asserting them. The term 'labour movement' too we should use sociologically to denote all forms of social and political organization geared explicitly to the propagation of interests articulated by groups belonging to the sociological category 'working class'. These need by no means be anti-capitalist and even where they are this by no means inevitably makes them Socialist or emancipatory. To the extent that such groups do not propose the creation of supposedly pre-capitalist social structures and pre-bourgeois political forms and envisage a take over of political power by the working class and a categorically transformative upheaval in property rights we can call them Socialist. Imperial German Social Democracy clearly falls into this category.

By the beginning of World War I, the membership of the party itself exceeded one million and many more were associated with Social Democracy more generally. To want to make claims as to what 'the members' or 'the supporters' of Social Democracy thought and felt, aspired to and called for, is an extremely daring enterprise. All we can really do is seek to understand as precisely as possible the options and influences that are likely to have helped form and determine their choices and decisions. One point often conveniently forgotten in this context is that the single most important formative influence was, of course, not specifically Social Democratic at all. Just like everyone else, potential Social Democrats were subjected to a massive state machinery (often backed up by a powerful church apparatus) designed to churn out and maintain loyal Imperial subjects. When it comes to such phenomena as authoritarianism, lack of initiative and the much-cited 'revolutionary attentism' within Social Democracy²³ the odds are, therefore, that these were not so much vices created by Social Democracy. Rather, they reflected attitudes and behavioural patterns that Imperial German society considered virtuous and Social Democracy failed to tackle with sufficient determination or success.

In this context the formative influence I would assume to have been best equipped to allow Social Democracy to combat the impact of standard Imperial German socialization on its potential constituency is Marxism. Now, it is important to understand that Marxism, in the sense in which I

²³ For the classic development of this notion see Dieter Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus* (Frankfurt/Main, Vienna: Propyläen, 1973). Cf. also *Idem*, *Emanzipation und Integration* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1999) and Hans-Josef Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, [3rd revised edition] 1972).

propose we use this term, was not an organic, spontaneous outgrowth of the Socialist labour movement. In practical terms it was a minority position that developed on the fringes of the emerging Socialist labour movement. Originally, it was quite literally a set of ideas, then a political project, as it were, that was developed by Marx and Engels, their close associates and those who subsequently became convinced of the pertinence and usefulness of the Marxian mode of analysis and its strategic implications. This small group of men (and very few women) tried, in a more or less co-ordinated fashion, to penetrate relevant groups on the far Left of the emerging labour movements to win support for their project. To varying degrees they were able to establish, over time, a Marxist strand within the Socialist labour movement. More often than not this resulted in a process of syncretism far beyond the influence of individual Marxists or Marxist groups and factions that transformed individual tenets of the Marxian approach quite considerably before they entered circulation as one ideological currency among others accepted as legal tender in the highly eclectic ideological dealings of Social Democracy. A particularly obvious illustration of this is perhaps the fact that the leadership of the German party felt the need to withhold both Marx's critique²⁴ of the party programme prepared for the Congress of Gotha in 1875 (at which the SDAP and the majority of the ADAV merged to form the SAPD) and Engels's critique of the draft of the famous Erfurt programme (1891).²⁵ In 1875, even for the leaders of the *Eisenacher* faction, 'insofar as they had understood Marx, his doctrine was,' as Schorske put it, 'worth less to them than the achievement of unity in the labour movement.'²⁶ Marx's critique was not in fact published until the run up to the Congress in Erfurt in 1891, the juncture that presumably saw German Social Democracy as a whole at its most radical. Engels 'made the most of the opportunity'²⁷ by persuading Kautsky to publish Marx's critique of the Gotha programme, now some fifteen years old, in the *Neue Zeit* but even then had to agree to its publication in a sanitized version.²⁸ Engels's own critique of the draft of the Erfurt programme, in turn, was then not deemed fit for publication for another decade either.²⁹ Clearly, the appropriation of Marxism was anything but a smooth process that came naturally to German Social Democracy. We will see this not least when we discuss the appropriation of Karl Marx's *Zur Judenfrage* by German Social Democrats in the second chapter. As I demonstrate there, that appropriation was in fact predicated on at least three fundamental misunderstandings of *Zur Judenfrage* and its significance for the development of Marx's thought.

One prominent German Socialist who saw himself as a stalwart of the Marxist project, who actively sought to assert his understanding of Marxism within the party and continuously tried to spell out its implications for as many walks of life as possible was Franz Mehring.³⁰ Born into a conservative

²⁴ Cf. MEW 19: 13–32.

²⁵ Cf. MEW 22: 227–240.

²⁶ Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 3.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Cf. MEW 19: 549 n12.

²⁹ Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism* (London, New York: Tauris, 1996), 2.

³⁰ For a first introduction to Mehring cf. Helga Grebing, Monika Kramme, 'Franz Mehring,' in Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), *Deutsche Historiker 5* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972): 73–94 – hereafter Grebing, Kramme, 'Franz Mehring' – and the standard accounts by Thomas Höhle, *Franz*

Protestant family in outer Pomerania in 1846, he only became a Social Democrat in 1890, at the age of 45. The way that finally led to his joining Social Democracy had not only been long and difficult, but also full of vacillations and detours, some of them quite dramatic. On at least two occasions he had deserted left-wing liberalism with which he was affiliated for much of his pre-Marxist journalistic career – veering, on these two occasions, not to the Left but emphatically and outspokenly to the Right. Indeed, in the second half of the 1870s and the early 1880s he was a rabid anti-Socialist and built quite a reputation for himself as an expert on the application of anti-Socialist strategies and someone capable of lending those strategies scholarly respectability. By the mid-1880s he had returned to the left-liberal fold and subsequently played a prominent role in the renowned *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, the journalistic flagship, at least for northern Germany, of those political liberals who had refused to make their peace with Bismarck. With Mehring at its helm it became increasingly radical and was eventually the only non-Socialist paper temporarily banned during the *Sozialistengesetz*. Towards the end of 1890, following a protracted and rather messy conflict with his employers precipitated by his dispute with the journalist and playwright Paul Lindau (1839–1919), he lost his post and found himself in a position which required either drastic measures to rebuild badly damaged bridges or offered an excellent opportunity to burn the few that had remained more or less intact. In 1891, Mehring started to write, as yet anonymously, for the *Neue Zeit*, Social Democracy's previously fortnightly theoretical organ that now began to appear on a weekly basis, and he remained one of its outstanding contributors for more than twenty years. He was a prolific journalist, writing for a number of the more influential party publications, and himself edited the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, one of Social Democracy's most prestigious dailies, between 1902 and 1907. The list of his book and pamphlet publications is long. In the course of the 1890s he produced a massive history of Social Democracy, a work which remains an indispensable source to this day. He also dabbled extensively in literary criticism, producing an as yet rather crude pioneering form of materialist literary criticism beginning with his well-known *Lessing-Legende*,³¹ an all-out assault on the myth increasingly popular with the Prussian bourgeoisie that Friedrich II ('the Great', reigned 1740–1786) had been a precursor of the German national cause and Lessing his bourgeois prophet. Mehring's Marx studies³² culminated in a Marx biography published in

Mehring, *Sein Weg zum Marxismus, 1869–1891* (Berlin: Rütten & Loenig, 1956, [2nd rev. ed.] 1958) – hereafter Höhle, *Franz Mehring* – and Josef Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring. Sein marxistisches Schaffen, 1891–1919* (Berlin: Rütten & Loenig, 1959). Hereafter Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*. Cf. also Wolfgang Beutin, Wilfried Hoppe (eds.), *Franz Mehring (1846–1919)* (Frankfurt/Main, Berlin: Peter Lang, 1997). Hereafter Beutin, Hoppe, *Franz Mehring*; cf. also Glen R. McDougall, 'Franz Mehring and the Problems of Liberal Social Reform in Bismarckian Germany 1884–90: The Origins of Radical Marxism,' in *CEH* 16, 3 (1983): 225–255.

³¹ Franz Mehring, *Die Lessing-Legende. Eine Rettung. Nebst einem Anhang über den historischen Materialismus* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1893).

³² Especially *Idem* (ed.), *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle* 1–4 (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1901/1902). Hereafter Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe*.

1918³³ that remains one of the better biographies available. Indeed, where Mehring is known at all in the Anglophone academic world it tends to be for this biography.³⁴

Although his development within the party was not free of ambiguities and vacillations either, it is fair to say that from 1903 at the latest he can be identified more often than not with the emerging left wing of the party. By 1913 he was closely associated with the small group of Social Democrats with whom he would go on to organize the activities that eventually culminated in the establishment of the Communist Party at the end of 1918: Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), Julian Marchlewski (1866–1925), and Leo Jogiches (1867–1917); Karl Liebknecht (1871–1919) only joined the group towards the end of 1914. Mehring attended the legendary meeting in Rosa Luxemburg's flat on the evening of 4 August 1914 and it is evident that from that night on he never looked back. In August 1916, by now a man of seventy, he was taken into *Schutzhaft*.³⁵ His health soon deteriorated so badly, though, that he was released in December. He enthusiastically welcomed the October Revolution and the Bolsheviks in turn made him a member of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences. By the winter of 1918 he had become too ill to attend the founding congress of the Communist Party and the news of Rosa Luxemburg's and Karl Liebknecht's murder are said to have left him so distraught that his health subsequently deteriorated inexorably³⁶ and Mehring died on 28 January 1919. Mehring himself simply equated Marxism with historical materialism. For him the path-breaking aspect of Marx's analytical approach lay in his insistence that social and historical phenomena cannot simply be taken at face value. Although they often appear to result from natural or inevitable 'facts of life' beyond human control they are in fact in every instance the outcome of a genetic process and can hence be understood and accounted for as resulting from the interplay of the factors that contributed to that genetic process. These contributing factors can in turn be identified as representing specific interests of individuals or social groups. Hence, social realities are man-made and therefore also alterable, provided we can identify the points at which the development that has led to the current state of affairs needs to be reversed or altered to bring about an alternative outcome.

One might be forgiven for assuming that people who subscribed to this approach should have been singularly well equipped to see through political myths prevalent at the time such as, to name the two most rampant and crude ones: nationalism and antisemitism. That Mehring and his peers were in fact

³³ *Idem, Karl Marx. Geschichte seines Lebens* (Leipzig: Leipziger Buchdruckerei, 1918). Hereafter *Idem, Karl Marx*; English originally as *Idem, Karl Marx. The Story of his Life*. [transl. Edward Fitzgerald] (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1936).

³⁴ Cf. for example A J P Taylor in his edition of *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, [1967] Reprint 1985), 49: 'The standard life of Marx is by Franz Mehring.'

³⁵ The *Rote Fahne* published his account of the prison experience, 'Militärische Schutzhaft. Eine Gefängnisarbeit,' in 12 instalments between 21 November and 28 December 1918. Mehring's imprisonment featured prominently in a debate on the practice of *Schutzhaft* in the *Reichstag* on 28 October 1916 (*Verhandlungen des Reichstags 308: XIII. Legislaturperiode. II. Session. Stenographische Berichte* [7 June 1916–12 December 1916] 69. *Sitzung*, 1870–1894; on Mehring esp. 1876–1877, 1884, 1892.) A copy of the minutes of this debate was still among Clara Zetkin's papers at the time of her death.

³⁶ Cf. Eduard Fuchs, *Sonderdruck der Vorworts zur zweiten Auflage von Mehrings Marx-Biographie* (Leipzig: Leipziger Buchdruckerei, 1919); excerpt as *Idem*, 'Er starb am Tod seiner Freunde. Erinnerungen an Franz Mehring,' in *Weltbühne* 74, 9 (1979): 283–284.

by no means immune against these myths is now a commonplace and one that is usually enlisted to demonstrate the supposedly intrinsic deficiency of historical materialism. However critical one may be of historical materialism, though, there can be no doubt that Socialists professing a Marxist orientation were susceptible to the myths of nationalism and antisemitism, or at least to some of the concepts and notions on which those myths drew, not because of their historical materialism but in spite of it. It is in this sense that Marxists like Mehring can be counted among those whom one would least expect to subscribe to the perceptions of antisemitism and matters Jewish prevalent in Imperial German Society. Hence the fact that they nevertheless did subscribe to at least some of these perceptions provides a particularly good opportunity to gauge the impact of those perceptions on society as a whole.

When is an anti-anti-semite an anti-anti-semite?

Manifold attempts have been made to define and delineate precisely what constitutes antisemitism or qualifies an individual as an anti-semite.³⁷ Although the matter is destined by its very nature to remain controversial, the fundamental issues in this debate are well rehearsed. My argument throughout this thesis will be based on a categorical rejection of the kernel of truth approach to antisemitism.³⁸ That is not to say that antisemitism is based on 'projections unrelated to any palpable reality,' to use the formulation chosen by Lindemann to caricature rather than portray the stance of his critics,³⁹ or that individual antisemitic perceptions can never coincide with individual aspects of Jewish reality. Nor am I driven by the conviction 'that one should avoid any observations, even if accurate, that anti-Semites might misuse.'⁴⁰ Of course a connection exists between the realities of Jewish existence and antisemitic perceptions. But the crucial question is whether that connection is of a coincidental or of a causal nature.

Contrary to the assumption underlying the kernel of truth approach, the really interesting question is, after all, not which empirically verifiable phenomena antisemitic perceptions may have coincided with or used as a foil but how those perceptions were generated and functioned in the first place. Modern political antisemitism's obsession with the 'invisibility' of the emancipated Jew that supposedly

³⁷ Probably the best survey of this debate is now that in Klaus Holz, *Nationaler Antisemitismus. Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 26–115. Hereafter Holz, *Antisemitismus*. I thank Dr François Guesnet for alerting me to this publication. Cf. also the recent survey by Wolfgang Benz, 'Anti-Semitism Research,' in Martin Goodman, Jeremy Cohen, David Sorkin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 943–955.

³⁸ On this issue specifically cf. Holz, *Antisemitismus*, 62–77.

³⁹ Albert S. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears. Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xvii. Hereafter Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*. Lindemann's version of the kernel of truth approach is a relatively complex one, of course, as his reference to 'the peculiar and elusive interplay of fantasy and reality in anti-Semitism' (ibid., xviii) indicates. This is more than can be said of the immediate causal link between Jewry's role in modern society and antisemitism suggested, for instance, by William D. Rubinstein. For a particularly crass statement cf. his 'Jews in the Economic Elites of Western Nations and Antisemitism,' in *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 42, 1–2 (2000): 5–35.

⁴⁰ Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*, xix

rendered him all the more dangerous to society⁴¹ in any case indicates that empirical verifiability is hardly the standard best suited to help us assess the emergence and dynamics of antisemitic perceptions. Moreover, even where we could assume the coincidence of an antisemitic perception with an actual aspect of Jewish existence, we would of course still need to determine to what extent a phenomenon that may well be empirically verifiable *post facto* was actually in any meaningful sense of the word visible or palpable in everyday life at the time. Either way, the fact remains that antisemitic perceptions constitute not a rational but an irrational response to reality and are based not on one possible representation of reality but on its radical misrepresentation.⁴² That said, antisemitic projections are obviously ‘by no means altogether irrational,’ but rely on a form of ‘applied rather than spontaneous irrationality.’⁴³ How the empirically verifiable phenomena that supposedly give rise to the antisemitic impulse subsequently generate their own misrepresentation in the antisemitic perception is a question that the kernel of truth approach is of necessity structurally incapable of answering and at this juncture it can only either admit defeat or it will inevitably veer, however unintentionally, towards conceding at least a degree of validity to the antisemitic perception(s) at hand.⁴⁴

At this point the utmost clarity is imperative. Take the seemingly straightforward statement that antisemitism is a response to a particular socio-economic state of affairs. This statement can, after all, imply two entirely distinct notions. On the one hand, the implication might be that the socio-economic state of affairs in question creates conditions conducive to the emergence of antisemitism. Under the conditions in question those negatively affected by, or ill at ease with, the socio-economic state of

⁴¹ Cf., for instance, Amos Funkenstein, ‘Anti-Jewish Propaganda: Pagan, Christian and Modern,’ in *Jerusalem Quarterly* No. 19 (Spring 1981): 56–72, here 71; *Idem*, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 323. Hereafter *Idem*, *Perceptions*.

⁴² To avoid any misunderstanding it is perhaps worth pointing out that I am not, of course, by some stroke of epistemological naivety, suggesting that there is any such thing as an identical human perception of reality that is not ultimately based on projection. To my mind the best discussion of this issue is still that by Horkheimer and Adorno at the beginning of the sixth section of the ‘Elemente des Antisemitismus’ in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944/1947/1969) (Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998): 211–225.) The problem, as they explain there, is not that antisemitism is based on projection, for all human perception is in an important sense ultimately projection (*ibid.*, 212), but that it is based on a false projection (*ibid.*, 211), on a blurring of the distinction between the projecting subject and the object that provides the foil for the projection (*ibid.*, 212), and more generally on an exclusion of the reflective faculties in the process of projection (*ibid.*, 214).

⁴³ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Anti-Semitism and Fascist Propaganda,’ [1946] in *Idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften* 8 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998): 397–407, here 401.

⁴⁴ Shulamit Volkov pointed this out a quarter of a century ago in her much-cited (though, one suspects, for many years now far less often actually read than cited) historiographical discussion of antisemitism in Imperial Germany when she stated that, ‘having provided the historical background for the anti-Jewish feelings endemic in the Christian world, having analysed the particular circumstances, [...] having disclosed the strains within [...] society at the time’, the crucial ‘task of explaining the *process*’ by which antisemitic perceptions are actually formed and related to these circumstances and how they develop momentum and the ability to mobilize sections of society, still remains to be tackled. ‘There is only one way by which this task can be avoided,’ she added: ‘Only if one assumes that the antisemites’ claims were truthful [...] is one exempt from the effort to show how men [...] succumbed to the patently false worldview of antisemitism’ (Shulamit Volkov, ‘Antisemitism as a Cultural Code – Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,’ in *LBIYB* 23 (1978): 25–46, here 36.)

affairs project their adverse reaction onto Jewry and this provides them with a means of (mis)interpreting that state of affairs in a way that both strengthens their sense of identity (as members of the non-Jewish in-group) and offers them the ostensible prospect of a possible alleviation of their plight (namely via the removal of the Jews). On the other hand, the implication might be that antisemitism is a response to that socio-economic state of affairs because the Jews really did play the role in, and bore the responsibility for, it that the antisemites ascribed to them. Admittedly, it would be conceded, the antisemitic ideologues tended to embellish their portrayal of this role, based false generalizations on it, and were obviously wrong (and perhaps even disingenuous) in presenting the partial or total elimination of Jewry from society as an easy fix. But the popular anti-Jewish sentiments they drew on, so the underlying assumption, did represent an obvious and reasonable response to actual and specifically Jewish phenomena. These are two radically opposed notions but as I have just tried to demonstrate the formulations they generate can nevertheless be deceptively similar or even identical.

Among Karl Liebknecht's prison notes from 1917–1918, to give a concrete example for this, is an attempt to characterize the Conservatives. The *Deutschkonservative*, he suggested, were characterized 'primarily by their opposition [Gegensatz] to movable [beweglichen] capital, an opposition that grows proportionately to the mobility of the capital; hence also [their] particularly antisemitic and anti-stock exchange tendency'.⁴⁵ Let us compare this with Moishe Postone's theory. He suggested that the anti-capitalist notion at the root of antisemitism is predicated on a distinction between the functions of capital in the sphere of production, on the one hand, and the sphere of circulation, on the other. Although both aspects are in fact integral to capitalism and inextricably linked, industrial capital becomes associated with the use value of commodities and the productivity of 'honest' work, categories, in other words, that are supposedly timeless and not specific to capitalism. Capital's more conspicuous functions in the financial sector, on the other hand, are identified as unproductive and parasitical and are seen to constitute the genuine essence of capitalism. Thus one aspect of capitalism is artificially singled out, declared to represent capitalism as a whole, and the traditional association of Jewry with the money economy then allows for a projection that pins the responsibility for capitalism and its alienating and exploitative nature on 'the Jews'.⁴⁶ Did the early-twentieth-century activist Liebknecht and the late-twentieth-century academic Postone essentially make the same statement, then? Far from it. Liebknecht in fact partly subscribed to the position the critical analysis of which was at the heart of Postone's conceptual endeavour. Where Postone is trying to explain the dynamics behind a process of projection, Liebknecht is simply suggesting that the capitalization process infringed on the economic interests of the clientele whose interests the *Deutschkonservative* primarily represented, hence compelling them to turn on those responsible for this process: the Jews and the stock exchange. That this is what Liebknecht meant is borne out not only by the suggestion of a direct

⁴⁵ Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften* 9 (Berlin: Dietz, 1982): 378. Hereafter Karl Liebknecht, *Schriften*.

⁴⁶ Moishe Postone, 'Anti-Semitism and National Socialism,' in Anson Rabinbach, Jack Zipes (eds.), *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust* (New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1986): 302–314, here 309–312.

nexus between the extent of capital's mobility and the opposition it arouses, but also by the fact that Liebknecht added a final remark stating that this Conservative tendency sprung from the conditions prevalent in the agricultural sector [aus Bedingungen der Landwirtschaft fließend].⁴⁷

While the nature of antisemitism has been widely debated, what constitutes anti-antisemitism or qualifies an individual as an anti-antisemite, by contrast, is an issue that has received very little systematic attention. 'How important it is to pay attention to the opposite side of the spectrum [...] as well, to what may be called the anti-antisemites,' in order to 'evaluate [...] the maximum that German society was ready or able to offer its Jewish population,'⁴⁸ has repeatedly been emphasized. Yet attempts genuinely to do so remain remarkably rare. One observation we soon make if we do look at anti-antisemitic statements is that we are confronted, well-nigh universally, with a phenomenon we might call the embarrassment of anti-antisemitism. Anti-antisemites typically express an obviously heart-felt urge to state explicitly and in an almost formulaic gesture that their stance is not intended to suggest a 'blanket exoneration' of Jewry's 'unpleasant traits'. They display a profound sense of embarrassment that they might be seen as being in some way too unconditionally positive in their attitudes towards Jewry and a conspicuous urge to develop a more or less juicy rhetoric suited to dispel the unpalatable suspicion of excess friendliness towards Jews. This is an issue in urgent need of careful systematic research.

Moreover, if we take a careful look at the prevalent discourse on antisemitism and matters Jewish in Imperial Germany it transpires that antisemitic and anti-antisemitic positions were in fact more often than not largely identical both in their concepts of what they actually identified as Jewish and even in their evaluation of many of the phenomena they subsumed under this label. If we subscribe to the kernel of truth approach to antisemitism this seems rather unremarkable. In fact, it would seem to provide neat confirmation of the basic assumption that antisemitic perceptions of matters Jewish ultimately derived from empirically verifiable Jewish phenomena that were of concern to anti-antisemites too. If we reject the kernel of truth approach, however, the far-reaching commonality of perceptions of matters (supposedly) Jewish between antisemites and anti-antisemites obviously takes on a rather more disquieting dimension.

When, we might therefore ask, is an anti-antisemite an anti-antisemite? All other things being equal, the attempt to answer this question is beset by one absolutely fundamental problem. Since 1945 at the latest, the term antisemitism is usually applied specifically and unambiguously to denote the stance of an individual, a group, or an ideology on phenomena perceived of as Jewish, and it is usually applied to anathematize the stance in question. What follows more or less automatically from this usage of the term antisemitism is the assumption that anti-antisemitism specifically takes issue with a stance on matters (supposedly) Jewish and presumably qualifies it as lying beyond the pale of acceptable discourse or polemic. In the course of my research I have become increasingly aware of the fact,

⁴⁷ Karl Liebknecht, *Schriften*, *loc cit.*

however, that at least as far as the anti-antisemitic arguments prevalent within Imperial German Social Democracy are concerned this by no means holds true.

As will emerge in varying ways from the material presented in the following chapters, three criteria seem to have been applied by Social Democrats to identify antisemites. Firstly, probably more often than not the term antisemitic was used simply to denote the self-avowed party-political affiliation of those involved in the antisemitic movement. Consequently, a wide range of criticisms could be (and was) levelled against 'antisemites' without necessarily making the slightest reference, critical or otherwise, specifically to their stance on matters (supposedly) Jewish. The second criterion did hinge on that stance: individuals, groups, or ideologies that *explicitly* called for the reversal of the emancipation process, *explicitly* professed to hold Jewry responsible for all the woes of the world and therefore *explicitly* claimed that the curtailment or removal of the Jews would more or less instantaneously rectify all of society's maladies were classified as antisemites. Anti-Jewish sentiments or stereotypes that did not find their expression in these explicit formulations, on the other hand, in and of themselves were considered neither antisemitic nor problematic unless they were articulated by political opponents. The third criterion, then, hinged not on *what* was said about Jews, rather the crucial question was: *who* said it (and/or, we might add, whom exactly was it directed against)? It struck Social Democrats as perfectly legitimate to remark critically on the, as they saw it, 'actual' Jewishness of bourgeois Jews. Yet an essentially identical remark could well strike them as antisemitic when it was directed by a political opponent against the, to their minds, 'alleged' Jewishness of one of their comrades of Jewish extraction who had relinquished his Jewish identity.

The problem does not end there, however. Even when anti-antisemitic arguments did explicitly refer to matters (supposedly) Jewish, we need to examine the extent to which these arguments actually sought to address the issues that compel us to anathematize antisemitism. Within Social Democracy many of the problematic ostensible counter-arguments obviously sprung from the basic notion that antisemitism was essentially a form of anti-capitalist protest that did not go far enough. That said, it would be nonsensical to suggest that it took the particular brand of Marxist anti-capitalism officially professed by Social Democracy to generate the predilection for anti-Jewish stereotyping displayed by Social Democrats when granting antisemitism its anti-capitalist credentials. Social Democrats did not make up the 'arguments' presented in this context in order to gain a pretext allowing them to avoid the anathematization of antisemitism lest they alienate those who subscribed to it but whose support Social Democracy hoped to win in the long run. They refrained from its anathematization not for tactical reasons but because they genuinely believed that the arguments on which the antisemitic case hinged were, within the limits they pointed out, correct. The preconceptions of matters (supposedly) Jewish that Social Democrats already brought with them when they became affiliated with the party probably formed and constrained their ability to appropriate the specifically Marxist critique of capitalism, and the extent to which the brand of Marxism prevalent in the party reflected and accommodated these constraints clearly calls for a thorough critical examination. After all, the problem with antisemitism is

⁴⁸ Evyatar Friesel, 'The German-Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration,' in *LBIYB* 41 (1996): 263–275, here 265.

not that it does not take its own anti-capitalist impulse seriously enough but that it conceptualizes that impulse and expresses it with a thrust that precludes *a priori* any possibility of a development in which anti-capitalism and human emancipation are not pitted against one another but inextricably linked. Clearly, all the contextualizing sensibility of the world cannot change the fact that in this respect Social Democracy's dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish were simply excruciatingly inept. One would nevertheless be hard pressed, though, to demonstrate that the attitudes towards Jewry prevalent within the movement were actually an original outgrowth of the brand of Marxism it professed. As already pointed out, the second chapter will show that these attitudes certainly did not reflect an accurate understanding of Marx's *Zur Judenfrage* or its significance for the development of Marx's thought.

In the course of our discussion we will come across numerous supposedly anti-antisemitic 'arguments' popular among Social Democrats. To clarify the problem, some of them should perhaps be indicated at this point. The Jews were indeed exploiters, it was usually conceded, but it was untrue that they only exploited non-Jews. While they did ordinarily stick together, a similar argument went, the fact that they were not quite as clannish as the antisemites suggested was demonstrated by the readiness with which they sacrificed all solidarity among one another for profit's sake. Antisemitism offered no genuine solution, it was argued, because even if all Jews were removed non-Jews would take on their roles as exploiters. Did the non-Jewish majority not realize, it was asked, that it would be showing itself up (and giving the Jews far too much credit) if it conceded that it had failed to prevent the Jewish minority from wreaking all the havoc the antisemites ascribed to the Jews? Another line of argument suggested that the antisemites would only provoke Jewry into refusing further assimilation and falling back into its admittedly ghastly clannish ways. Hence the antisemites would in fact only aggravate the very problem they claimed to offer a solution for (a problem that indeed required a solution, as the Social Democrats readily conceded). If non-Jews had failed to get the better of the Jews in the past, it was suggested, then the antisemites stood no chance of doing so in future either. Great emphasis was placed on the disingenuousness of the antisemitic activists. They claimed to be democrats and anti-capitalists but in fact they were in cahoots with the capitalist and reactionary establishment. They themselves borrowed money or bought products from Jews while calling on their compatriots to boycott the Jews. In fact, they were the ones who would take over the Jews' roles as exploiters if the Jews really were removed and their antisemitism was merely a ploy to achieve this goal. Social Democrats took great pleasure in pointing out that numerous leaders of party-political antisemitism had criminal records for libel or perjury or had in the past been forced to declare themselves bankrupt. Moreover, they were disunited and competed among one another, often in the most vicious ways. In fact, they were in (almost) every respect so unpleasant that one would (almost) rather be a Jew than an antisemite. The fact that most of the antisemitic periodicals and publishers were persistently in financial difficulties was also frequently publicized in the Social Democratic press.

Had the Social Democrats not felt that these were 'arguments' with which they could score points against the antisemites they presumably would not have used them. But to what extent do they actually

address what we would identify as the problematic nature of the antisemites' perceptions of, and prescriptions for, matters (supposedly) Jewish? Similarly we need to ask to what extent the antisemitic movement's enmity towards Social Democracy necessarily tells us anything specifically about its antisemitism (rather than, say, its anti-Socialism). Only then can we determine the extent to which Social Democracy's response to that enmity was in turn necessarily anti-antisemitic (in more than the merely party-political sense of the word).

The simple truth of the matter is that if we discount the 'arguments' developed along the lines just characterized, Imperial German Social Democracy's publicly articulated anti-antisemitism very quickly seems to dry up to little more than a barely discernible trickle. I would suggest, then, that we fundamentally need to reconsider our approach to the anti-antisemitism of Imperial German Social Democracy. We need to determine on a case to case basis whether any given instance of Social Democratic opposition to antisemitism hinged on genuine opposition specifically to the antisemites' stance on matters (supposedly) Jewish. Political opposition to organized political antisemitism as one of the political camps or movements in Imperial Germany opposed to Social Democracy and narrower forms of directly party-political opposition to party-political antisemitism cannot automatically be taken to vouch for anti-antisemitism in the more specific sense in which we would understand the term today.

The 'philosemitism' discourse

Within Imperial German Social Democracy much of the discourse pertaining to antisemitism or matters Jewish in fact addressed neither antisemitism nor matters Jewish directly but instead hinged on a critique of 'philosemitism'. This issue is doubly relevant to our discussion because it has generally been argued that among German Socialists this critique of 'philosemitism' was largely a pet obsession of Mehring's that was not shared (and even opposed) by his peers. In the course of my discussion of the issue in the first chapter I will argue that the critique of 'philosemitism' was by no means Mehring's preserve but in fact widely accepted among German Social Democrats. A few rather more general remarks on the matter seem in order at this point, though, because the extant literature tends to use the term 'philosemitism' with only the slightest conceptual underpinning, if any. This is clearly an issue in urgent need of systematic scholarly treatment. For reasons that will become clearer in the course of our discussion, 'philosemitism' is, to my mind, a term we should use with the utmost discrimination and only to denote very specific and clearly defined phenomena; ultimately it is a term that can only ever be used appropriately in inverted commas, as it were.

Hans Joachim Schoeps, to give one example for the sort of specific phenomena I have in mind, famously applied the term to the dealings of a small number of seventeenth-century Christian intellectuals (especially millenarians) with an equally limited number of rabbinic scholars.⁴⁹ Here the term made a certain amount of sense because it denoted the way in which the essentially conversionist

⁴⁹ Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock: Religions- und geistesgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1952).

agenda of these 'philosemites' inadvertently paved the way for an unprecedented degree of genuine fascination with Judaism and mutual respect between those involved on both sides of the divide.

The term has also been applied, to give another example, to characterize a strategy adopted by the bulk of the political class and polite society in West Germany and Austria for some four decades after 1945 to deal with the perpetrator societies' implication in the Shoah.⁵⁰ Its purpose was to allow society to distance itself as conspicuously as possible from the antisemitic consensus that had facilitated the perpetration of the Shoah without critically examining and addressing that consensus and its origins and dynamics. Hence a wilfully positive attitude towards Jewry (or at least towards certain Jews) was displayed that in fact maintained the traditional stereotypes but simply inverted their evaluation. The same qualities were still identified as specifically Jewish but they were now given a positive connotation. Where one previously spoke of the sly and exploitative rich Jew one now referred to the smart and economically successful Jew and so on. Similarly, the outspoken support for the State of Israel that tended to be part and parcel of this 'philosemitism' was ultimately an outgrowth of the notion that Jewry was the anti-nation, the negation of the national principle. The State of Israel was seen as the most effective check on Jewry's supposedly anti-national proclivities that could be achieved under the current circumstances and therefore deserved support. Whether the term 'philosemitism' was well chosen to denote this strategy seems arguable, but the phenomenon it was used to refer to can at least be clearly defined and identified.

In the Imperial German context the term 'philosemitism' had a very clear connotation.⁵¹ The organized political antisemites initially introduced the term to denounce their opponents and it promptly became a generally accepted shorthand to denote all those who opposed organized political antisemitism. This usage obviously signifies an equally general acceptance of the assumption that there could, on this matter, be no neutral ground. One could only be either for the Jews or against them. The mechanism by which the Jews were singled out as a distinct group supposedly necessitating this sort of harsh choice in the first place, however, was not debated. Moreover, as we will see in the course of our discussion in the first chapter, one could rationalize one's anti-Jewish sentiments and partial sympathies for the antisemitic cause and render them respectable by formulating them as a critique, not of Jewry, but of 'philosemitism'. This procedure will strike not least those unsettled by the increasingly ferocious populist onslaught of recent years on affirmative action and 'political correctness' as disquietingly familiar. Among Social Democrats this procedure hinged on the contention that 'philosemitism' purported to defend the Jews against antisemitism only in order to defend capitalism, a notion that was to remain popular on the political Left far beyond the context of Imperial German Social Democracy.

Against this background the use of the term 'philosemitism' simply to denote the fact that not all non-Jews were at all times persistently and unambiguously anti-Jewish⁵² or as a blanket term for opposition

⁵⁰ For this argument cf., for instance, Frank Stern, 'Philosemitismus. Stereotype über den Feind, den man zu lieben hat,' in *Babylon* No. 8 (1991): 15–26.

⁵¹ For an oddly inconclusive discussion of this issue cf. Michael Brenner, "'Gott schütze uns vor unseren Freunden' – Zur Ambivalenz des Philosemitismus im Kaiserreich,' in *JbA* 2 (1993): 174–199.

⁵² This would essentially seem to be the Rubinstein's 'concept' of 'philosemitism'. Cf. William D. Rubinstein, Hilary L. Rubinstein, *Philosemitism. Admiration and Support in the English-Speaking World for Jews, 1840–1939* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

to antisemitism in one guise or another strikes me as problematic and prone to reproduce the very ambiguities that characterized the usage of the term in Imperial Germany. Hence, where ‘non-antisemitic’ or ‘anti-antisemitic’ might just as aptly describe a given historical (or contemporary) stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish, the term ‘philosemitism’ should, to my mind, definitely be avoided.

While the anti-‘philosemitism’ of Mehring and his peers is at the heart of the discussion in the first chapter, the second chapter, as already mentioned, deals with the ways in which Imperial German Social Democrats appropriated Karl Marx’s *Zur Judenfrage*. On this count too it has generally been argued that Mehring’s stance was an exceptional one and that his enthusiasm for *Zur Judenfrage* was not shared by his peers. I will question this notion by demonstrating that other leading Social Democrats too made rather more extensive and substantial references to *Zur Judenfrage* than the extant literature suggests. Moreover, the way in which they misunderstood and misrepresented the actual argument of *Zur Judenfrage* and its significance for the development of Marx’s thought was largely identical with Mehring’s interpretation and utilization of *Zur Judenfrage*.

Social Democracy’s dealings with former antisemitic activists offer us a particularly intriguing focus on the perceptions of antisemitism and matters Jewish prevalent within the party. What, we might ask, beyond the change of party-political affiliation, made a former antisemite a *former* antisemite? We will be able to study this question in some detail in the third chapter. It discusses the critique levelled at Mehring at the 1903 Party Congress in Dresden in connection with his dealings with the former antisemitic deputy Hans Leuß (1861–1920).

The fourth chapter, finally, will discuss a conflict between Mehring and Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) in 1904 that provides us with an arguably particularly surprising example for the way in which the attitude towards the person who said something detrimental about Jewry could be rather more decisive when it came to classifying someone as antisemitic than the content or context of the detrimental remark itself. Any attempt to determine, based on notions of matters (supposedly) Jewish, who is an antisemite and who an anti-antisemite obviously presupposes our ability to identify in the first place when matters (supposedly) Jewish were actually being discussed. The concluding section of the fourth chapter will demonstrate that even this can be a rather more difficult task than meets the eye.

Chapter 1

Playing va banque with a double safety net. Social Democracy's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish and the spectre of 'philosemitism'

Foolhardy as it may appear to us not only with hindsight but even on its own terms, the Social Democratic response to antisemitism in effect amounted to playing *va banque*, a fact not recognized at the time, though, for the simple reason that the game was supposedly being played with a double safety net. The first safety net was the assumption that not only the much-discussed unpleasant traits ascribed to Jewry but ultimately the entirety of features that distinguished Jews from non-Jews were an outgrowth of specific socio-economic factors and would thus become obsolete with the socio-economic framework that generated them. The second safety net was the assumption that antisemitism was tied to specific strata of society that could be precisely delineated in terms, again, of the socio-economic factors that defined their existence. The capitalization process had massively dislocated them, thus provoking a cryptically anti-capitalist response, but would ultimately eliminate them as specific social strata. Since the demise of both these strata and of the 'object' of their antisemitism was a foregone conclusion, the only substantial problem with antisemitism seemed to be its ability to muddy the waters. And yet it was apparently assumed that reality itself would solve that problem as far as the antisemites, or at least all those among them worth bothering about, were concerned. Mehring for one was convinced that all the 'healthy' elements in question would in the end invariably cling to the 'rock' that was the working class (which for him, needless to say, was not a sociological but a political category). In fact it was just as well that they did not try to clamber onto that rock at an earlier stage because, as he put it, 'had all the ruined farmers and petty-bourgeois individuals with their confused illusions gone over to Social Democracy straight away, the party would have had a hard nut to crack and it may well be that all the theoretical instruction of the world would not have drummed economic dialectics into them as quickly as antisemitism will do as a result of its practical effectiveness.'¹ Not only, then, would the inevitable course of development invariably rob antisemitism of its prerequisites but antisemitism would also prove ineffective and therefore ultimately function as an additional eye-opener, underscoring yet further that Socialism, and Socialism only, offered genuine solutions.

As already mentioned, those who publicly opposed the first antisemitic campaigns in the 1870s were promptly referred to, by general consent, as 'philosemites', even though calling them 'non-antisemites' or 'anti-antisemites' would, as I have already tried to indicate, have been far more accurate. As is well-known not least from Abraham Cahan's recollections of the International Socialist Congress in Brussels in 1891,² opposition to this 'philosemitism' was certainly popular with French Socialists.

¹ Franz Mehring, 'Das zweite Wahlergebnis,' in *NZ* 11-II, 41 [28 June 1893]: 417–421, here 420. Mehring goes on to say: 'In this respect, although in this respect only, one can place one's full trust in the antisemitic demagogy and we may say of it, what Voltaire said of God: if it did not already exist, one would have to invent it.'

² Abraham Cahan, *bleter fun mayn lebn* 3 (New York: Forverts, 1926): 149–185; Cf. also Edmund Silberner, 'Anti-Semitism and Philo-Semitism in the Socialist International,' in *Judaism* 2, 2 (1953): 117–122 and, critically, Jack Jacobs, 'Die Sozialistische Internationale, der Antisemitismus und die

Moreover, as Cahan recalled, the leadings German Social Democrat Paul Singer (1844–1911), and the leader of the Austrian party, Victor Adler (1852–1918), both themselves of Jewish extraction, vehemently pleaded with him to withdraw his anti-antisemitic motion at the Congress in Brussels to avoid a show down. They made it perfectly clear to him that they would under no circumstances let themselves be forced into a position where they might be seen to defend Jews. Hence, in the event, they raised no objections, to say the least, to the International Congress' final resolution which was then directed with equal emphasis, as the resolution put it, against both antisemitic and philosemitic 'incitement'.

Ultimately, 'philosemitism' was in fact assumed to be made of more solid stuff than antisemitism. Mehring certainly was in no doubt as to which was the more daunting foe: 'The brutalities committed against the Jews by antisemitism, in words rather than deeds, should not lead us to loose sight of the brutalities philosemitism commits, in deeds rather than words, against anyone, be he Jew or Turk, Christian or Pagan, who resists capitalism,' he wrote in 1891 and then went on to explain how this in his opinion followed: 'Philosemitism opposes antisemitism only to the extent that antisemitism opposes capitalism. Antisemitism is capitalism *avec phrase*, philosemitism, however, is capitalism *sans phrase*.'³

Now, Mehring's case is indeed particularly instructive not least in that we need not surmise but know for sure that his appropriation of the philosemitism discourse took place when he was still a rabid anti-Socialist and cannot, therefore, be the outflow of a specifically Marxist critique of capitalism. We know this for sure because of a rather remarkable incident in 1891. In that year, as Thomas Höhle, the biographer of the early Mehring who essentially accepted Mehring's own point of view on the matter, explained, Mehring was publicly accused 'of having, at one and the same time, written prosemitic articles for the *Volks-Zeitung* and antisemitic ones in the *Saale-Zeitung* which was untrue on both counts.'⁴ In a pamphlet published later that year, Mehring then 'refuted the senseless attacks concerning pro- and antisemitism.'⁵ In that pamphlet,⁶ Mehring offered a comparison of relevant articles that, to his mind, demonstrated that he had formulated the same stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish throughout. 'I admit, though, that this evidence is not entirely conclusive,' he went on, because the indictment might actually result from 'my perfectly reticent objections to certain philosemitic excesses.'⁷ Which articles had he chosen to compare? He wrote: 'Of the incidentally only very few "strongly antisemitic" articles I wrote for the *Saale-Zeitung* I have chosen the one that led to a boycott of the paper by Jewish subscribers and advertisers and which one might, therefore, assume to be the "most strongly antisemitic" of them all.' As he hastened to add, 'it also epitomizes the general

jüdisch-sozialistischen Parteien des Russischen Reiches,' in Wladislaw Hedeler et al. (eds.), *Ausblicke auf das vergangene Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: VSA, 1996): 156–168.

³ Franz Mehring, 'Anti- und Philosemitisches,' in NZ 9-II, 45 [27 July 1891]: 585–588, here 587.

⁴ Höhle, *Franz Mehring*, 274.

⁵ Ibid., 276.

⁶ Franz Mehring, *Kapital und Presse. Ein Nachspiel zum Fall Lindau* (Berlin: Kurt Brachvogel, 1891). Hereafter Mehring, *Kapital und Presse*.

⁷ Ibid., 82, 83.

attitude of that paper to the Jewish question.’⁸ By contrast, ‘of the again very few articles on antisemitism that I published in the *Volks-Zeitung* I do not want to focus on the one that led, in 1886, to a boycott of the paper by Jewish subscribers and advertisers, because it was not by me [...] and I merely published it.’⁹ The article he had chosen from the *Saale-Zeitung* was from September 1881 and dealt with the extensive (or in his eyes not so extensive) anti-Jewish unrest that swept his home province of Pomerania that year.¹⁰ There he stated that ‘the philosemitic incitement of the local papers carries a considerable degree of responsibility for such unrest as did actually occur’ and then stated:

We hope that the *Saale-Zeitung* will continue to uphold its established and upright stand, respecting every honest and decent person, be he Christian, Jew, Turk, or whatever else, but also denouncing every lie and deceit, every instance of usury, not only when they are committed by Germans or Turks, but also when they are committed by Jews. Neither incitement against Jews, nor Jewish domination: the same rights for all citizens, that is the straightforward and unambiguous credo which is entirely in keeping with Liberalism and is equally opposed to philo- and antisemitic incitement.¹¹

The article from the *Volks-Zeitung*, by contrast, offered a conventional critique of Stoecker’s antisemitism, published in November 1890, and contained not as much as an allusion to ‘philosemitism’. ‘As one can see,’ Mehring nevertheless concluded the comparison, ‘in all instances [...] I weave the same thread.’¹² It is hardly difficult to understand, and indeed sympathize with, those

⁸ Ibid., 83; Mehring in fact quoted from more than two texts in support of his case; with the notable exception, as we will see, precisely of the text from the *Volks-Zeitung*, however, they indeed develop the same argument and, hence, need not be discussed here individually.

⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰ On the background here cf., *inter alia*, Bernhard Vogt, ‘Antisemitismus und Justiz im Kaiserreich: Der Synagogenbrand in Neustettin,’ in Margret Heitmann, Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), *“Halte fern dem ganzen Lande jedes Verderben...” Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Pommern. Ein Sammelband* (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: Georg Olms, 1995): 379–399; Stephen C. J. Nicholls, *The Burning of the Synagogue in Neustettin. Ideological Arson in the 1880s* (Brighton: Centre for German-Jewish Studies, 1999); Christhard Hoffmann, ‘Politische Kultur und Gewalt gegen Minderheiten: Die antisemitischen Ausschreitungen in Pommern und Westpreußen, 1881’ in *JbA* 3 (1994): 93–120; revised English version as *Idem*, ‘Political Culture and Violence against Minorities: The Antisemitic Riots in Pomerania and West Prussia,’ in *Idem*, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith (eds.), *Exclusionary Violence. Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002): 67–92.

¹¹ Mehring, *Kapital und Presse*, 84.

¹² Ibid., 86. We might note in passing that the butt of Mehring’s arguably most viciously anti-‘philosemitic’ remarks in *Kapital und Presse* was a journalist called Woth. Mehring’s opponents had suggested that Woth should be summoned as a witness during one of the trials that resulted from Mehring’s dealings with Lindau and his associates in 1890/1891 and in the course of which the issue of his (allegedly) writing antisemitic and ‘philosemitic’ articles at the same time was brought up. Woth would, according to Mehring’s opponents, testify that he had lost his post with the *Saale-Zeitung* because he refused to publish Mehring’s anti-‘philosemitic’ articles. Mehring not only went to great lengths in *Kapital und Presse* to ridicule Woth and his ‘philosemitic’ servility but also claimed that he had in no way been involved in Woth’s departure from the paper. ‘If the paper’s publisher occasionally wrote to me that he would have to let Woth go because of his ineptitude, then I was neither in a position then to judge the validity of this one-sided contention nor am I in a position to do so now. In any case, being a collaborator of the paper who was not in town, I was neither called upon nor inclined to become involved in the dealings between publisher and editor’ (ibid. 82.) Now, in this instance Mehring clearly seems to have been lying. While I am not aware of any still extant correspondence between Mehring and the *Saale-Zeitung*’s publisher (Otto Hendel), part of the correspondence between Mehring and the head of the paper’s *Feuilleton*, the Orientalist Richard Gosche (1824–1889), has survived, including two letters dated 28 June 1879 and 22 November 1879 in which Mehring discusses

who had accused him of writing antisemitic articles in one paper and 'philosemitic' ones in the other. At the same time it is telling enough that his accusers too could only categorize the articles in question by classifying them either as antisemitic or 'philosemitic'. More importantly, though, however mind-boggling Mehring's claim may be that both his articles containing savage attacks on 'philosemitism' and those that did not as much as hint at the existence of 'philosemitism' nevertheless 'wove the same thread', his conclusion clearly demonstrates that he not only acquired his anti-'philosemitism' in the period of his militant anti-Socialism but that he also publicly re-affirmed it while in the very process of finally becoming a Social Democrat. In other words, although he himself pointed out that it was presumably his anti-'philosemitism' that had been 'misconstrued' as antisemitism, he maintained that his anti-'philosemitism' in the very form in which he had expressed it while still a vehement and embittered opponent of Socialism was free of any ambiguity that would justify its characterization as ultimately antisemitic. Thus we have Mehring's own word for it that his 'Marxist' anti-'philosemitism' was indeed identical with his pre-Marxist anti-'philosemitism' and that his appropriation of Marxism apparently required no modification of that anti-'philosemitism'.

Mehring's 'obsession' or 'preoccupation with the iniquities of philo-Semitism',¹³ as Wistrich has put it, is indeed undeniable and it invariably lends a far-reaching ambiguity to all his anti-antisemitic utterances. In at least one hitherto apparently unnoticed instance this ambiguity even earned him the praise of a periodical whose sympathies for the antisemites were considerably less ambiguous, namely the weekly journal *Die Grenzboten*, edited at the time by Johannes Grunow. In a survey of the Social Democratic press in its 21 April 1892 edition it remarked that an article in the *Neue Zeit* on the case of Paul Marx, a journalist who had sued the *Vossische Zeitung* for unfair dismissal on the grounds that he had been sacked simply because he was of Jewish origin, had aroused its 'unmitigated pleasure'.

Woth's situation with Gosche. On 28 June 1879 Mehring reported that Hendel had just informed him of his intention to sack Woth. Mehring added that he had no interest, be it personal or material, to see this averted. From all he knew the intention to sack Woth was entirely justified and indeed unavoidable (SAPMO-BArch NY 4043/8 Bl. 21.) On 22 November, Mehring again stated apodictically that, to his mind, Woth was the ultimately guilty party in the conflict at hand and had rewarded the generosity of being kept on with further inappropriate behaviour. Gosche had apparently requested that Mehring try to persuade Woth's (already sacked) opponent in the conflict to moderate his position and thus help end the dispute. Mehring, however, felt that although Woth's opponent too had behaved inappropriately, he had done so in response to Woth with whom final responsibility for the escalation lay. He explicitly added that Gosche's apparent fondness for Woth obviously prevented him from seeing just how appallingly Woth had behaved towards him and how great the risk to the paper's reputation was if energetic measures were not taken to end the conflict by putting Woth in his place (SAPMO-BArch NY 4043/8 Bl. 23–29.) While we do not as yet know anything about the nature of this conflict and Mehring indeed does not seem to have been directly involved in it, he obviously was perfectly 'inclined to become involved in the dealings between publisher and editor', did comment unfavourably on Woth and did encourage the paper to rid itself of him. It may well be, of course, that the initial conflict itself that had rendered Woth's position with the paper precarious hinged on an unrelated issue but that Woth nevertheless assumed that Mehring's recommendation had ultimately been crucial to his actually being sacked and that this recommendation resulted from the fact that he and Mehring did not see eye to eye on the issue of 'philosemitism'. Thomas Höhle has made some initial archival inquiries in Halle but as yet we have been able to identify neither Woth nor the exact nature of the conflict at hand.

¹³ Robert S. Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism or Antisemitism? The Case of Franz Mehring,' in *LBIYB* 22 (1977): 35–51, here 47. Hereafter Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism'; *Idem*, *Socialism*, 123–124.

The author of the article ‘had drawn the lesson from history, that, however strong the bond of Jewry’s common interest, the bond of the capitalist interest was ultimately always stronger and when push came to shove the former always gave way to the latter,’ a fact the article had dealt with ‘rather humorously’.¹⁴ In the article in question, Mehring argued that the fate of Paul Marx epitomized the philosemitic hypocrisy. The same political spectrum and press that ordinarily screamed blue murder when Jews became the victims of an anti-capitalist critique immediately sensed that in this particular case the principle at stake was a rather different one: never mind whether the victim was a Jew or not, ‘every capitalist has the right to throw his slaves onto the street when it suits him and that’s that!’¹⁵ Hence this case should prove particularly instructive for the ‘honest antisemites’, Mehring reasoned, in other words those ‘who due to an essentially honourable hatred for the moral hideousness of capitalism want to eliminate the Jews as the allegedly sole cause of that hideousness.’¹⁶

At first sight it hardly seems surprising, therefore, that Mehring has generally been singled out, either as someone whose ‘writings on the subject reveal in a particularly illuminating manner the tactical and ideological dilemmas confronting the labour movement in the 1890s and the difficulty in demarcating the Marxist from the anti-Semitic critique of liberal capitalism,’¹⁷ or as an outright ‘special case’. Silberner identified Mehring as one of four antisemites in the movement,¹⁸ along with Richard Calwer (1868–1927), a reformist journalist specializing in economic affairs who sat in the *Reichstag* for Holzminden (Brunswick III) from 1898 to 1903 and left the party in 1909, and the earlier leading Lassalleans Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (1833–1875) and Wilhelm Hasselmann (1844–1916). Leuschen-Seppel emphatically underlined Mehring’s exceptional position within the party in this context, as demonstrated not least by the explicit reference to his ostensible *Sonderstellung* in the title of the section of her book dealing specifically with Mehring.¹⁹ Most recently, Haury too has classified Mehring as a *Sonderfall* within the party.²⁰ The two main issues crucial to the argument underscoring Mehring’s supposedly exceptional role in the party have generally been, firstly, his dealings with Karl Marx’s *Zur Judenfrage* which we shall, as mentioned, discuss in some detail in the second chapter, and, secondly, his stance on ‘philosemitism’.²¹

¹⁴ ‘Von der sozialdemokratischen Presse,’ in *Grenzboten* 51, 17 [21 April 1892]: 180–182, here 180.

¹⁵ Franz Mehring, ‘Der Fall Marx,’ in *NZ* 10-I, 16 [6 January 1892]: 481–485, here 483. Hereafter Mehring, ‘Fall Marx’. Following Marx’s successful appeal Mehring reiterated his stance. The legal proceedings had tested what ultimately weighed more heavily, ‘the right of the capitalist to throw any of his slaves onto the street whenever it suited him and for whatever reason, or the principled opposition to the allegedly anti-capitalist “ignominy of the century”’ (*Idem*, ‘Kapital und Presse,’ in *NZ* 10-II, 30 [14 April 1892]: 97–101, here 100. Hereafter Mehring, ‘Kapital und Presse’.) We might note in passing that Mehring rather tellingly confuses the planes of his argument here. Those who denounced antisemitism as the ‘ignominy of the century’ were not of course the ones who claimed that it was anti-capitalist, as Mehring’s formulation would suggest.

¹⁶ Mehring, ‘Fall Marx,’ 481.

¹⁷ Wistrich, *Socialism*, 116; cf. *Idem*, ‘Anti-Capitalism,’ 36.

¹⁸ Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 198, 201–203, 289.

¹⁹ Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 162–171, here 162.

²⁰ Thomas Haury, *Antisemitismus von links* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002), 190 n27. Hereafter Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*.

²¹ For this line of argument cf. also Reinhard Rürup, ‘Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus im deutschen Kaiserreich,’ [1989] in Micha Brumlik, Doron Kiesel, Linda Reisch (eds.), *Der Antisemitismus und die Linke* (Frankfurt/Main: Haag und Herchen, 1991) – hereafter Brumlik et al.

In part, the notion that Mehring's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish, and specifically his outspoken anti-'philosemitism', made him an exceptional (or at least particularly crass) case among his peers hinges on a quantitative argument. As Wistrich rightly pointed out, 'no other socialist wrote as extensively on the Jewish question'²² as did Mehring, nor, we might add, did any of his peers address the 'iniquities of philosemitism'²³ as extensively, persistently and with as much vitriol. That we should interpret the extent, persistence and heftiness of this coverage as directly proportionate to the strength of his 'obsession' with the matter is therefore a suggestive inference. In fact, however, few of his peers wrote as extensively on any issue as did Mehring on this one (or others, for that matter), nor did he criticize other phenomena he deemed seriously critique-worthy with any less contempt or vitriol. The two leading Social Democrats who produced comparable quantities of relatively high-quality journalistic work were, of course, Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) and Eduard Bernstein. Throughout the nineties, when the bulk of Mehring's particularly problematic articles on antisemitism and matters Jewish were written, Kautsky, as the editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zeit*, sat in Stuttgart while Bernstein, due to the prosecution pending in Germany for his illegal activities during the *Sozialistengesetz*, was stuck in London. Kautsky's administrative duties and focus on theoretical and especially economic issues and Bernstein's particular interest in theoretical issues and the international movement apart, both were indeed at liberty to contribute articles on current affairs and frequently did so if and when they saw fit. Neither of them, however, was the Berlin correspondent of the journal and compelled to churn out editorials on a weekly basis in a manner designed to unlock the deeper meaning of current events in the capital not only of the Empire but also of the antisemitic movement. Moreover, given the heavy publicistic work load he shouldered, it is perhaps little wonder that Mehring was inclined to recycle what he held to be his expertise in any given field wherever possible, mainly in his journalistic work, but on occasion also in his books. Once he had chosen or been compelled to take on a certain issue, for whatever initial reason, his readers were therefore highly likely never to hear the last of it. His determination to spell out what he held to be the implications of Marxism for as many aspects of life as possible was thus compounded by this habit of relentlessly recycling, not least for reasons of pure expediency, ideas and issues he felt he had at some point managed to formulate rather aptly. Hence, while the likes of Bebel, Bernstein, and Kautsky tended to comment on antisemitism and matters Jewish predominantly on occasions and in contexts that qualified their utterances from the outset as a matter of grave ideological significance, Mehring's relevant remarks popped up throughout the huge corpus of his varied writings, in his most banal and his most respectable texts alike. Consequently, they caught their readers ideologically at ease or off guard which would have placed Mehring in an exceptionally good position to challenge prevalent preconceptions, had he wanted to do so. One might therefore argue that he bears a particular responsibility for in fact doing the exact opposite. He obviously enjoyed spelling out, deftly and with verve, what tended to remain abstract

(eds.), *Antisemitismus* –, 17–31, here 23. Hereafter Rürup, 'Sozialdemokratie'; Julius Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 422 n2. Hereafter Carlebach, *Karl Marx*.

²² Wistrich, *Socialism*, 116; *Idem*, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 35.

²³ *Idem*, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 47.

ideological formulations in the pronouncements of his peers on antisemitism and matters Jewish and we might well question the motives behind the pleasure he took in doing so. On the other hand, the fact that his peers tended to be more reticent in spelling out in detail what they thought were the implications of the party's official stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish does not imply that their formulations, had they tried to explicate those implications, would have been any more palatable to us than the ones Mehring actually came up with. Similarly, we need to consider the possibility that Kautsky and Bernstein wrote less regularly about the turbulences caused by the antisemitic movement or the antics of the antisemitic deputies in the *Reichstag* during its sessions in Berlin simply because they did not witness events in Berlin, living in Stuttgart and London as they did. Automatically to infer from the fact that they commented less frequently on the matter that they were presumably less 'obsessed' with it and viewed antisemitism and matters Jewish in a more rational manner does seem a rather short-circuited procedure. On purely quantitative grounds, then, and given that this remarks pervaded a wealth of ideologically less charged contexts than comparable pronouncements by his peers, Mehring is indeed likely to have played a particularly strong role in allowing Social Democrats to maintain and rationalize their preconceptions of matters (supposedly) Jewish. This, in and of itself, would only make his role a genuinely exceptional one, though, if we assume that the less frequent utterances of his peers on the matter challenged those preconceptions and that Mehring was exceptional in accommodating them.

Assuming, then, that the inference that Mehring wrote as extensively on antisemitism and matters Jewish as he did simply because he could not help himself does not tell us the full story, we can arrive at a fuller picture only by systematically weighting our analysis against this quantitative aspect. In fact, one might well argue that Bernstein's decision, for instance, to comment on the matter on the relatively few occasions he chose to do so is ultimately in greater need of explanation than the fact that Mehring did so as frequently and extensively as he did. At the very least, however, one can assume that Bernstein was in a far better position (and therefore also laboured under a greater responsibility), on those select and self-chosen occasions, to do so in a more reasoned and more carefully reflected way than the need to come to a penetrating yet spontaneous assessment of events as they unfolded may have allowed Mehring to do. Moreover, Bernstein and Kautsky could, of course, have raised misgivings they might have had about Mehring's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish with him personally. They do not, however, seem to have done so. Had Mehring's stance genuinely been as exceptional as much of the extant literature suggests, this would be hard to explain. It is not least against this background, then, that we need to examine the 'proof-text' enlisted well-nigh universally²⁴ to demonstrate that Mehring's stance on 'philosemitism' was supposedly not only exceptional but also publicly criticized within the party, namely Bernstein's 'Das Schlagwort und der Antisemitismus'.²⁵

Massing already enlisted this article to demonstrate 'Eduard Bernstein's warning against the use of the catchword of philo-Semitism',²⁶ and even Robert Wistrich, a scholar hardly given to unduly generous

²⁴ Even Shlomo Na'aman subscribed to this notion, cf. Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 93.

²⁵ Eduard Bernstein, 'Das Schlagwort und der Antisemitismus,' in *NZ* 11-II, 35 [17 May 1893]: 228–237. Hereafter Bernstein, 'Schlagwort'.

²⁶ Massing, *Rehearsal*, 188.

judgements on the matter, stated that ‘some colleagues of Mehring in the SPD, notably Eduard Bernstein, challenged his one-sided emphasis on the philosemitic spectre threatening the labour movement,’ and then discussed Bernstein’s article as a case in point.²⁷ Jack Jacobs, though arguably the scholar to have given Bernstein the cleanest bill of health yet on the matter, offers a more nuanced summary of the text in question. Focusing especially on “‘the comrades of Jewish descent who, precisely because they are of Jewish origin, consider it to be their special duty to keep the Party free of every suspicion of promoting²⁸ Jewish interests,’” Bernstein had, ‘while respecting their concern [...] advised these comrades not to condemn philo-Semitism. For, Bernstein points out, the anti-Semites also engaged in attacks on philo-Semitism. According to Bernstein, philo-Semitism can mean several things.’²⁹ On the one hand, it can imply, as Bernstein put it, ‘merely a certain sympathy for the Jews which rules out neither a condemnation of notorious mistakes nor a repudiation of their presumptuousness where it shows itself,’ on the other hand, it can imply ‘obsequiousness towards capitalist money-Jewry, support of a Jewish chauvinism, glossing over injustices perpetrated by Jews and loathsome characteristics developed by Jews.’³⁰ For Bernstein, as Jacobs explains, philosemitism,

if [...] defined in the first of these ways [...] is “very legitimate.” Bernstein was not opposed to condemning philo-Semitism in the latter sense, but feared the *blanket* condemnation of certain of his party comrades, which, he was afraid, might play into the hands of the anti-Semites. Wouldn’t it be better, Bernstein suggests, for socialists to distinguish their positions more clearly from those of the anti-Semites by using a different terminology? Socialists ought to attack not philo-Semitism, Bernstein proposes, but rather *pan-Semitism* – by which he apparently meant philo-Semitism in the second sense delineated above. The correct social democratic position, Bernstein concludes, is one that opposes anti-Semitism and pan-Semitism equally. Though Bernstein does not explicitly say so,

Jacobs concludes, ‘his wording implies that he was a philo-Semite in the first sense of the term.’³¹

What becomes clear from Jacobs’s rather reticent summary only by implication is the fact that Bernstein’s main concern here really was with the issue of terminology. Massing had already found the situation a little more complex than his line of argument strictly speaking allowed for. On the one hand, he sought to emphasize how ‘significant’ it was that it had been none other than ‘Bernstein who cautioned the Social Democratic Party against ambiguity of language and attitude in the Jewish question’ because this ‘protest’, to Massing’s mind, ‘anticipated the disagreement with the “orthodox” interpretation of Marxism,’ a notion essentially shared, as we saw, by Jacobs. On the other hand, he was forced to concede that Bernstein had in fact ‘at the time [...] still shared the party’s official

²⁷ Wistrich, ‘Anti-Capitalism,’ 47; cf. similarly *Idem*, *Socialism*, 124.

²⁸ It should be noted that Bernstein used the term ‘begünstigen’ here which is also the technical term for ‘aiding and abetting’.

²⁹ Jacobs, *Socialists*, 57.

³⁰ Bernstein, ‘Schlagwort,’ 233. I have preferred my own translation to Jacobs’s here. The initial ‘merely’ should, to my mind, be included because it clarifies the essentially defensive thrust of the following characterization of ‘legitimate philosemitism’; moreover, Bernstein should be given his due for not in fact explicitly generalizing in the way Jacobs’s translation suggests (‘a certain sympathy for the Jews which excludes neither a condemnation of *their* notorious mistakes nor repudiation of possible overencouragement [etwaiger Ueberhebungen derselben] of *them*’; my emphasis).

³¹ Jacobs, *Socialists*, *loc. cit.*

viewpoint of anti-Semitism as “the intermediary link that is being put between socialism and the reactionary parties – seemingly as a dam against the former, in reality as an approach to it.”³²

What exactly was it, then, that Bernstein had to say in this much-cited text to ‘caution’ the party ‘against ambiguity of language and attitude in the Jewish question’? The text in question is in fact a review article. ‘It is my task,’ Bernstein began,

to review three publications³³ dealing with the Jewish or, some might argue, the so-called Jewish question. According to the terminology widely accepted in the socialist press too, they would have to be classified to the effect that two of them are antisemitic while the third is distinctly philosemitic. Somehow I cannot quite get my head around this juxtaposition, however, and I have decided, partly in order to develop the reasons for my diverging opinion, partly since it strikes me as being an issue of current interest anyway, to combine this review [...] with the discussion of a number of aspects not always given sufficient consideration in the assessment of antisemitism.³⁴

Although the juxtaposition of anti- and philosemitism is indeed the single most important theme running through Bernstein’s article, it also touches on numerous other issues. He mocks the flimsiness of one of the publications in question, for example, by stating that ‘if it really is a principle of “Jewish commerce” to put quantity and cheap showmanship before quality, then Herr Waldhausen’s text is indeed an example for the contagiousness of a bad example. [...] The shallowest Viennese *Judenliteratur* could not have worked less conscientiously.’³⁵ Even based on ‘only moderately sound judgement,’ anyone who read Waldhausen’s publication ‘in an unprejudiced manner’ could not but conclude ‘that the Jews could not possibly have wreaked all the havoc he ascribes to them, unless they had become involved with spiritually and morally totally depraved peoples [Völkerschaften].’³⁶ The other antisemitic publication Bernstein criticises, *inter alia*, because its author uses the fact that more Jews than non-Jews embroiled in court proceedings were ultimately acquitted ‘merely as proof for the greater slyness and scrupulousness etc. of the Jews’. In fact, however, Bernstein countered, giving matters a rather mind-boggling turn, although it was ‘in part right and justified to reject any blanket interpretation of the larger percentage of acquitted Jews in their favour as jumping to conclusions,’ to ‘attach the stigma of moral guilt to *all* those acquitted is simply ridiculous.’³⁷

It was only when turning to the third publication in question that Bernstein began to address the issue of ‘philosemitism’ that is at the heart of the second half of his article. He introduced the juxtaposition quoted above, explaining that it was in order to criticize ‘philosemitism’ of the second type that the

³² Massing, *Rehearsal*, 267 n15. A slightly more pertinent translation would, to my mind, perhaps refer to the official notion of antisemitism as ‘the link lodged between socialism and the reactionary parties – ostensibly as a barrier against the former, in fact, however, as its precursor [Vorstufe].’ Bernstein’s adherence to this notion did not, incidentally, prevent Massing from simply upholding his claim anyway that ‘the coming theoretician of “revisionism” was even then at variance with the “radical” leadership on basic questions of capitalistic development and socialist strategy.’

³³ The publications in question were: 1. Wilhelm Giese, *Die Juden und die deutsche Kriminalstatistik* (Leipzig: F. W. Grunow, 1893); 2. Robert Waldhausen, *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben. Skizzen aus dem sozialen Leben der Gegenwart* (Passau: Rudolf Abt, 1892); 3. Walter Pohlmann, *Das Judentum und seine Recht* (Leipzig, Neuwied: Heuser, 1893).

³⁴ Bernstein, ‘Schlagwort,’ 228–229.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

catchword had ‘occasionally’ been adopted in the Socialist press too. Primarily, however, it was prevalent among the antisemites ‘who apply it to everyone who will not subscribe to their unconditional condemnation of the Jews and their demand that the Jews be deprived of their rights, and this does lead me to question the wisdom of granting them a certain legitimacy by using the term in the way outlined above.’³⁸ The wish of the comrades of Jewish extraction to spare the party any suspicion of promoting Jewish interests Bernstein not only respected but indeed found ‘very commendable’. The usage of this ambiguous catchword ‘which the antisemites use in a completely different sense from the Social Democrats,’ was not, however, the right way of realizing this wish which ‘can be better and more effectively underscored’ by referring to the genuine ‘other extreme’ opposed to antisemitism, namely the already mentioned ‘pansemitism’. While Jacobs is certainly right when he suggests that by that Bernstein ‘apparently meant philo-Semitism in the second sense delineated above,’ it does seem pertinent to point out that Bernstein actually stated quite explicitly that, to his mind, antisemitism and pansemitism stood against one another ‘as panslavism and slavophobia’ do. ‘We are as determined in our opposition to the former as we know ourselves free of the latter,’ Bernstein added in a slightly ambiguous formulation leaving it open whether he was referring primarily to matters Slavic, Jewish, or both.³⁹

The analogy Bernstein introduces here is surely a remarkable one. Panslavism may ultimately have proved a ‘phantom,’⁴⁰ thus rendering the harsh rejection and resentment it provoked from Marx and Engels and much of mainstream Western Socialism utterly disproportionate. Nevertheless, it was a self-avowed and self-styled ideology that actually existed and was actively propagated by various groups of political and literary figures that repeatedly sought to establish a broad political movement and entered into allegiances with differing political and governmental camps in pursuit of their political goals. It seems rather obvious that the prompt rejection by Marx and Engels and their collaborators around the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of this ideology and movement from its very inception during the revolution of 1848/1849, rather than initiating some novel form of animosity, primarily cemented the distrust already prevalent among democrats and radicals of Russia as the stalwart of reaction in Europe. Subsequently too it will have legitimised such distrust, rather than actually arousing it. This is borne out not least by the fact that distinctly non-Marxist and anti-Marxist strands of Western Socialism were no less partial to this habitual distrust. As is well known, the Imperial German government consciously (and very successfully) sought to capitalize on this distrust in the immediate run up to World War I when insisting, against the increasingly impatient military leadership, that Russia must under all

³⁸ Ibid., 233.

³⁹ Ibid., 234.

⁴⁰ Cf. Harrison Thomson, ‘A Century of a Phantom. Panslavism and the Western Slavs,’ in *Journal of Central European Affairs* 11, 1 (1951): 57–77. Cf. also Hans Kohn’s still useful *Pan-Slavism. Its History and Ideology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953); on Marx and Engels esp. 82–89. Conceptually problematic but, as always, highly stimulating are also Hannah Arendt’s comments on Panslavism in the eighth chapter of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, New York, London: Harvest/Harcourt Brace, 1958), 222–266: ‘Continental Imperialism: the Pan-Movements’.

circumstances be seen to be the first party to declare war.⁴¹ In the event, the deeply ingrained Russophobia in fact sufficed for the bulk of Social Democracy to convince itself that it was facing a war of national defence against Russia (and a Russian attempt to quash European civilization) even though the military ultimately forced the government's hand without waiting for a Russian declaration of war. Somewhat ironically, given our discussion here, Bernstein too was, of course, among the majority during the decisive days in early August 1914 and nurtured no doubts at all concerning the alleged Russian war guilt.⁴²

Now, as Na'aman has pointed out, 'true, there were some staunch allies of the Jewish community, motivated largely by religion and humanism, but there was never any movement of sympathy for Jews parallel to antisemitism.'⁴³ What in fact transpired here was 'the artificial fostering of animosity towards a mythical "philosemitism" which never appeared in concrete form in any broad or narrow movement.'⁴⁴ This discourse posited a 'juxtaposition of a hypothetical philosemitism *vis-à-vis* a real-existing antisemitism' along with the suggestion that 'both needed to be rejected in equal degree.'⁴⁵ What this in fact afforded was not only the possibility 'to obscure numerous phenomena in many countries, which a normal person would have regarded as antisemitic.' More crucially 'antisemitism hid behind philosemitism,'⁴⁶ the latter providing 'a convenient screen behind which to conceal anti-Jewish feelings that could no longer be allowed to appear in their true guise.'⁴⁷ This mechanism and the logic behind it could only be reinforced by the analogy that Bernstein introduced here, given that it posited a correspondence between the, to his mind, illegitimate form of 'philosemitism' and an actually existing, self-styled ideological and political movement.

It seems rather significant that Bernstein's text was published in mid May 1893, less than six weeks after the establishment of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* on 26 March of that year.⁴⁸ Perhaps Bernstein felt that with the inauguration of the *Centralverein* 'philosemitism' had finally become a real-existing movement like pansemitism. Should this assumption be correct, we would obviously need to reconsider Bernstein's motives for writing this article. Perhaps his misgivings regarding the term 'philosemitism' were in fact over-determined by the concern that the 'philosemitism' discourse as it stood prevented Social Democrats from comprehending the far more

⁴¹ Cf., for instance, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* 3 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995): 1152–1168, esp. 1158, 1165–1166.

⁴² Cf., for instance, Bernstein's own testimony in Eduard Bernstein, 'Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten,' in Felix Meiner (ed.), *Die Volkswirtschaftslehre der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen* 1 (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1924): 1–58, here 45. Hereafter Bernstein, 'Entwicklungsgang'.

⁴³ Shlomo Na'aman, 'The Beginnings of Historical Animosity Between Marxism and Zionism,' in Haim Shamir (ed.), *France and Germany in an Age of Crisis, 1900–1960* (Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1990): 356–401, here 369. Hereafter Na'aman, 'Beginnings'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, *Marxismus*, 25.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, 'Beginnings,' 370.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁴⁸ On the *Centralverein* cf. now Avraham Barkai, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893–1938* (Munich: Leo Baeck Institute, C. H. Beck, 2002). Barkai's main focus is on Weimar and the final years of the *Centralverein* under the Nazis, roughly the first fifth of the book deals with the period up to 1918.

real danger of ‘pansemitism’ as witnessed by the establishment of the *Centralverein* and that event was in fact what had convinced Bernstein that he needed to publicize his stance on the matter.

Bernstein then went on to explain why antisemitism, though an ostensible barrier against Socialism, would in fact be its precursor. The commercial dealings of bourgeois society had become so ‘intricately interwoven that no substantial accusation directed against Jews’ could be envisaged that did not at the same time apply ‘on a massive scale’ to non-Jews too. ‘Consequently,’ and what now follows is truly remarkable,

the antisemitic propagandists are pushed more and more from ostensible to actual opposition and are eventually genuinely persecuted [...] Temporarily the persecuted antisemites are Social Democracy’s strongest but inherently least robust opponents. They must either eat humble pie in which case the masses will abandon them, or draw the logical conclusion from their persecution and recognize the solidarity between the exploiters of all denominations and then work directly for Social Democracy.

Mehring, as we saw, sought the ‘healthy element’ within antisemitism primarily in the supposedly duped masses that supported it rather than the functionaries who did the duping. To his mind, the propagandists would facilitate antisemitism’s eye-opening function by making untenable claims. The refutation of these claims by reality itself would then drive the masses temporarily supporting the antisemitic cause forward on their inevitable path towards Social Democracy. But Mehring did not suggest, as Bernstein did, that the antisemitic propagandists themselves would be forced either to withdraw their claims or become Social Democrats. At this point, Bernstein’s contention, while in keeping with assumptions prevalent in the party, amounted to a particularly far-reaching formulation of those assumptions and certainly went beyond the claims made by Mehring whose abandon in this respect the extant literature would have us believe was exceptional and unsurpassed in the party.

That this focus on the propagandists, rather than just on the masses supporting them, was no mere slip of the pen, becomes clear as Bernstein continues. The more principled Social Democracy was in its rejection of the antisemitic catchwords – hence, of course, the need to find the correct counter-catchword –, and ‘the more it reveals the reactionary nature of antisemitism and its lack of clear-cut objectives, the less it will need to join in the *personal* anathematization of the persecuted by the liberal bourgeoisie [in das Kreuzige der liberalen Bourgeoisie über die *Personen* der Verfolgten einzustimmen]. It is, admittedly, often difficult,’ he continued,

to believe in the personal integrity and good faith of those concerned. A sincere opponent of exploitation and corruption will combat these in any guise and not just where they are perpetrated by the adherents of one denomination or the descendants [Abkömmlingen] of a particular race, nor will he hold hundreds of thousands responsible for the mistakes or offences of individuals. But there is a time and a place for everything, and a correct way of going about things.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ One context in which Bernstein aired his doubts about the ‘personal integrity and good faith’ of the ‘persecuted’ antisemitic propagandists with less reticence was apparently his correspondence with Kautsky. Schelz-Brandenburg, in his attempt to argue that Bernstein in fact opposed the whole prevalent notion of antisemitism as a precursor of Socialism, refers not only to Bernstein’s ‘Das Schlagwort und der Antisemitismus’, but also quotes from a letter that Bernstein wrote Kautsky on 2 May 1893. There Bernstein stated: ‘But I believe that the time has come to demonstrate the mistakenness of the juxtaposition: antisemitism – Jewish capital in *our* press. For the antisemitism of today Jewish capital is but a pretext, a demagogic device to get rid of Jewish competition in all sorts of professions’ (IISH Karl Kautsky D V: 243 as quoted by Till Schelz-Brandenburg, *Eduard Bernstein*

Objections of the sort that flowed from ‘moneyed morality [zahlungsfähige Moral]’, for instance, Social Democracy should ‘leave to those who ultimately sit on the same capitalist branch as the Ahlwardts and Liebermanns von Sonnenberg.’⁵⁰ Here Bernstein somewhat clumsily conflated two ideas into one. The ‘moneyed morality’ he rejected was, to his mind, clearly an expression of the sort of ‘philosemitism’ that struck him as illegitimate and was in fact a mere defence of capitalism. Lest anyone conclude from the pro-capitalist nature of this ‘philosemitism’ that those it targeted, namely the likes of Ahlwardt and Liebermann von Sonnenberg, were genuine anti-capitalists (rather than merely exploiting the anti-capitalist sentiments of their supporters), Bernstein therefore had to reiterate at this point that the antisemites and those who subscribed to this ‘moneyed morality’ ultimately sat ‘on the same capitalist branch’.

Now, Pohlmann, the author of the third, the ‘philosemitic’, publication under review, sought to explain all the Jews’ faults merely as an outflow of the centuries of oppression they had suffered. ‘Even to the extent that this is the case, and true as it is that the proven faults of the Jews [die den Juden nachgewiesenen Fehler] can also be found among non-Jews,’ Bernstein explained, ‘this cannot do away with the fact that certain unpleasant traits are indeed found more frequently among Jews than among non-Jews, albeit not to the extent claimed by the antisemites.’ It would amount to a ‘pointless whitewash’ to want to deny ‘that the Jews had executed their economic superiority to the detriment of the people with whom they were involved and that many of the practices in question had still been handed down among them long after any historical justification for them had ceased to exist.’⁵¹

Moreover, while formal emancipation might not have fully succeeded in facilitating the professional productivization of Jewry, it had certainly rendered obsolete ‘any excuse for segregation, for a special solidarity among Jews *vis-à-vis* non-Jews, for a tribal or racial morality in dealings between Jews and non-Jews,’ and wherever such a phenomenon was to be found ‘it cannot be combated forcefully enough. No one will claim that it had disappeared entirely when antisemitism emerged, but that it was rapidly disappearing is borne out by hundreds of pieces of evidence.’

und Karl Kautsky (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 1992): 244 n2.) As we saw, Bernstein argued in the *NZ* that it was a feature of modern bourgeois society that opposition to Jewish capital had become impossible without developing into opposition to non-Jewish capital too and hence ‘the antisemitic propagandists are pushed more and more from ostensible to actual opposition.’ The only interpretation that can explain this apparent contradiction is that Bernstein was differentiating between anti-Jewish sentiments aired against Jewish capital, on the one hand, and the anticapitalist rhetoric that featured in the propaganda of organized party-political antisemitism, on the other. His misgivings about the juxtaposition of ‘antisemitism’ and Jewish capital he observed in the Social Democratic press, then, would have been based not on a rejection of the notion that an essential anticapitalism inhered in the anti-Jewish sentiments that nurtured antisemitism but on the fact that the juxtaposition in question credited the organized political antisemites with genuinely anticapitalist intentions where they were, in fact, only utilizing this anticapitalism for other than anticapitalist ends. Whether Bernstein chose to suppress this less optimistic assessment of the antisemitic propagandists’ ‘integrity and good faith’ in his article for didactic reasons, in other words, so as not to alienate anyone unduly who might yet see the light, or in order to spare himself any suspicion of ‘pansemitism’ (or both) is hard to say.

⁵⁰ Bernstein, ‘Schlagwort,’ 235.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

Although the antisemites alleged, and in many cases apparently genuinely believed, that antisemitism targeted these sorts of Jewish characteristics, it was 'in fact the most suitable means to facilitate their regression and re-ignite them. And it is here, above all, that the critique of antisemitism has to begin [Und hier hat seine Kritik vor allem einzusetzen]. There could be no prescription less suited to remedy the maladies it seeks to cure.'⁵² Here too the question arises whether it may not well have been the establishment of the *Centralverein* that specifically alerted Bernstein to this most critique-worthy aspect of antisemitism, namely its ability to regenerate Jewish separatism. Given that he clearly had no intention of letting any antisemite outdo him in his opposition to this separatism, he must have found the *Centralverein* a most irksome phenomenon and hence its inauguration may well in fact explain why he felt the need to speak out on the matter in a more principled form at this particular juncture.

It is hard to see how Bernstein's line of argument on the matter should, as Wistrich suggests,⁵³ have been any less ambiguous than Mehring's. Writing to Mehring on 12 June 1893 in response to an inquiry concerning this article by Bernstein, Kautsky stated that 'ultimately, I am convinced that your stance and Bernstein's are not in fact all too different. Your differences strike me as being primarily of a formal nature.'⁵⁴ Nor, for that matter, did Kautsky himself venture to use this opportunity to air any misgivings of his own about the 'philosemitism' discourse.

Despite the fact that Bernstein had so clearly singled out the usage of the term 'philosemitism' specifically by 'comrades of Jewish descent', Mehring had written to Kautsky on 7 June:

Presumably Bernstein's article on philosemitism and antisemitism was supposed to be an indirect polemic against me? On the issue of antisemitism the difference of opinion seems to be predominantly of a formal nature, on the issue of philosemitism, however, it is apparently of a more principled nature. I think I have already written to you about this on an earlier occasion and have frequently experienced since that it is especially among the advanced workers [gerade in vorgeschrittenen Arbeiterkreisen] that 'philosemitism' is regarded just as I understand it.⁵⁵

Kautsky replied on 12 June that

as far as I know Bernstein's articles are not directed against you. He has been discussing the issue of philosemitism with me for quite a while; when mentioning people who, to his mind, use the term wrongly, he did not mention you, but particularly Viktor Adler in Vienna who indeed propagates a stance similar to yours and [does so], should that be possible, even more emphatically [than you do].

Adler argued the case even more emphatically, Kautsky went on to explain, because Austrian Social Democracy was confronted more frequently and intensely than its German counterpart with a much more virulent antisemitism. 'Nowhere has "philosemitism" emerged in such force as a natural response to antisemitism' as it had in Vienna, Kautsky explained. He then characterized 'philosemitism' as 'that school of thought that regards every event and every phenomenon exclusively from the vantage point whether it will benefit or harm the Jews.' It was beyond doubt that 'philosemitism in this sense exists,' and it was 'equally indubitable that the antisemites use the word in a different sense than we do,' he

⁵² Ibid., 236–237.

⁵³ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 47.

⁵⁴ Fonds 201: 50.

⁵⁵ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 43.

went on and then concluded with his remark that the differences between Mehring and Bernstein on the matter were, to his mind, 'primarily of a formal nature'.⁵⁶

That Bernstein's much-cited article was in any way suited to 'caution the Social Democratic Party against ambiguity of language and attitude in the Jewish question'⁵⁷ is a claim borne out neither by the text itself, then, nor by the way it was discussed by his peers at the time. Far from challenging the fundamental logic and emotive thrust underlying the anti-'philosemitic' argument Bernstein's article reinforced it and his main concern was not to see anti-'philosemitism' abandoned or curtailed but to see it given its due in the most effective way possible. Kautsky too, as we saw, subscribed to the critique of 'philosemitism' and could see no substantial difference between Bernstein's and Mehring's position on the matter. The suggestion that Mehring's peers did not share his stance on 'philosemitism' and even criticized it on occasion, publicly or otherwise, is therefore untenable.

The 'philosemitism' discourse did more, though, than offer a welcome opportunity to rationalize one's anti-Jewish sentiments and partial sympathies for the antisemitic cause and render them respectable by formulating them as a critique, not of Jewry, but of 'philosemitism'. It in fact made it an anti-'philosemitic' duty to express those sentiments and sympathies as clearly as possible in order to prevent 'philosemitism' from obscuring antisemitism's eye-opening function and thus impeding the inevitable historical and socio-economic development that would automatically render Jewry and antisemitism alike obsolete.

To my mind, another factor added to the vehemence with which Social Democrats criticized 'philosemitism', namely the desire to vent their embarrassment of anti-antisemitism. Given that the disappearance of both the social strata susceptible to antisemitism and of Jewry as a distinct entity was supposedly a foregone conclusion, organized political antisemitism, while it still existed, needed to be addressed merely because (and to the extent that) it was a reactionary political force. Where its perceptions of, and prescriptions for, matters (supposedly) Jewish went beyond a critique of Jewry that Social Democrats too would have seen as legitimate, they required critical attention only in so far as they helped mobilize support for reactionary politics. Beyond that, antisemitism was best left to its own devices to let it take its supposedly self-eliminatory course, driving its temporary supporters inexorably towards Socialism in the process.

This strategy could not be maintained, however, if 'philosemites', instead of letting antisemitism run its course, continuously insisted on making it the centre of undue attention. It was ultimately this 'philosemitic' insistence that forced Social Democrats to engage the antisemites' perceptions of, and prescriptions for, matters (supposedly) Jewish critically. Strictly speaking, this critical engagement therefore represented only an indirect response to antisemitism but a direct response to 'philosemitism'. In this sense, to the extent that Social Democrats, like most anti-antisemites, were angered and embarrassed at being forced into a partial defence of Jewry, it was the 'philosemites' rather than the antisemites who appeared to be the cause of this anger and embarrassment.

⁵⁶ Fonds 201: 50.

⁵⁷ Massing, *Rehearsal*, 267 n15.

If we are looking for the immediate source of the discomfort actually felt by many Socialists in connection with political antisemitism, it is therefore not so much the antisemitism itself (let alone its impact on Jewry) we need to turn to but rather the activities of the ostensible 'philosemites'. Hence the vehemence with which the Social Democrats took these 'philosemites' to task. Conversely, the fact that the Social Democrats could so easily construe as diffuse and marginal a phenomenon as the actually extant anti-antisemitism in Imperial Germany into a 'philosemitic' bogeyman deserving and requiring so much attention and critique gives an additional indication of just how strong the embarrassment of anti-antisemitism actually was.

There can be little doubt that the 'philosemitism' discourse could easily drown out the elemental insight that antisemitism was the real culprit in the game and that perhaps the greatest threat lay in the general societal defencelessness against, and often susceptibility to, a crucial cross section of the fundamental assumptions and concepts on which the antisemitic case rested. Moreover it neatly accommodated (and most certainly conspicuously failed to challenge) rather more immediate and elementary anti-Jewish sentiments among a fair share of Social Democracy's members and supporters.

Chapter 2

Beating the life out of liberal philosemitism. Mehring's dealings with Zur Judenfrage

Karl Marx's early double essay *Zur Judenfrage*, though barely noticed when it was originally published, has subsequently drawn inordinate amounts of attention and generated immense debate.¹ Until relatively recently it was generally assumed that the text exerted a crucial formative influence on the Socialist movement's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish. Silberner, for instance, argued that 'hundreds of thousands, millions have read *Zur Judenfrage* with the same zeal and the same fervour as they read the *Communist Manifesto*,² thus implying that its influence could hardly be overestimated. This is a notion to which few scholars today would still subscribe.³ To be sure, *Zur Judenfrage* hardly provided the movement with a legacy of analytical perceptiveness and acuity in its dealings with antisemitism and matters Jewish, but its significance was largely limited to the role of a repository offering a limited selection of quotes well suited, in isolation, to provide already extant perceptions and convictions with the ostensible seal of approval of the founder (or one of the two founders, depending on one's preferences) of *scientific Socialism*. This altered perception of the influence of *Zur Judenfrage* reflects not only a more thorough examination of the concrete issue in its own right but also an increasing methodological refinement throughout the field of intellectual history more generally. That the mere existence of the text in and of itself essentially vouched for the assumption that a movement professing a Marxian or Marxist orientation most likely subscribed to the position reflected in *Zur Judenfrage*, as Silberner and others automatically assumed, no longer seems an acceptable line of reasoning. Much of the argument underpinning the now generally accepted notion has therefore hinged on the technical issue of the availability of the text, on the one hand, and the extent to which leading Socialists made explicit and affirmative references to *Zur Judenfrage*, on the other. Before we address these issues, however, we need to develop a more general framework within which we can assess the extent to which the stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish prevalent within German Social Democracy was compatible with Marx's position in *Zur Judenfrage* and its role in the development of Marx's thought more generally. As we will see, the notions prevalent among Social Democrats in fact differed substantially from Marx's stance and such attempts as were undertaken by leading Social Democrats to appropriate *Zur Judenfrage* were consequently based on at least three fundamental misunderstandings. Against this background one will hardly be able to credit *Zur Judenfrage* with a formative influence on Social Democracy's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish even where it was actively appropriated.

¹ For an impressive, though now inevitably somewhat dated, survey cf. Carlebach, *Karl Marx*.

² Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 142.

³ For the now largely accepted general consensus cf., for example, Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 86; Susanne Miller 'Vorwort,' in Jack Jacobs, *Sozialisten und die "Jüdische Frage" nach Marx* (Main: Decaton, 1994): 7–10, here 8; *Idem*, 'Deutsche Sozialdemokratie, Juden und Israel,' in *Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte* (April 1998): 331–336, here 331; most recently Thomas Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 179.

A one-sided perception of capital as money. The first great misunderstanding

The most obvious major misunderstanding we need to address in this context results from the fact that, to use Claussen's apt formulation, Marx, in *Zur Judenfrage*, did 'not equate Jewry and capitalism because at the time he as yet had no concept of capitalism.'⁴ In the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* Marx is concerned with Jewry's involvement in the money economy and the demonization of the money economy he inclines towards is reflected in a concomitant demonization of Jewry as its alleged personification. The process in which he subsequently developed his concept of capitalism pulled the plug on this whole line of thought and rendered it obsolete.⁵ This concept assumed, after all, that the capitalist mode of production hinges crucially on the way labour is utilized to produce surplus value. Only to the extent that it facilitates and perpetuates the process by which surplus value is extracted from labour in the sphere of production does money function as capital in the strict sense of the word. The in many ways more conspicuous role that money plays in the sphere of circulation, by contrast, merely signifies the re-distribution of surplus value that has already been pressed out of labour and is hence not fundamental to the specific nature of capitalism. The forces governing the capitalist mode of production originated historically in a complex constellation of identifiable group interests but now functioned impersonally and with a momentum of their own that pitted the bourgeoisie and the working class against one another but transcended the immediate interests of individual groups within each of these major blocks. Hence nothing was to be won by attempts to pin the responsibility for capitalism on individual groups within the bourgeoisie, let alone could one overcome capitalism by targeting such groups. With the emergence of this concept the fixation on Jewry and its role in the money economy invariably became obsolete.

In the much-cited section of his letter to Isidor Ehrenfreund (21 March 1890) that was subsequently published in several papers,⁶ Engels, as is well known, claimed that antisemitism stood a chance only in backward societies, in other words, in societies whose socio-economic base had not yet become fully capitalist; hence the consummation of the capitalization process would spell the demise of antisemitism too.

⁴ Detlev Claussen, 'Die antisemitische Erbschaft in der Sowjetgesellschaft,' in Brumlik et al. (eds.), *Antisemitismus*, 83–95, here 85. Hereafter Claussen, 'Erbschaft'. Cf. also *Idem*, *Judenhaß*, 18, 92.

⁵ For a similar argument cf. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*, 171. Rather remarkably, even a scholar as acute as Derek Penslar has recently reiterated the notion that, to Marx's mind, the Jews 'embodied' capitalism. From his subsequent remark that Marx specifically identified the Jews with the 'essence of commercial capitalism' (Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), 44. Hereafter Penslar, *Shylock's Children*) it is obvious that Penslar is not altogether oblivious to the conceptual issues at stake here. Given that his remarkable monograph focuses on the ways in which Jews defined their role in the capitalist economy he is not, of course, generally speaking compelled to adhere to a Marxist concept of capitalism that insists on the specificity of capitalism proper *vis-à-vis* earlier forms of commerce or the money economy. Any attempt to paraphrase *Zur Judenfrage*, however, obviously does need to contextualize Marx's comments on the socio-economic role of Jewry in the double essay by relating it to Marx's subsequently developed specific concept of capitalism.

⁶ *Inter alia*, in the *Berliner Volksblatt* 7, 109 [13 May 1890]: 1–2 that reprinted the text from the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Vienna).

Rather tellingly, not only Socialists at the time but most scholars since have focused predominantly on Engels's emphasis on the backwardness of the antisemites.⁷ Far less attention has been paid to the fact that Engels clearly assumed that industrialization and modernization would render obsolete the causes of antisemitism not only by robbing those strata inclining towards antisemitism of their existence but also by dislodging the Jews (to the extent of turning increasing numbers of them into proletarians) and asserting the dominance of non-Jewish over Jewish capital. 'Only there,' only in the backward countries 'is the capital predominantly Jewish and only there does antisemitism exist,' he explained. In the USA the Rothschilds were 'veritable beggars' compared to the genuinely wealthy Americans among whom there was '*not a single Jew*' and even in the Rhineland where 'with the help of the French, we chased the nobility out of the country ninety-five years ago and created a modern industry for ourselves, where are the Jews there?'⁸ One wonders, incidentally, just how aware Engels was of the *décret infâme* and the French assistance it had afforded the Rhineland in keeping not only the nobility at bay. That Engels's prognosis should have been 'wildly mistaken',⁹ as Wistrich claims, because it assumed that organized political antisemitism and the support it could mobilize sprung from discontent that was generated by 'objective processes in the development of capitalism'¹⁰ and subsumed and transformed more traditional forms of anti-Jewish sentiments and prejudice, remains to be proven; to my mind, its fundamental weakness resulted from the fact that it assumed the antisemitic expressions of that discontent to be a direct and essentially rational response to those 'objective processes in the development of capitalism'. More importantly for our context here, what clearly emerges is that Engels too assumed the socio-economic role supposedly personified by Jewry to be essentially a pre- or proto-capitalist one rendered obsolete by fully-fledged capitalism.

There is a certain irony to the fact that Marx's earlier demonization of the money economy may well have been at the very least stimulated by none other than Moses Heß and his essay 'Ueber das Geldwesen'. Given that a substantial part of his discussion in the first part of *Zur Judenfrage* is based on literature apparently not at his disposal in Kreuznach,¹¹ there can now be little doubt that Marx did not in fact write *Zur Judenfrage* before his arrival in Paris in the autumn of 1843, as the late Julius Carlebach still assumed.¹² That Heß' manuscript of 'Ueber das Geldwesen' had been submitted in time for publication in the first edition of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* was never in doubt¹³ and Marx must therefore have known the manuscript when preparing, or at the very least when finalizing, *Zur Judenfrage* (and especially its short second part). As a result, much of Carlebach's argument in an important sense effectively turns on itself. He himself established that the similarities other authors claimed to have

⁷ Cf. for instance Wistrich, *Socialism*, 128–130.

⁸ *MEW* 22: 50.

⁹ Wistrich, *Socialism*, 128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹ Cf. *MEGA2* I.2 Apparat, 650–651; Na'aman erroneously assumed that the first part of *Zur Judenfrage* had been written in Kreuznach but the second part in Paris (Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 62).

¹² Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 111–112.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 113.

identified between the ways in which Marx and Heß treated the rights of man and the role of guilds and corporations are not borne out by a more careful textual comparison,¹⁴ leaving as ‘the closest parallel between the two writers’ their ‘evaluation of money’.¹⁵

Carlebach also rejected the suggestion that Heß’ portrayal of Jewry might have inspired Marx. After all, as he conceded in a perhaps slightly surprising formulation, the ‘gruesome imagery’ Heß deployed to depict Jewry was ‘not very profound and lacks the incisiveness of Marx.’¹⁶ Avineri initially formulated this rather more starkly when he qualified ‘Ueber das Geldwesen’ as ‘one of the harshest statements which has ever been made about Judaism by a Jew,’ adding that it ‘contains material which is much more extreme than anything used by Marx; and it is to Marx’s credit that he did not include this material in his work.’¹⁷ We might add, though, that Avineri subsequently softened his stance,¹⁸ arguing that while Heß had indeed made ‘some explicitly harsh comments on Judaism [...] Hess basically identifies capitalism with *Christianity*,’¹⁹ and his ‘language about Christianity vies in its vehemence with Marx’s language about Judaism.’²⁰ Heß’ worst remarks he now characterized as ‘a passage in which it is obvious that Hess was carried away by the strong imagery suggested by the analogy between blood and money,’²¹ and the fact that Marx ‘did not [...] go as far as to follow Hess in his rather wild ascription of blood sacrifices in Judaism (and the Christian mystery of the blood and flesh of Christ) as sublimation of cannibalism turned into capitalism’²² was tucked away in an endnote. In any case, just how much of a favour one is doing Heß by insisting on the extent of his influence on Marx at this particular juncture²³ certainly seems rather arguable. Na’aman’s comments during a seminar discussion in Hannover at the end of 1977 that seems to have received little attention from Anglophone historians to my mind still offers the most pertinent assessment of the matter to date:

So, Heß wrote an essay on the nature of money. You probably know that. And Marx wrote an essay on the Jewish Question. What emerges is the following problem [...] It transpires that basic ideas in Marx’s essay are contained in Heß’ “Geldwesen”, well, that is terrible, of course. So, Marx did not let Heß [...] state his case [...] in order to publish his own piece which “plagiarizes” Heß. But that is terrible! That is inhumane! From a personal point of view, assuming that was really the case, one may well wonder, and it may also be of biographical

¹⁴ Ibid., 120.

¹⁵ Ibid., 121.

¹⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹⁷ Shlomo Avineri, ‘The New Jerusalem of Moses Hess,’ in Alkis Kontos (ed.), *Powers, Possessions, and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): 107–118, here 111.

¹⁸ Moshe Mishkinsky pointed this out in his review of Avineri’s monograph on Moses Heß in *Polin* 3 (1988): 386–389, here 388.

¹⁹ Shlomo Avineri, *Moses Hess: Prophet of Communism and Zionism* (New York, London: New York University Press, 1985), 123.

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ Ibid., 132.

²² Ibid., 157 n32.

²³ Cf. Zwi Rosen, ‘Moses Hess’ Einfluß auf die Entfremdungstheorie von Karl Marx,’ in Walter Grab, Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), *Juden im Vormärz und in der Revolution von 1848* (Stuttgart, Bonn: Burg Verlag, 1983): 169–198, here 176. For a more moderate formulation cf. however *Idem*, ‘Der Einfluss von Moses Hess auf die Frühschriften von Karl Marx,’ in *TAJb* 8 (1979): 143–174, esp. 173–174.

relevance to establish that Heß, who was older than Marx, also formulated an issue. But: the real problem is, it is not that. The question is: Who formulated this idea more correctly, more precisely, whose formulations are more capable of further development. And at this point it transpires that Heß is caught up in a one-sided perception of capital as money. From his formulation of the problem he can never find the way to an analysis of the capitalist mode of production. He will always remain stuck with, bogged down by, the money issue. Marx too is still heavily embroiled in the money issue but not in the same way and not so deeply that he could not move beyond it. When one analyses Marx's essay one can imagine how the same Marx will think later on [...]

[On Jewry] Heß used formulations that are irresponsible. He used expressions that are far more compromising than those used by Marx. Marx's judgment on Jewry in his essay is hardly very flattering. But Heß uses formulations that veer towards the blood libel and that is a great responsibility [...] This is a matter of grave guilt, if a man writes something like this about the "social blood" that the Jews shed and that the Jews develop the predator in man.²⁴

That said, Carlebach's warning not to overestimate Heß' influence on Marx at this juncture, 'if only because the moral revolt against "money" was such a strongly felt and widespread attitude in the radical circles of that time,'²⁵ remains one that not only deserves careful consideration but is also relevant to our main discussion here. Needless to say, German Social Democrats were not dependent on Marx's pre-Marxist analysis in *Zur Judenfrage* in order to adopt a stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish that hinged on a demonization of the money economy rather than a genuine critique of capitalism in the Marxian or Marxist sense of the word; let alone could one argue that *Zur Judenfrage* (or anyone's recommendation of, or comments on, it) would have led Socialists to abandon Marxist anti-capitalism and a concomitant indifference towards Jewry for a pre-Marxist fixation on the money economy and Jewry as its personification. Rather, *Zur Judenfrage* could be, and was, utilized to accommodate and legitimize already prevalent, conventional forms of anti-Jewish stereotyping that fell short of a genuine critique of capitalism along Marxist lines. Wistrich is quite right, then, in pointing out that Mehring seized on *Zur Judenfrage* as 'an unbreakable alibi for his own (pre-Marxist) negative judgment on Jews and Judaism,'²⁶ as an 'alibi for expressing an anti-Jewish nuance in his writings,'²⁷ surmising that it 'offered the perfect ideological justification for the long-standing emotional resentment'²⁸ of Jewry he clearly nurtured all along. Wistrich's implication, however, that Mehring should have been an exception in this respect is barely plausible, except perhaps in the sense that Mehring generally did make a genuine effort to engage Marxist thought while many others in the party never tried to move beyond their 'pre-Marxist' preconceptions of matters Jewish (or any other issue, for that matter) in the first place.

The 'philosemitism' discourse too needs to be evaluated against this background. Just as the reference to the ostensibly Marxian equation of Jews with capitalism in fact seized upon Marx's pre-Marxist fixation on the money economy, the identification and denunciation of anti-antisemitism as pro-capitalist obviously

²⁴ Shlomo Na'aman, *Zur Entstehung der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Hannover: SOAK, 1978), 5–7.

²⁵ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 122.

²⁶ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 43.

²⁷ Ibid., 44.

²⁸ Ibid., 43.

hinged on a mere reversal of that same false equation. If Jewry could be identified at best with the functions of the commercial and financial sector in pre-capitalist societies (and lost its status with the onset of capitalism proper) and antisemitism hence fell short not only, as most Social Democrats conceded, of a thorough critique of capitalism in its entirety, but in fact of a genuine critique of capitalism at all, then it is hard to see how anti-antisemitism could amount to a defence of capitalism. This suggestion made sense only if one subscribed to the assumption that Marx had identified Jewry and capitalism after all. Over time these two false notions presumably began mutually to reinforce one another. The logic according to which 'philosemitism' was pro-capitalist because antisemitism was 'anti-capitalist' could, of course, be inverted: once one had accepted the notion that 'philosemitism' utilized anti-antisemitism to defend capitalism, this notion not only pre-supposed but also demonstrated that antisemitism surely must be anti-capitalist. Thus the two interdependent misunderstandings were eventually seen to bear one another out. Ultimately, the 'philosemitism' discourse thus represented an extension of the supposedly subversive strategy of combating capitalism by seeking to personalize responsibility for it and attacking those who allegedly personified it, a strategy that had, as we saw, become obsolete with the emergence of Marx's concept of capitalism and his concomitant abandonment of the earlier fixation on the money economy.

Penslar, we might note in passing, has offered an intriguing account of the emphasis placed by influential segments of Jewry itself on the substantial contributions of *Homo economicus judaicus* to the capitalist order.²⁹ This obviously begs the question to what extent this emphasis may have offered Mehring and his peers further arguments to underscore their pre-Marxist identification of Jewry with capitalism. The simple truth of the matter is, however, that the Social Democrats were in no position to enlist this actual Jewish affirmation of capitalism and Jewry's role in it because in order to do so they would have needed to engage the relevant inner-Jewish discourse in the first place. Social Democrats only ever related to Jewry as it was reflected in the disputes between antisemites and anti-antisemites but never directly. Hence, somewhat ironically, they continued to draw comfort from their misinterpretation of the weakest and most dated sections of *Zur Judenfrage* without even realizing that contemporary Jewry itself was producing a constant stream of material that could easily have been exploited to help them maintain their pre-Marxist identification of Jewry with capitalism.

A sound theory of Jewish emancipation. The second great misunderstanding

All subsequent appropriations of *Zur Judenfrage* within German Social Democracy, however passionate or perfunctory, were also predicated on yet another, in general terms perhaps even more fundamental misunderstanding. In a truly ground breaking but still oddly neglected study that makes it painfully

²⁹ Cf. Penslar, *Shylock's Children*, [Ch. 4] 124–173.

palpable just how brilliant an impulse giver we have lost in its author,³⁰ the late Amos Funkenstein identified as ‘the only sound political theories of Jewish emancipation [...] those which, against the *consensus communis* argued for the disjunction of emancipation and assimilation.’³¹ To Funkenstein’s mind, the rare insistence on that disjunction found its expression at three distinct junctures and could be directly identified with the names of three authors and three classical texts. Reflecting the promise of the emancipation process at its inception, Mendelssohn, in *Jerusalem*,

had not yet reached the point where assimilation or at least accommodation even of religious tenets, seemed a necessary price for emancipation into the state, because the state he conceived of was not yet the national state of the early nineteenth century, itself a surrogate for religious fervor. And, for the same reason,

Funkenstein suggested, ‘he could not yet see the gap between political and social integration.’³² Reflecting the ‘gap between emancipation and integration’ that still remained more than a century later, Herzl’s *Judenstaat* had sought to address the question how, ‘granted that assimilation did not result in integration,’ one could ‘nevertheless defend and maintain the achievements of the emancipation.’³³ His endeavour ‘to rescue the achievements of the emancipation without assimilation’ had led Herzl to conclude that the Jews’ ‘integration into the civil state will be the formation of their own state.’³⁴ In between Mendelssohn’s pre-emancipatory ‘anticipation’ and Herzl’s post-emancipatory ‘drawing of balance’, however, Funkenstein identified an ‘admonition’ *in medias res* in the form of Karl Marx’s *Zur Judenfrage*.³⁵ Funkenstein conceded that the two essays are ‘utterly soaked with Jewish self-hatred,’ making it ‘hard to penetrate its stench to discover their interesting core,’³⁶ but then demonstrated convincingly that that interesting core indeed hinges crucially on the disjunction of emancipation and assimilation; a disjunction so incomprehensible to all those who subsequently professed to follow in his footsteps that they never even realized that Marx’s argument in *Zur Judenfrage* had directly targeted the, to his mind ridiculous, notion that formal emancipation presupposes assimilation.

The basic message of the first part of *Zur Judenfrage* is clear enough. ‘The liberal state,’ to stay with Funkenstein’s paraphrase, ‘purports to stand above all particular social interest-groups. In reality, though, it expresses and institutionalizes the atomisation of society. The “freedom” or equality which it propagates [...] are nothing but a tool’ to make the individual ‘free to sell himself, his labor, as a commodity in the

³⁰ Cf. David Sorkin, ‘Emancipation, Haskalah, and Reform: The Contribution of Amos Funkenstein,’ in *JSS* Nser 6, 1 (1999): 98–110.

³¹ Amos Funkenstein, ‘The Political Theory of Jewish Emancipation,’ in *TAJb* Beiheft 3 (1979): 13–28; reprint: *Idem*, *Perceptions*, 220–234, here 222. Hereafter Funkenstein, ‘Political Theory’.

³² *Ibid.*, 229.

³³ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

market.³⁷ It is 'the appearance of the state – as an aggregate of conflicting interest groups' that is in fact its essence, 'while its essence or "ideal" is only appearance,' and 'the very discrepancy between essence and appearance is' actually 'the driving moment of the state.' The Jews 'cannot but be emancipated into this state, which cannot let either religion or family stand in the way of political emancipation of man: his transformation into a commodity [...] It is not the Jews,' then, 'who have to change in order to be granted emancipation, it is the state which has to change.' As Funkenstein rather intriguingly suggests, 'it seems as if Marx's argument is a caricaturised version of Mendelssohn's.' While Mendelssohn too assumed that it was not the Jews who needed to change but the state by adhering to its own ideals, Marx felt that the change really required of the state was that it 'become its true ugly self.' Moreover, 'Marx, like Mendelssohn, also sees the Jews as better fit than any other social segment for the civil state,' but here too Marx substituted what he held to be the 'ugly truth' for Mendelssohn's idealized vision. The Jews are particularly well prepared for the civil state because 'they are the very incarnation of its true essence,' namely, 'the atomisation of society into conflicting economic interest-groups.' In this sense 'the civil state is a Jewish state.'³⁸

Now, whatever else one might possibly be able to say about the way in which *Zur Judenfrage* was subsequently appropriated in the Socialist movement, there can be absolutely no doubt that that appropriation, wherever and in whatever form it took place, was always unquestioningly predicated on the assumption that emancipation and assimilation were two sides of one and the same coin and that Marx's notion that the demise of the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois society it generated would automatically spell the disappearance of distinct Jewish existence ultimately implied that emancipation and assimilation were inextricably linked. Given that assimilation would supposedly transpire as a consequence of the objective course of historical progress more generally, Socialists should have been less inclined than others to make the issue of Jewish preparedness to assimilate one of moral judgements and demands. On the other hand, refusal to assimilate clearly amounted to more than an individual failure in this light and was readily interpreted as a wilful attempt of the Jews in question to set themselves against the inevitable course of history (and the triumph of the Socialist movement it was indubitably steering towards), an issue we shall return to in a moment.

Clearly, all this flew in the face of Marx's central argument in *Zur Judenfrage*. Of course the demise of capitalism and bourgeois society would spell a form of human emancipation that would lead Jews and non-Jews alike into totally uncharted territory, but that very process would render the concept of assimilation utterly obsolete since it would bring with it not only the demise of a distinct Jewish existence but would also transcend all distinct forms of non-Jewish existence in their current form. There would, admittedly, no longer be anything specific Jewish, but, put simply, there would also no longer be anything specifically non-Jewish that those who had previously been Jews could assimilate to. We may or may not find this

³⁷ Ibid., 230.

³⁸ Ibid., 231.

vision attractive or realistic but what is crucial for our discussion here is the fundamental fact that the subsequent appropriation of *Zur Judenfrage* in the Socialist movement, where it did occur, was clearly predicated precisely on the conventional notion that emancipation did presuppose assimilation. This appropriation in fact represented the very *consensus communis* against which Marx had directed the main thrust of the double essay in the first place and thus blatantly disregarded Marx's central argument in *Zur Judenfrage*.

The duty of the Jews to oppose reactionary politics in all spheres and selflessly.

The third great understanding

The notion that those who failed to assimilate promptly enough and instead insisted on the legitimacy of a distinct Jewish existence were wilfully setting themselves against the inevitable course of history and the triumph of Socialism that would come with it found its complement in the accusation that Jews were betraying the cause of general emancipation to maintain their own particular interests. In this context, all too serious a response to antisemitism clearly counted as one form of such undue insistence on a distinct Jewish existence; after all, since antisemitism was supposedly as doomed as the phenomenon it attacked, any attempt (or demand) to take antisemitism too seriously and thus, by implication, question its imminent demise surely implied the notion that Jewry too would prove a more durable phenomenon than the theory envisaged. This general indictment played a particularly prominent role during the *Sozialistengesetz*.

The extant literature generally treats Social Democracy's insistence that the *Sozialistengesetz* and political antisemitism were the product of one and the same reactionary tendency as evidence for its anti-antisemitic integrity.³⁹ Leuschen-Seppel seeks to underscore this notion by contrasting the Social Democratic response to the *Sozialistengesetz* with the response of the bulk of organized Catholicism to the *Kulturkampf*. As she explains, many Catholics tended to feel genuinely anguished by the *Kulturkampf* and therefore readily turned on the Jews as an even weaker minority, scape goating them to compensate for their own sense of exclusion and frustration. The *Sozialistengesetz*, by contrast, generally instilled a sense of pride and superiority in most Social Democrats. Hence they felt no need to indulge in any scape goating, she suggests, and instead emphasized the common cause of all those affected by discrimination.⁴⁰ We might note in passing that this concept of scape goating is in any case a problematic one. More importantly, however, this line of argument automatically pre-supposes that Social Democrats could only have turned on Jewry to vent a sense of inferiority provoked by the *Sozialistengesetz*. In fact, however, Social Democrats were inclined to employ their very sense of superiority to polemicize against Jewry.

Take the contention, contained in a motion passed by a workers' assembly in Berlin in January 1881, 'that the sense of justice and democratic spirit of the unprejudiced German wage labourers, large numbers of

³⁹ Cf. Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 94, 114–115; Rürup, 'Sozialdemokratie,' 20.

⁴⁰ Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 115.

whom themselves currently suffer under special legislation – and whose political behaviour never transgressed legality [either] – must reject the curtailment of the civil equality guaranteed Jewry by the constitution.’⁴¹ This is surely no straightforward statement of solidarity. Firstly, the pompous formulation clearly demonstrates that the fact that Social Democrats oppose antisemitism was clearly one that needed explaining and apparently not only to outsiders but also to those in whose name this statement was supposedly being made. The appeal to ‘the sense of justice and democratic spirit of the unprejudiced German wage labourer’ has a ring akin to something of an incantation. But the emphasis on the German worker’s magnanimity not only reflected an anti-antisemitic concession, as it were, it also implied a demand. If Social Democrats could find it within themselves to make anti-antisemitic pronouncements of this sort then it was incumbent upon Jewry to express its opposition to the *Sozialistengesetz* in an equally forceful manner. Now, in and of itself this was by all means a valid argument. Solidarity among social groups denied (constitutional) rights is always the most effective (and definitely the most honourable) means of gaining those rights. In fact, however, this notion was over-determined from the outset by a more fundamental distrust of Jewry and thus offered yet another opportunity to rationalize and articulate anti-Jewish preconceptions. For the Jewish establishment to support (or at the very least not oppose) the ban on Social Democracy and yet reject the emerging antisemitic movement because it called for special legislation against Jewry was both hypocritical and futile, the argument went that could thus be construed.

A text perhaps particularly well suited to illustrate this is the pamphlet *Der Wahrheit die Ehre. Ein Beitrag zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, published early in 1881 under the pseudonym Wilhelm Revel by Wilhelm Hasenclever. Hasenclever (1837–1889) had been Schweitzer’s successor as the ADAV’s final President from 1871 until the merger with the Eisenacher SDAP at the Congress in Gotha in May 1875. He had been returned to the *Norddeutscher Reichstag* for the ADAV by Duisburg in 1867 and was elected to the *Reichstag* again in Altona in 1874. In Gotha he was initially elected as joint chairman of the united SAPD and subsequently even took over as the party’s executive chairman, but then resigned in October 1875 after his constituency had asked him to choose between his post in the *Vorstand* and his role as editor of the *Hamburg-Altonaer Volksblatt*.⁴² Together with the long-standing second man in the party, Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900), he also edited the *Vorwärts* (Leipzig), the paper that succeeded the SDAP’s *Volksstaat* and the ADAV’s *Neuer Social-Demokrat* as the central organ of the newly merged party in October 1876 and was published three times a week,⁴³ and he continued to represent the party in the *Reichstag*, being returned for Berlin VI in 1877 and again a decade later, while representing Breslau VI between 1878 and 1887. He finally resigned as a deputy in June 1888 and died on 3 July 1889.⁴⁴

The scholarly community was only alerted to the fact that Revel was Hasenclever’s pseudonym and Hasenclever hence the author of *Der Wahrheit die Ehre* with the publication of a selection of Hasenclever’s

⁴¹ Quoted *ibid.*

⁴² Cf. Fricke I: 156.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I: 518.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 754.

texts edited by Ludger Heid and others on the centenary of his death in 1989,⁴⁵ and Na'aman subsequently reported the matter to the interested Anglophone public in the 1991 *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*. Nor does it seem to have been general knowledge that Hasenclever was the author of this pamphlet when it was published and we know nothing of its impact at the time.⁴⁶ Hence its significance definitely does not lie in some formative influence it could only be credited with by wild conjecture. More importantly, Hasenclever, who had initially been apprenticed as a tanner by his father, was hardly the most sophisticated Social Democratic leader. It is for this very reason that Na'aman has convincingly described him as 'the one who best expressed the opinion and mood of the rank and file member' within the leadership,⁴⁷ and it is here that the significance of *Der Wahrheit die Ehre* lies. According to the preface, the pamphlet consisted of a series of articles that had been published in a left-liberal paper [in einer freisinnigen Zeitung] in December 1880. That said, Hasenclever's pamphlet is nothing if not ambitious and wide-ranging in its scope. Its two central themes are Jewry's responsibility for the antisemitic upsurge and the hypocrisy of the way in which it stood on its own dignity while betraying the general cause of justice and emancipation. 'What,' he began, had

actually happened to make everyone in the entire German *Reich* speak of nothing other than the Jewish Question?

Answer: A Court Preacher convened meetings in Berlin and several other German localities in which he *campaigned* against the Jews and that in a manner that was in many ways extremely irresponsible. On the other hand, some of the things the Court Preacher made an issue of in the course of this campaign were justified as even the most eager friends of the Jews in the Prussian *Landtag* conceded.⁴⁸

If one looked at the recent debates on antisemitism and matters Jewish in the Prussian *Abgeordnetenhaus*, it was clear that 'more than 200 deputies, the majority in other words, belong to the antisemites.' If one were to subscribe to the 'common cliché' propounded by 'the liberal papers [...] one would have to count all these gentlemen among the "ignorant masses"'.⁴⁹ Not only the deputies, though, 'the *students*, too, at least those who participate in public, political life, are predominantly on Stöcker's and von Treitschke's side.' And yet, Hasenclever explained,

when the *students* participated in the *Kulturkampf* or the *attacks on Social Democracy*, they were praised by the liberal press dominated by Judah for their superlative national intelligence, on which one could depend and rely *as the herald of the future*. – Now, of course, that the students do not want to sing from the liberal-Semitic hymn sheet [...] one treats them like children.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ludger Heid, Klaus-Dieter Vinschen, Elisabeth Heid (eds.), *Wilhelm Hasenclever. Reden und Schriften* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1989), 12, 53 n89. Hereafter Hasenclever, *Reden und Schriften*.

⁴⁶ Shlomo Na'aman, 'Social Democracy on the Ambiguous Ground between Antipathy and Antisemitism. The Example of Wilhelm Hasenclever,' in *LBIYB* 36 (1991): 229–240, here 231. Hereafter Na'aman, 'Social Democracy'.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁴⁸ Wilhelm Revel, *Der Wahrheit die Ehre. Ein Beitrag zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*. (Nuremberg: Wörlein, 1881), 1–2. Hereafter Revel, *Wahrheit*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

The Christian Social movement, Hasenclever explained, had 'brought the Jewish Question to the fore, mainly due to the ineptitude of the liberal Press'⁵¹ which, 'instead of hushing up the Christian Social assemblies or reporting on them in a decent manner, saw to it that the wildest racket was unleashed, and conspicuously by *Jewish reporters* at that.'⁵² Stöcker's activities, he claimed, 'had almost stopped to draw any attention. Then,' however,

analyzing the situation correctly, the Christian Social agitator turned to coarse but in many ways justified attacks against the liberal press – and the latter walked into the trap by reciprocating his abuse. Moreover, what was even worse and even more stupid, it *habitually* fabricated lies about Stöcker and his assemblies [...]

Now [Stöcker] thundered against the *liberal Jewish press*, and quite skilfully at that. The Jews in the employ of the liberal press felt insulted and grumbled all the more and lied in all keys. Now Stöcker attacked the *Jews* and *Jewry* itself – his agitation began to become interesting and exciting.⁵³

There could be no doubt, Hasenclever conceded, 'that envy, jealousy, laziness and ineptitude often help unleash hatred against Jews [...] But that it is also unleashed and indeed intensified to wild hatred by the particular *ruthlessness* with which the Jews engage in the commercial struggle is beyond doubt.' Needless to say, 'the few real workers initially inclined towards Stöcker's agitation completely withdrew when the squabble with the Jews erupted. As an uninvolved third party that could only take pleasure in the quarrel between its common opponents, they were well advised in doing so.'⁵⁴

There was no denying, he explained, 'that the Jews are *superior* to the Germanic people in *the exploitation of the economic conditions*. Hence the better economic status of the Jews, hence their greater wealth and hence their dominance in all economic affairs; hence also the envy, the jealousy, and the hatred against the Jews.' The economic or social issues apart, Hasenclever continued, another 'aspect of the Jewish Question' needed to be addressed, namely, 'the *Race Question*.'⁵⁵

Is, then, the Jewish race in general so much more diligent, so much more able, than the Germanic [race] that the Christian-Germanic people would need to tear their hair out in despair?

Answer: No! No and no again!

Physically, the Germanic tribe is indubitably stronger than the Jewish tribe, and *intellectually* it is more substantial, too.

We hardly need to demonstrate the former [...]

As far as the intellect in *general* is concerned, the Germanic people are superior to the Jews; as far as the intellectual capacity pertaining to the economic and purely social sphere is concerned, however, the Jews are far superior to the Germanic people [...] this is borne out by the names, the great, hallowed names: *Rothschild* und *Bleichröder*.

This was 'due in part to hereditary characteristics, in part to *characteristics* acquired in the course of historical development.' Among the latter one had to count the Jews' '*ruthlessness in the commercial struggle*, provoked by the manifold persecutions,' among the former their '*asiatic cunning* that borders on

⁵¹ Ibid., 14.

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

dishonesty, a hereditary characteristic that the Jews of earlier times share with the Phoenicians and now with the Armenians.' It was these 'conspicuous characteristics that have brought the Jews to the top in economic terms in Germany, especially if one keeps in mind that the Germanic people in general, when they came into contact with the Jews, were afflicted with a *clumsy honesty*.'⁵⁶ That said, more recently the

Germanic tradesmen and merchants have *acquired* from the Jews their ruthlessness in the commercial struggle and Asiatic cunning bordering on dishonesty; the good qualities of the Jews, however, their diligence, thrift, and sobriety have drawn *little attention*. Thus the so very unpleasant tone came into German commercial life without the Germanic people having managed to shake off Jewish control or at least to gain equality with them.

This went so far that the fact that 'so very few businessmen are involved in the current antisemitic movement in Germany' could be 'easily explained, because they have presumably become aware of the fact that in their commercial dealings they have become "Jewish".' For 'the commoners, peasants and workers',⁵⁷ on the other hand, antisemitism was unattractive because it was neither here nor there for them whether their exploitation was 'the work of real thoroughbred Jews or of "Christian" Jews. And indeed, we prefer the original to the imperfect copy any day.' On a similar note, the antisemites, it had to be said, were an unpalatable crowd, 'indeed an *appetizing league*, an *appetizing brethren*. One would almost rather be a Jew!'⁵⁸

'One of the worst characteristics of the Jews,' Hasenclever explained, was

their almost laughable *touchiness*. While the Jews and the satirical publications directed by Jews ridicule and drag that which is revered by others through the mud, even the most enlightened Jew becomes angry when one finds some Jewish religious ceremony ridiculous – *vis-à-vis* any attack on the Jewish religion the non-religious Jew suddenly becomes orthodox, although only apparently so. [...]

If a Jew calls his dog "Stöcker", as has occurred, this coarse act is a perfectly permissible joke; if, however, a non-Jew makes as much as an allusion to the *crooked nose* of the Jews, Jewish circles will immediately talk of anti-Jewish incitement. Such behaviour is inappropriate, it is injurious to any sensible person, more than that, it is – impertinent,

and bore testimony to the 'lack of tact' that was 'in any case a prime characteristic of the upstart'.⁵⁹

'Numerous other instances of social ill-manneredness' on the part of the Jews he would not even want to discuss, Hasenclever stated, 'because it would seem too petty to do so, much as good manners and formally correct behaviour make social intercourse easier. Moreover,'⁶⁰ he then added, going on to discuss further instances of Jewish 'social ill-manneredness' anyway,

it is a very bad characteristic of the Jews that the majority of them insult the *German language* both verbally and in writing. Allegedly these people want to be *good Germans*, indeed authentically national; the first thing to do, then, would be to speak and write *German*. If everyone complains about the bad *newspaper German*, it is precisely the Jewish publicists who

⁵⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22–23.

are, to a considerable degree, to blame for it. It was after all a *born Jew*, Ferdinand Lassalle, who was most outraged by this and repeatedly aired his outrage in a devastating manner. If the Jewish side wants the popular antipathy towards Jewry to abate, the Jews must strive to cast off, as best they can and as promptly as they can, their bad social manners.

‘In all honesty!’ he then exclaimed,

is the *legal expulsion of Socialists* from hearth and home not far worse than a legal restriction of the *immigration of the Jews* can be?

The Jewish deputies subscribed with genuine ecstasy to the *Kulturkampf* and with even greater ecstasy to the *anti-Socialist incitement*⁶¹[...]

After such *special legislation* against *German* nationals [Stammesgenossen] [...] has been engineered by *Germans*, aided and abetted by the overwhelming majority of the Jews in Germany – one need think only of the earlier attacks against Social Democracy by Herr Bernstein⁶² in the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* – one now screams blue murder when a few immature people submit a petition [...] calling for *special legislation against the Jews*!?

That is simply ridiculous!⁶³

The Jews are no better than the Catholics and the Social Democrats, but they want to be and unfortunately many perceive of them as better because, well *precisely because they have money, a great deal of money*.⁶⁴

Theodor Mommsen had published ‘a pamphlet in which he says one should treat the Jews in Germany just like any *German* tribe, such as, e.g., the Pomeranians or the Saxons. Quite apart from anyone else, not even a single Jew would believe that! – If the Jews had remained *poor* [...] the Liberals would not show the slightest bit of interest in them,’⁶⁵ Hasenclever added.

‘No tribe, no nation has been spared persecution,’ he went on to explain, and

all of them that still exist have emerged *changed* from the struggles and persecutions [...] so, too, have the Jews. But the crucial question in this context is whether the persecutions have *reformed* a tribe or race or have made it *inferior*.

[...] Would it be possible to say that the Jews, too, have been reformed by the persecution? – Absolutely not!⁶⁶

And this very point is demonstrated most easily. If one mentions the *bad* qualities of the Jews to Jews or special friends of the Jews one can bet one’s life on the fact that the *first*, and usually the *only*, response will be: “But you must keep in mind the many years of persecution!” This stereotypical, popular dictum in fact wrecks the very case of those who continuously utter it.

It had to be said, then,

that whatever good qualities the Jews *may* have, they have done *little* so far to demonstrate *them*, rather they have used their bad qualities to exploit numerous other human beings most emphatically.

In the interest of the Jews themselves this *must* stop. As long as the exploitation of human beings by other human beings forms part of the general social institutions, the Jew cannot, of course, entirely abandon this exploitation, but he must *restrain* himself and need not take the lead.

⁶¹ Ibid., 23.

⁶² Aron Bernstein (1812–1884), the co-founder of the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* who for decades wrote its daily editorials.

⁶³ Revel, *Wahrheit*, 24.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 24–25.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 28.

He had ‘demonstrated,’ Hasenclever reiterated, ‘that the Jews are the least tolerant of all, since they most eagerly subscribed to the special legislation of recent years and yet themselves are afflicted by an almost lachrymose touchiness.’⁶⁷ ‘But enough!’ he eventually concluded,

primarily we demand that Jewry abandon its “*noli me tangere!*” attitude [...] Moreover, we demand that the Jews, precisely because they claim to be *persecuted*, *never* and in *no* way themselves participate in the persecution of their other fellow human beings.

The current attacks on Jewry sprang from the persecution of the Catholics and Social Democrats, since these unleashed the *reactionary trend* – this reactionary trend, however, is the source of all persecutions.

It is the duty of the Jews, then, to oppose reactionary politics in *all spheres* and *selflessly* – not just reactionary economic policies that impede their freedom of exploitation. If they help break the currently dominant reactionary regime, then the *attacks on Jewry* [...] will soon cease.⁶⁸

Now, while his comrades apparently did not know that *Der Wahrheit die Ehre* was by Hasenclever his attitude to antisemitism and matters Jewish certainly did not go altogether unnoticed. On 1 September 1882, Bernstein wrote to Engels that Hasenclever, who ‘although not himself a worker, is in close contact with them and has the horizon to go with it,’ epitomized the potential susceptibility of the Social Democratic clientele to antisemitism. ‘The chap persistently vacillates between Stöcker and uncle Bernstein⁶⁹ or Dr Phillips,⁷⁰ and one keeps fearing he might one day get stuck in one position or the other. Mind you, that would be a surmountable loss.’⁷¹ We also find a rather cryptic relevant reference to Hasenclever in Kautsky’s posthumously published recollections, although these obviously need to be treated with a certain amount of care, given that Kautsky did not write them until the 1930s. He mentioned there a statement published by August Bebel (1840–1913), the party’s uncontested leader during the first half-century of its existence, and Liebknecht, on 16 November 1881 in which they explained that the party had negotiated with representatives of the Conservatives and Stöcker’s Christian Social movement during the election campaign. The latter had suggested an electoral alliance for the run-offs, offering to recommend that their voters support Social Democratic candidates and promising to call for the repeal of the *Sozialistengesetz* in the *Reichstag* if Bebel, Liebknecht, and Hasenclever publicly acknowledged the Imperial government’s good will towards the workers, declared their intention to cooperate with the Christian Social movement on social policy issues and professed their hope that a revolution could be averted by means of thorough social reform. The declaration energetically rejecting ‘any such haggling

⁶⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁹ Aron Bernstein was an uncle of Eduard Bernstein.

⁷⁰ Dr. Adolf Phillips succeeded Aron Bernstein at the helm of the *Volks-Zeitung*. He sat in the *Reichstag* for the *Fortschrittspartei* but subsequently seceded from the party in 1884 and belonged to the initiators of the *Demokratische Blätter* and the ultimately abortive attempt to establish a *Demokratische Partei*, the much-cited ‘last attempt’ to get a radically democratic non-Socialist party off the ground in Imperial Germany, a project in which Mehring too was involved. When Phillips died on 20 January 1886, Mehring succeeded him as *de facto* editor-in-chief of the *Volks-Zeitung* (Höhle, *Franz Mehring*, 171–172).

⁷¹ *BWEBE*, 122; also quoted by Ludger Heid, “...gehört notorisch zu den hervorragenden Leitern der Sozialdemokratischen Partei.” Wilhelm Hasenclever in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung,’ in Hasenclever, *Reden und Schriften*, 15–68, here 57. Hereafter Heid, ‘Hasenclever’.

over votes [jeden Stimmenschacher]', Kautsky related, had been signed by Bebel and Liebknecht. 'Why not by Hasenclever?' he then added in parentheses, 'that was not explained.'⁷² We might note in passing that Social Democracy basically opposed 'any such haggling over votes' in principle at the time. Hence this opposition in and of itself had no specifically anti-antisemitic thrust. Conversely, one cannot help wondering whether the term 'haggling' was not chosen specifically to 'unmask' the disingenuousness of the antisemites who opposed 'haggling' as a Jewish practice and yet were more than happy to indulge in it themselves when it suited them.

We nevertheless have no evidence to suggest that Hasenclever's position was perceived of as a major issue or that anyone took him to task for it. We therefore have no reason to presume that he published *Der Wahrheit die Ehre* under a pseudonym because he assumed his position would be insufficiently anti-antisemitic to be accepted by his comrades. Na'aman suggested it may have been simple insecurity that led him to do so. No one in the party seemed capable of making an authoritative statement on antisemitism and matters Jewish and his attempt 'to deal with this issue from a fresh perspective, which would take into account the Socialist outlook, but would also be acceptable to the general public, which had reservations about Jews, shared by the author himself,'⁷³ invariably entered totally uncharted territory and therefore posed a risk best minimized by not as yet making his case under his own name. Heid, on the other hand, who is beyond doubt the scholar currently on the most intimate terms with Hasenclever, suggested that he 'hid behind a pseudonym' because 'he knew only too well that popular antisemitism existed within Social Democracy too' and therefore 'feared criticism from within his own ranks,'⁷⁴ in other words, because he feared his pronouncements were too anti-antisemitic to find favour with his comrades.

That Jewry's duty to stand up for the cause of general emancipation was a theme popular with Mehring too is beyond doubt and is indeed borne out not least by his introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Nachlaßausgabe*. Because Jewry's 'political emancipation coincided with the bourgeois revolution,' he argued there, Jewry

became very democratic and liberal, with the proviso that it would immediately betray democracy and liberalism should they obstruct its own rule. We have seen ample examples of this over the last half century and can still experience it every day how Jewish fellow citizens that we admired as relentless standard bearers of bourgeois democracy only a moment ago become vicious reactionaries when the consequences of some civil right infringe on some specifically Jewish interest.

This pattern, Mehring claimed, was 'as old as Jewish participation in the public struggles and was precisely what motivated Bruno Bauer's writings on the Jewish Question.' Mehring even quoted Bauer at this point:

"One cries out as if humanity had been betrayed when critics venture to examine the essence inherent in the Jew as a Jew. The same people, quite likely, who watch with pleasure when Christianity is subjected to criticism or deem this critique necessary and even call for it are capable of condemning anyone who then also wants to subject Jewry/Judaism to criticism. [...]"

⁷² Karl Kautsky, *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen* ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1960), 497–498.

⁷³ Na'aman, 'Social Democracy,' 231.

⁷⁴ Heid, 'Hasenclever,' 55.

The defenders of Jewish emancipation have hence appropriated the odd position of fighting against privileges and at the same time granting Jewry/Judaism the privilege of immutability, invulnerability, and unaccountability.”⁷⁵ Do these sentences not sound as if they were written today?⁷⁶

Mehring then asked. In this respect there can indeed be no doubt that this part of Mehring’s discussion of *Zur Judenfrage* ultimately, as Carlebach has put it rather aptly, ‘owes more to Bruno Bauer than to Marx.’⁷⁷ Wistrich too has remarked that Mehring ‘felt constrained to agree with Bruno Bauer that German Jewry had demanded emancipation in the 1840s, not to achieve civil equality but to reinforce their special privileges,’⁷⁸ and that he in effect ‘offered an implied apology for Bruno Bauer’s antisemitic writings on the *Judenfrage*.’⁷⁹ As Na’aman has pointed out, and this seems obvious enough, Mehring’s identification with Bauer sprung from his contempt for those he deemed ‘philosemites’⁸⁰ and on this count the affinity between them is indeed conspicuous. We shall come across another instance in which Mehring denounced alleged Jewish insistence on privileges rather than general emancipation towards the end of the final chapter. Even so, Mehring clearly by no means stood alone with this perception which, especially during the years of the *Sozialistengesetz*, was a set piece of the Social Democratic discourse on antisemitism and matters Jewish.

The logic behind these arguments indeed bears more than passing resemblance to the line of argument Moggach has recently described as ‘the conflation of right and morality’⁸¹ in Bauer’s *Judenfrage*, namely his claim that the total renunciation of particular identities is the prerequisite not only for comprehensive human emancipation but also for the granting of formal emancipation. Thus Bauer turns, as Na’aman has put it, ‘a legal act into an act of conscience.’⁸² It was precisely the rejection of this conflation, of course, that formed Marx’s point of departure in *Zur Judenfrage*. He begins the first essay by paraphrasing Bauer’s position. How did Bauer respond to the Jewish demand for legal emancipation? He responded by saying,

⁷⁵ Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (Brunswick: Friedrich Otto, 1843), 2. Hereafter Bauer, *Judenfrage*. When discussing *Zur Judenfrage* in his Marx biography, Mehring paraphrased this passage without attributing it directly to Bauer. There too he emphasized the ‘thoroughness, boldness and pungency for which Marx praised his [Bauer’s] treatises on the *Judenfrage*,’ though (Mehring, *Karl Marx*, 72–73.) The introduction and the first six sections of Bauer’s *Judenfrage* (1–74) had previously been published in Ruge’s *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* Nos. 274–282 [17–26 November 1842]: 1093–1126 while the final section (‘Auflösung der letzten Illusionen,’ 74–115) was new. As is well known, Bauer subsequently published what was not least a first response to his critics, ‘Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden,’ in Herwegh’s *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zurich, Winterthur: Literarisches Comptoir, 1842): 56–71 (hereafter Bauer, ‘Fähigkeit’) to which the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* was a direct response; hence the form of the double essay. On Bauer’s *Judenfrage* cf. also my forthcoming entry in Levy, *Encyclopedia*.

⁷⁶ Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* I: 354–355.

⁷⁷ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 270.

⁷⁸ Wistrich, *Socialism*, 122.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, ‘Anti-Capitalism,’ 45.

⁸⁰ Na’aman, *Marxismus*, 95.

⁸¹ Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148. Hereafter Moggach, *Philosophy*.

⁸² Na’aman, *Marxismus*, 14.

you Jews are *egoists* if you demand a special emancipation for yourselves as Jews. As Germans, you ought to work for the political emancipation of Germany, and as human beings for human emancipation [...]

Or do the Jews demand equality with the *Christian subjects*? In that case, they acknowledge the *Christian state* as justified and thus also the regime of general oppression. [...]

Why should the German be interested in the liberation of the Jew, if the Jew is not interested in the liberation of the German?⁸³

This response followed conclusively, Marx explained, from a line of argument that defined the issue as a purely religious one and addressed only the questions of who was to be emancipated and who was to emancipate while failing to ask what sort of emancipation was actually at stake; and as Marx insisted it was precisely in taking this approach that Bauer had gone radically astray. If it were not already clear from his main argument anyway, there can be no doubt that Marx clearly rejected Bauer's response as he paraphrased it. Here again, then, the stance prevalent among Social Democrats flew in the face of that developed by Marx in *Zur Judenfrage*. To their minds, Jewry needed to prove its entitlement to solidarity by demonstrating its commitment to the cause of general emancipation but was in fact only too inclined to betray that cause to pursue its own particular interests. This clearly reflects the very 'conflation of right and morality' the rejection of which had formed Marx's point of departure in *Zur Judenfrage* in the first place.

The, to our mind, most important passage. The availability of Zur Judenfrage

To turn, then, to the issue of the extent to which the text was actually available as a point of reference, the now widely accepted and largely accurate argument goes as follows. The bulk of the first (and only) edition of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* in which the double essay was published⁸⁴ was confiscated at the border and never reached the relevant centres of debate in Prussia and the neighbouring German-speaking territories. Somewhat ironically, given that the whole 'Bauer controversy' would be largely forgotten today, were it not for Marx's contribution to it, *Zur Judenfrage* in fact elicited close to no response at all in Germany at the time.⁸⁵ Nor was the text later readily available within German Social Democracy. As a text in its own right it was not published independently in Germany until 1919 anyway,⁸⁶ and that edition was produced not under the auspices of the party or anyone (still) associated with it but by Stefan Großmann and published by Rowohlt.⁸⁷

⁸³ MEW 1: 347.

⁸⁴ Karl Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage,' in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* Pt. 1–2 (1844): 182–214.

⁸⁵ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 177, 187–188, 405 n80. Carlebach slightly underestimates the response, though. For additional references cf. MEGA2 I.2 Apparat, 651.

⁸⁶ Cf. Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 86 n94.

⁸⁷ Stefan Großmann (1875–1935) was initially an anarchist rather than a Social Democrat (Katharina Zucker, 'Gustav Landauer an Stefan Großmann: Ausgewählte Briefe,' in Bernhard Getz, Hermann Schlösser (eds.), *Wien–Berlin. Mit einem Dossier zu Stefan Großmann* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2001) – hereafter Getz, Schlösser, *Wien–Berlin* –, 256–270. Hereafter Zucker, 'Gustav Landauer'). He worked as an editor for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Vienna) from 1905 and was the artistic director of the Viennese *Freie Volksbühne* from 1906 onwards. He broke with the party in 1913, acting as head of the *Feuilleton* section

Roughly the second half of the second essay⁸⁸ was published by Wilhelm Hasselmann (1844–1916) in the ADAV's *Neuer Social-Demokrat* on 20 September 1872,⁸⁹ as part of the ADAV's campaign to enamour itself with the workers of Berlin by denying the SDAP the credentials of a genuine workers' party and portraying it instead as infiltrated and steered by a group of intellectual *Mühlendammer* who were merely out to manipulate the workers. Hasselmann prefaced the text from *Zur Judenfrage* by stating that

a fanatical Hebrew has committed the naivety of calling the editor of the "Neuer Social-Demokrat" a "Jew eater" [Judenfresser]. Although we by no means enjoy "biting into Jews"⁹⁰ [Obschon Schreiber dieses nun durchaus keinen Geschmack daran findet "Juden anzubeißen"] we do in the following want to enlighten certain easily offended individuals by presenting the definition of Jewry as presented by a man whom the anti-Jew eater in question presumably acknowledges as an authority, namely, Herr Karl Marx.

Among the mainstream Social Democrats, the argument continues, *Zur Judenfrage* did not resurface until 1881, when the bulk of the second essay was published in the *Sozialdemokrat*, the banned party's weekly central organ produced in Zürich between September 1879 and September 1888 (and then in London until September 1890)⁹¹ and illegally distributed in Germany with considerable success by the legendary *Rote Feldpost* under the auspices of Julius Motteler (1838–1907) and Joseph Belli (1849–1927).⁹² Although Bernstein took over the editorship of the *Sozialdemokrat* from Vollmar in January 1881 and overall

of the *Vossische Zeitung* in Berlin from 1914 to 1919 (under the former Social Democrat Georg Bernhard whom we shall meet in the next chapter) before becoming associated with Rowohlt for whom he edited the *Tage-Buch* from 1920 to 1928 (Christina Wesemann-Wittgenstein, 'Stefan Großmann: Publizist, Theatermacher und Schriftsteller zwischen Wien und Berlin,' in Getz, Schlösser, *Wien-Berlin*, 158–184, here 163, 169, 171.) In his introduction to *Zur Judenfrage*, Großmann praised its 'refreshing independence' and the 'prophetic self-assurance of its tone'. 'The foolish and malicious people who drivel about "Marx the Jew" could learn from these essays how critical Marx's attitude vis-à-vis Jewry was. Fanatical racists will regret that, reasonable people will discover how much German intellectuality expresses itself in this detachment from the narrowness of social determinedness' (Stefan Großmann, 'Einleitung,' in Karl Marx, *Zur Judenfrage* (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt, 1919): 5–6). *Zur Judenfrage* was published as the fourth title in the Rowohlt series *Umsturz und Aufbau. Eine Folge von Flugschriften*. Its purpose, as the general introduction to the series explained, was to publish documents 'that hover above our despairing present like lights signalling a better future,' among them texts by 'mature minds of the past [...] whose clarifying and liberating call is tied to no temporality and echoes into our confused days.'

Excerpts of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* were also published at this time in a volume edited by Ernst Drahn, Karl Marx, *Lohnarbeit und Kapital, Zur Judenfrage und andere Schriften aus der Frühzeit* (Leipzig: Reclam, [1919] n.y.): 47–53. Drahn (born 1873) succeeded Eduard David as head of the party archive and library in 1917 and was sacked early in 1920 after he had joined the KPD at the end of 1919.

⁸⁸ Silberner's formulation that Hasselmann reprinted 'most of the antisemitic passages' from *Zur Judenfrage* (Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 199) is at the very least misleading since it implies that Hasselmann picked specifically those passages; that is not to say that it might not well be argued that the second half of the second essay indeed contains 'most of the antisemitic passages' contained in *Zur Judenfrage*. Hasselmann definitely did not reprint both essays, as Wistrich suggests (Wistrich, *Socialism*, 47).

⁸⁹ 'Das Judenthum,' in *Neuer Social-Demokrat* [20 September 1872]: 3.

⁹⁰ The ambiguity of this formulation must be intentional; on the one hand, the label 'Jew eater' obviously required a refutation of sorts, on the other, he could not resist the temptation of applying ostensible irony to clarify that he could surely not be accused of being a 'Jew eater' if for no other reason than simply because Jews were (notoriously) not to his taste.

⁹¹ Fricke I: 527

⁹² Fricke I: 529

responsibility for this publication therefore clearly lies with him, the details of the decision leading to it are somewhat unclear. We know that in 1879 Bernstein did not have a copy of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* at his disposal, because he wrote to Engels on 19 June 1879, inquiring where his and Marx's older publications that he, Bernstein, was missing, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* among them, might be acquired.⁹³ Engels informed Bernstein on 26 June 1879 that he was in no position to assist him and himself no longer had copies of some of the items in question.⁹⁴ It has therefore been suggested that Kautsky most likely brought a copy of the text with him when he returned to Zürich from his three-month stay in London late in June 1881, shortly before the publication of the excerpt from *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Sozialdemokrat*. How plausible it is to conclude from this, should it be accurate, that Kautsky may well in fact have prepared the text for publication and prefaced it while still in London and thus surely did so with the approval and perhaps the direct assistance of Marx and/or Engels⁹⁵ is hard to determine. In any case, whether drafted by Kautsky (with or without assistance) or written by Bernstein himself, the preface stated that 'given the significance the Jewish question has acquired again today it should be all the more pertinent to point to this article. The development in the almost four decades since it was written has only confirmed its content,' it claimed. 'Unfortunately,' the preface continued,

it is too long for us to print it in its entirety, we only want to reproduce the, to our mind, most important passage which deals with *the social significance of Jewry*. In so doing we do believe, though, that we should warn our readers against picking individual easily understandable passages out of their context, otherwise they risk assuming the exact opposite of what Marx, to our mind, develops superbly, namely that the so-called Jewish spirit is a product of bourgeois society, based as it is on the capitalist mode of production, which, where oriental Jews are not already a given, produces Christian Jews; in America, for instance, [it produces] Christian-Germanic Jews.⁹⁶

There can be no doubt, of course, that Bernstein assumed the *Sozialdemokrat* was doing something profoundly anti-antisemitic in publishing the bulk of the second essay in this way, hard as it is to imagine, what exactly he hoped the publication might achieve. In his much-cited article on Jews and German Social Democracy published much later in the *Tsukunft* in March 1921, Bernstein took Hasselmann to task for his publication of part of the same text. 'Although Hasselmann was strongly opposed to Marx,' Bernstein remarked, 'he couldn't resist the temptation to reprint the above-quoted article in order to prove the correctness of his own opinions about Jews. Had Marx seen this article,' Bernstein then went on, without

⁹³ BWEBE, 7–8

⁹⁴ Ibid., 11; MEW 34: 381

⁹⁵ MEGA2 I.2 Apparat, 652.

⁹⁶ 'Karl Marx über die Judenfrage,' in *Sozialdemokrat* No. 27 [30 June 1881] and No 28 [7 July 1881]. Bernstein printed almost the entire second essay (not the entire essay as Leuschen-Seppel claims, cf. Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 81) leaving out only the introductory section in which Marx argued that Bauer's focus was restricted to the religious aspect of the issue, and beginning instead with Marx's claim to transcend the merely religious focus. The remark made above [n88] about Silberner's comment on the excerpt of *Zur Judenfrage* chosen by Hasselmann obviously applies equally to Wistrich's contention that 'the extracts selected contained many of Marx's sharpest formulations against the Jewish spirit,' (Wistrich, *Socialism*, 48).

explaining why he assumed Marx not to have seen it, 'he would undoubtedly have opposed it because his article had been written for an educated public which could be trusted to see the sociological implications: that the capitalistic nature of society had historically imbued the Jews with these acquired characteristics. But Hasselmann's paper was mainly circulated among poorly educated workers.'⁹⁷ We might note in passing that this was, of course, in part a misrepresentation of Marx's argument. Marx had not argued that 'the capitalistic nature of society had historically imbued the Jews with these acquired characteristics,' but that those (alleged) characteristics had been acquired as a reflection of their role in the money economy at a time when it represented a marginal aspect of society while they were becoming common characteristics of Jews and non-Jews alike now that the money economy was becoming integral to society in its entirety. Now, although written four decades after the event and at a time when the need to justify the decision to publish the bulk of the second essay in the *Sozialdemokrat* may well have seemed a rather more pressing issue than it did at the time, it would seem, then, that Bernstein assumed that his readers, as opposed to Hasselmann's, were 'educated' and could be 'trusted to see the sociological implications' of Marx's argument. On the other hand, his decision to publish the warning (whether written by himself or Kautsky) that 'easily understandable passages' could, if taken out of context, suggest the 'exact opposite' of Marx's position would seem to indicate that he cannot have been all that certain after all.⁹⁸ Given what we know about Bernstein's own attitudes towards Jewry at the time,⁹⁹ his intention may well have been to

⁹⁷ Quote from the English translation in Massing, *Rehearsal*, 332–330, here 323. Cf. also Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 354–355, 435 n31 and Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 200, neither of whom comment on the implications of Bernstein's responsibility for this publication of the bulk of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Sozialdemokrat*.

⁹⁸ Wistrich's objection that the *Neue Social-Demokrat* was 'as sophisticated as any of the publications produced by the Eisenacher socialists' (Wistrich, *Socialism*, 48) does not really address Bernstein's argument since its concern was with the sophistication of the publications' readers rather than that of the publications themselves and Bernstein's point was precisely that Hasselmann had, as it were, made manipulative use of *Zur Judenfrage* by presenting it to an audience incapable of comprehending its niceties. That said, Wistrich's remark as such is absolutely valid and worth making for a slightly different reason. More than the *Neue Social-Demokrat*, its predecessor, Schweitzer's *Social-Demokrat*, had indeed been not only theoretically more sophisticated but had also propagated a doctrinally more radical and purer and, by and large, a more 'Marxist' Socialism than the publications of the *Eisenacher*. That the fault and harmful effect of the publications of the ADAV resulted from their having done the right thing at the wrong place and time, as it were, was therefore a standard argument regularly applied to explain why the future had belonged to the ideologically backward *Eisenacher* and their closet Socialist predecessors.

⁹⁹ As Jacobs points out, in the 1870s 'Bernstein was willing to overlook Dühring's anti-Semitism, "since at the time certain strata of Jewry in Germany in fact pushed themselves to the fore in a way which very much repelled even many Jews – including myself"' (Jacobs, *Socialists*, 46; the quotation is from Bernstein, 'Entwicklungsgang,' 11.) It is perhaps worth pointing out explicitly that this is of course not a purely retrospective remark on Bernstein's part. Writing in 1924, he is not merely saying that he felt at the time that the behaviour of 'certain strata of Jewry in Germany' was repellent but he clearly maintains that it actually was. He in fact comments in some detail on the *Gründer* period and makes a rather interesting remark in connection with the apparently wide-spread (and subsequently banned) practice of offering influential editors and financial reporters shares in the hope of thus securing positive publicity. Since the liberal papers dominated the market during the years following the establishment of the *Reich* they were the main beneficiaries of this practice, he explained. But conservative papers too 'did not say no to the favours of the "stock exchange Jews" [Börsenjuden].' He himself had seen 'the proprietor of a staunchly

demonstrate that Marx and his followers too were highly critical of Jewry but in a manner inordinately superior to that of the ideologues of the emerging antisemitic movement.

The subsequent reprint of *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Berliner Volksblatt* in October 1890 notwithstanding, the argument then winds up, these were all isolated news paper (and hence by their very nature hardly durable) publications unlikely to have a lasting effect and it was not until Mehring's publication of the text in his *Nachlaßausgabe* in 1902 that it became widely available,¹⁰⁰ and that in a form imbued with the greatest possible respectability and prefaced in a way strongly emphasizing not only its significance for the development of Marx's thought but also its validity and fundamental importance as the basis for any Socialist analysis of antisemitism and matters Jewish. 'None' of his peers, as Wistrich has put it, 'so consistently took' *Zur Judenfrage*

as his model and inspiration [...] Mehring not only considered that Marx's analysis was completely applicable to German society in the 1890s, he made every effort to popularise it in the working-class milieu. This was in significant contrast to other leading German socialists like Kautsky, Bernstein, Bebel and Liebknecht, who rarely, if at all, mentioned *Zur Judenfrage* and certainly never justified it,¹⁰¹

or who, at the very least, 'never made it the starting-point for an analysis of anti-Semitism or for a general critique of capitalism.'¹⁰² This assessment calls for some qualifications. It certainly is true that Mehring thought very highly indeed of Marx's *Zur Judenfrage* and specifically stated that the 'few pages' of the second part 'weigh more heavily than the mountain of literature that has been written on the Jewish Question since,'¹⁰³ rendering it quite 'indubitable that it would be most useful if the historical concept of the Jewish Question established by Marx in this text became the common intellectual property of the modern working class.'¹⁰⁴ It is, however, no coincidence that he speaks here of the 'historical concept' rather than the text itself which, beyond those 'easily understandable passages' the *Sozialdemokrat* had warned in 1881 against taking out of context, stood very little chance of any genuine popularisation, of course, given the heavy Young Hegelian baggage it came with.

Before we turn to Mehring's role in the popularisation of *Zur Judenfrage*, though, we might note first that to consider Marx's analysis in the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* 'completely applicable to German society in the 1890s' or at the turn of the century was, of course, no more and no less ridiculous than it was to do so in 1881, when the *Sozialdemokrat* claimed (under Bernstein's and Kautsky's auspices) that 'the

conservative weekly' and 'members of the high Prussian nobility' consult his Jewish employers on share dealings (Bernstein, 'Entwicklungsgang,' 9 n1.) That these observations, should they be genuine, should have stuck in his mind and still struck him as worth mentioning at this juncture, is surely relatively remarkable, given how strongly they echo one of the standard set pieces of the 'anti-antisemitic' case, namely, that those who decried the corruption of the Jews were in fact hypocrites who readily collaborated with them when it suited them.

¹⁰⁰ For this position cf. also Claussen, 'Erbschaft,' 94 n12.

¹⁰¹ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 43; cf. also *Idem*, *Socialism*, 122.

¹⁰² *Idem*, *Socialism*, loc cit.

¹⁰³ Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* I: 356.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 492.

development in the almost four decades since it was written has only confirmed its content,' or, for that matter, at any other point in time, including, we might add, the 1840s themselves. Admittedly, even if Marx had offered an analysis of contemporary Jewry in 1843/44 designed to be empirical in any meaningful sense of the word, the fact that anyone could so readily have deemed it still wholly applicable forty, fifty, or sixty years later would remain astounding enough. As Rotenstreich already pointed out, however, the fact of the matter is that the portrayal of Jewry in the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* (in distinct contrast to the discussion of political and human emancipation in the first part) is based on a purely philosophical deduction *par excellence* that is void of all genuine empirical underpinning and deploys traditional elements of anti-Jewish prejudice and mythology to generate a new variation on the same themes that generated that mythology and those prejudices in the first place.¹⁰⁵ Thus, 'the huckstering of the Jews,' for instance, as Na'aman has put it, 'was neither demonstrated nor examined, but presupposed,'¹⁰⁶ and the use to which *Zur Judenfrage* was subsequently put followed that same pattern. Much as *Zur Judenfrage* thus, in Carlebach's formulation, 'gave stereotypical folk-images an aura of social and philosophical respectability,' turning 'prejudices, hates and preconceptions of centuries of Christian and German nationalist advocates' into "'empirical knowledge" for Marxists,'¹⁰⁷ one would nevertheless be hard-pressed to demonstrate that *Zur Judenfrage* actually helped form or generate any of these perceptions, rather than simply failing to challenge them.

Mehring's role in the popularisation of *Zur Judenfrage*

How significant was Mehring's role in the popularisation of *Zur Judenfrage*, then, and how accurate is the contention that he played this role in 'significant contrast' to the 'silence' of the other 'German Labour leaders with regard to the essay of the young Marx'?¹⁰⁸ Mehring's most substantial contribution to the text's popularisation was undoubtedly the introduction he provided for an edition of *Zur Judenfrage* published in 1896 by the mainstream Polish Socialists, the nationalist PPS.¹⁰⁹ Na'aman in particular has taken Mehring to task for his decision to contribute to this publication, and with considerable justification.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Nathan Rotenstreich, 'For and against Emancipation. The Bruno Bauer Controversy,' in *LBIYB* 4 (1959): 3–36, here 26. Hereafter Rotenstreich, 'Bauer Controversy'; cf. also Hans-Gerd Henke, *Der "Jude" als Kollektivsymbol in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1890–1914* (Mainz: Decaton Verlag, 1994), 45. Hereafter Henke, "Jude"; Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 63.

¹⁰⁷ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 353.

¹⁰⁸ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 44.

¹⁰⁹ Franz Mehring, 'Wstep,' in Karol Marks, *W kwestii żydowskiej*. (London: Związku Zagranicznego Socjalistów Polskich [PPS Overseas Union], 1896): xi–xxviii. Cf. Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 46 and *Idem*, *Socialism*, 374 n142. This introduction was solicited by Witold Jodko-Narkiewicz (1864–1924), one of the leaders of the right wing of the PPS. Mehring's letter of acceptance (19 November 1895) and the German manuscript of his introduction (which is largely identical with his later introduction in the *Nachlaßausgabe*, though shorter) with the accompanying letter (6 December 1895) are in Fonds 201: 1160–1161.

Did he ‘not understand that the Polish workers would read Marx’s words through the antisemitic spectacles which the Polish clergy had prepared for them?’ Na’aman asked. ‘Did he really have no inkling that Marx’s words might have a much more negative impact in Poland than in Germany, whose clergy only preached antisemitism in an incidental fashion?’¹¹⁰ On the other hand, it was only the introduction that Mehring contributed to this publication and there is no indication whatsoever that his refusal to participate would in any way have questioned the decision of the Foreign Committee of the PPS to publish *Zur Judenfrage*. It is neither my intention to deny that Mehring could, in theory, have responded by advising against publishing *Zur Judenfrage* at all or that he could have written a very much more critical introduction, fundamentally questioning those potentially confusing ‘easily understandable passages’, nor would I want to deny that the fact that he did not do so is indicative of his being without the critical attitude towards the text that such a course of action would have required. The fact remains, though, that he indeed did no more than participate in this particular effort to popularise *Zur Judenfrage*, an effort that was neither the result of, nor dependent on, his initiative and was undertaken some six years before he himself published *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Nachlaßausgabe*.

That publication in the *Nachlaßausgabe* itself was certainly no effective means of popularising *Zur Judenfrage* (or any other text contained in it). Not only did it contain a substantial amount of material unlikely to appeal to a broad party readership, it was also far too expensive to circulate widely among the membership. A fair share of the party libraries may have owned it, although no evidence to that effect has survived, but even there it would clearly have fallen into the category of titles least likely to be borrowed with any frequency.¹¹¹ The *Nachlaßausgabe* proved an invaluable source for intellectually and historically interested members of the party elites and theoreticians throughout the Second International, and its significance is perhaps best demonstrated by the frequent use Lenin made of it, for whom it was the main source on the revolutionary strategy of Marx and Engels in 1848–1849 and their reflections on it in the following decade or so.¹¹² This made the *Nachlaßausgabe* highly influential in its own right, to be sure, but certainly no medium of popularisation. On the other hand, Mehring clearly did participate in the party publishers’ popularisation initiatives on a number of planes, *inter alia* by editing and prefacing (and in one instance even translating) easily accessible and affordable reprints of works by Engels, Weitling, Lassalle, Wilhelm Wolff, Labriola, F. A. Lange, Schweitzer, and Marx, but *Zur Judenfrage* was not among them. It may well be that he would have wanted to include it had there been the slightest chance that it might sell, but whatever the reasons, the fact remains that he did not publish a *Volksausgabe* of *Zur Judenfrage*.

¹¹⁰ Na’aman, ‘Beginnings,’ 370,

¹¹¹ Cf. Georg Fülberth, *Proletarische Partei und bürgerliche Literatur* (Neuwied, Berlin: Luchterhand, 1972), 110–114, esp. 112–113. Hereafter Fülberth, *Proletarische Partei*; cf. also Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 84–85.

¹¹² For references to the *Nachlaßausgabe* cf. for instance LW 8: 318, 9: 46, 12: 386, 13: 274, 14: 10, 15: 378. For direct references to Mehring’s annotation of the *Nachlaßausgabe* cf. for instance 6: 457, 9: 121–122, 127, 9: 129, 16: 384, 31: 336–337, 36: 120. *Inter alia*, Lenin also used Mehring’s *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* regularly, cf. for instance 5: 405, 11: 402, 12: 359, 12: 365–366.

The first more readily accessible and affordable edition of *Zur Judenfrage* which reprinted the text published in the *Nachlaßausgabe* appeared in *Aus der Waffenkammer des Sozialismus*,¹¹³ a periodical published twice yearly between 1903 and 1910 by the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* with the express purpose of offering affordable collections of otherwise not easily accessible basic texts. It was presumably edited by (or at the very least under the auspices of) the paper's long-standing editor-in-chief (from 1895 to 1917), the revisionist (and regular contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*) Max Quarck (1860–1930). To what extent Mehring may have had his fingers in this reprint of *Zur Judenfrage* is hard to determine.¹¹⁴ Whatever his possible involvement behind the scenes, though, the fact remains that the responsibility for this publication clearly lay with a periodical that he was not closely associated with and that was edited by (or at the very least under the overall control of) a prominent and outspoken revisionist who had been

¹¹³ Karl Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage,' in *Waffenkammer des Sozialismus* 10 (1908): 126–151. Leuschen-Seppel mentioned this publication in passing without further comment (Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 82).

¹¹⁴ Before the Party Congress in Dresden which we will discuss at length in the following chapter, Mehring and Quarck seem to have been on good terms, Quarck's revisionist orientation notwithstanding, as demonstrated by a letter Mehring wrote Quarck on 18 August 1903, less than a month before the Congress, which he began by assuring Quarck how fondly he remembered the day they had recently spent together in Frankfurt (Nachlaß Quarck 4: 62). The friendly relations between them did not, however, survive the conflict arising in Dresden. Obviously responding to remarks made in the *Frankfurter Volksstimme*, Mehring wrote in a statement dated 25 October that Bebel had confirmed in Dresden that he, Mehring, had been close to, but had not belonged to, the party when he wrote his polemic against Treitschke (1874/1875). This was a contentious issue because the polemic was presented as the ostensible response of a Socialist worker to Treitschke. Hence it was repeatedly suggested that Mehring had in fact been a party member at the time, the implication being that he had not merely been a sympathizer who subsequently tried his political luck elsewhere before finally becoming a Social Democrat, but that he was in fact a fully-fledged member who had actively betrayed his party. He had never misrepresented the circumstances under which he wrote the polemic nor its content, he insisted. 'If the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* wants to prove me guilty of deceit, well, then I donate the copyright on the pamphlet to the paper and it can reprint it. I await this examination of my truthfulness with the clearest possible conscience' (Franz Mehring, 'Erklärung,' in *LVZ* 10, 248 [26 October 1903] Beilage 1: 1). Apparently the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* now publicly accepted Mehring's offer but garnished this acceptance with new critical remarks on Mehring's version of events. Mehring therefore retracted his offer (cf. *Idem*, 'Erklärung,' in *LVZ* 10, 253 [2 November 1903]: 3.) Thereupon Quarck tried to convince Mehring that he could and should not go back on his offer and that precisely if he felt misrepresented by the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* it was all the more in his interest to see the full text in circulation again (Nachlaß Quarck 4: 63). Mehring would have nothing of it, however, and informed Quarck in a letter dated 3 November that he protested most energetically against any intention of the paper to print his pamphlet and had informed the press commission in Frankfurt of the dispute, asking it to guarantee his rights in the matter. As for Quarck's other remarks, Mehring concluded, 'I can only respond with the polite request that you spare me any further written communication' (Nachlaß Quarck 4: 64.)

On the other hand, while Quarck would hardly have needed Mehring's consent to reprint *Zur Judenfrage* in his *Waffenkammer*, the preceding issue had reprinted the correspondence of Karl and Jenny Marx and Engels with Joseph Weydemeyer (1818–1866) ('Aus der Flüchtlingszeit von Marx und Engels,' in *Waffenkammer des Sozialismus* 9-II (1907): 38–75) previously published by Mehring in the *NZ* ('Neue Beiträge zur Biographie von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels,' in *NZ* 25-II, 27–29 [3–18 April 1907]: 15–21, 53–59, 98–103 and 25-II, 31–33 [2–16 May 1907]: 160–168, 180–187, 222–228) with Mehring's annotation which would hardly have been possible without Mehring's agreement. It would seem, then, that Mehring and Quarck were at this time at least sufficiently reconciled for Mehring not to feel the need to refuse Quarck the possibility of reprinting this correspondence.

among those with whom Mehring was embroiled in a bitter dispute in connection with the 1903 Party Congress in Dresden that we will turn to in the following chapter. Moreover, *Zur Judenfrage* was published there with only a very short preface. Although originally no more than incidental remarks made in the form of a book review, it explained, the double essay made accessible again by Mehring deserved more attention than it usually received. 'We still have only very little literature on the nationalities and race question,' it continued,

and what has been written *en masse* about the Jewish Question over the last few decades by bourgeois authors does not remotely reach the thoroughness and depth of Marx's discussion. He took "the decisive step by bringing the religious question down to its secular basis and demonstrating why civil society perpetually creates the Jew from its own entrails, why Jewry only achieves its consummation in civil society and civil society only achieves its consummation in the Christian world" (Mehring). This significance of Marx's Jewish studies justifies the attempt to popularise them more strongly with the following publication.¹¹⁵

Tellingly enough, although *Aus der Waffenkammer* reprinted the entire double essay, the one sentence picked from Mehring's introduction once again paraphrases a passage from the second essay; but Mehring was not, of course, responsible for that choice, at least not directly, nor, for that matter, did that particular paraphrase misrepresent Marx or put any sort of specifically Mehringian spin on the matter. Clearly, Mehring was not quite as peerless in his dealings with *Zur Judenfrage*, then, as has been suggested. Moreover, the contention that Bebel and Liebknecht could be counted among those who 'rarely, if at all, mentioned *Zur Judenfrage* and certainly never justified it,'¹¹⁶ seems equally doubtful.

The train of thought anyone can grasp. Wilhelm Liebknecht and Zur Judenfrage

In Liebknecht's case this contention is all the more remarkable because he made a substantial reference to *Zur Judenfrage* (that seems to have gone unnoticed in the extant literature) in his Marx memoirs¹¹⁷ which are, of course, a crucial source for the much debated issue of the background of, and motives for, the conversion of Marx's father, Heinrich Marx (1782–1838). They contain not only Liebknecht's own view on the matter but, more importantly, a response by Eleanor Marx-Aveling (1855–1898, generally known as 'Tussy') to a number of questions raised by Liebknecht, including the issue of her grand father's conversion.¹¹⁸ As is well known, Marx's last surviving daughter, Laura Lafargue (1846–1911), along with

¹¹⁵ 'Vorbemerkung des Herausgebers,' in *Waffenkammer des Sozialismus* 10 (1908): 126.

¹¹⁶ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 43.

¹¹⁷ Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Karl Marx zum Gedächtniß. Ein Lebensabriß und Erinnerungen* (Nuremberg: Wörlein, 1896). Hereafter Liebknecht, *Karl Marx*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85–92, here 92. Marx-Aveling's first language was English and the letter in question was in fact written in English and translated for publication. It is not entirely obvious, however, whether the translator of the subsequent American edition, Ernest Untermann, had the original letter at his disposal or re-translated it (cf. Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Karl Marx. Biographical Memoirs* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1901), 156–165, here 164–165.)

Kautsky and based on Mehring's research, later sought to deny the (as we now know completely correct)¹¹⁹ contention of her younger and by then deceased sister that Heinrich Marx had converted to save (and perhaps even further) his career.¹²⁰ Liebknecht himself had subscribed to the younger sister's version of events. 'The pagan French,' Liebknecht explained at the outset of his Marx memoirs, had granted equality to all human beings in the Rhineland 'and relieved the Jews of the curse of a millennium of persecution and oppression, making them citizens and human beings. The Christian-Germanic spirit of the "Holy Alliance",' however, subsequently

rejected the pagan-French spirit of equality and aspired to a renewal of the old curse.

Shortly after the birth of the boy [Karl Marx] an edict was issued that forced all the Jews to choose between either letting themselves be baptized or relinquishing all public [amtliche] offices and professions.

Marx's father, a respected Jewish lawyer and notary and advocate at the district court, submitted to the inevitable and together with his family converted to Christianity.¹²¹

Liebknecht then added the somewhat dubious remark that 'twenty years later the man that boy had become gave his first response to that act of violence [Gewaltstreich] with his text on the Jewish Question. And his whole life was the revenge.'¹²²

Laura Lafargue, by contrast, responding to an inquiry from John Spargo (1876–1966)¹²³ at the end of 1907, insisted that her grand father had converted 'freely & not in obedience to any official edict. He believed in God, he told his son, as Newton, Locke & Leibniz had done before him. He also believed in Voltaire.'¹²⁴ Mehring had explicitly rejected Liebknecht's version in the *Nachlaßausgabe*, insisting not least that the connection he had drawn between the reason for the conversion and *Zur Judenfrage* led one to assume its content to be of a nature entirely at odds with the text's actual thrust,¹²⁵ and it was there, to Mehring's introduction, that Lafargue recommended Spargo should turn for 'the fullest information & abundant material, historical & biographical' on her father. Kautsky too directed Spargo towards the *Nachlaßausgabe*, writing in the spring of 1908 that 'Mad. Lafargue is quite right with her statement on the renunciation of the Jewish religion by Karl [sic!] Marx. Liebknecht was mistaken. But not Mehring,' who had dealt with the matter in the *Nachlaßausgabe*. 'Mehring's preface and commentaries to that edition are

We might note in passing that Marx is occasionally portrayed in the literature as dissatisfied with the lacking German language skills of his mother, Henriette Marx, *née* Preßburg (1787–1863), because they supposedly reflected her discernible Jewishness and lack of assimilation. It is evident from Eleanor Marx's report, however, that the language her grand mother spoke fluently was Dutch.

¹¹⁹ Probably the most instructive discussion of this issue (and the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere in Marx's parental home more generally) is now that by Na'aman, based on the relevant findings of Heinz Monz (Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 33–41.)

¹²⁰ On this episode cf. Lewis S. Feuer, 'The Conversion of Karl Marx's Father,' in *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 14, 2 (1972): 149–166. Hereafter Feuer, 'Conversion'.

¹²¹ Liebknecht, *Karl Marx*, 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²³ On Spargo cf. Feuer, 'Conversion,' 159.

¹²⁴ Quoted *ibid.*, 160.

¹²⁵ Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* I: 3–4

of the utmost importance for everybody writing on Marx.¹²⁶ This was an obvious blanket recommendation and we might note in passing that had Kautsky had massive misgivings about Mehring's treatment of *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Nachlaßausgabe* then this surely would have been a most suitable opportunity to indicate them, in however guarded a fashion, especially given the fact that Kautsky was making this recommendation specifically in connection with the issue of the Jewish background of Marx's family. Now, Spargo presumably consulted Laura Lafargue assuming she could provide him with information based either on documents in her possession or on authentic personal recollections of one kind or another. The authenticity of these recollections, however, and the exact nature of her explicit recourse to Mehring present us with something of a chicken and egg issue. Not least in an attempt to shore up his own position against Kautsky (and Riazanov), Mehring later related in the introduction to his Marx biography on what good terms he had stood with Laura Lafargue as the last immediate heir of Karl Marx. In fact, she had sent him friendly greetings only hours before her death. 'I had earned her friendship and trust,' he explained,

not because she considered me the most scholarly or ingenious of her father's students, but because she considered me the one who had penetrated his human nature most deeply and knew how to portray it most accurately. In letters and in direct conversations alike she frequently assured me that many a largely faded recollection of her parental home had become fresh and vivid again, and how many a name she had frequently heard her parents mention had only emerged from the shadows and become a concrete character, due to the account in my party history and especially in my *Nachlaßausgabe*.¹²⁷

We might well wonder, then, whether her certainty about the circumstances of her grand father's conversion were also among the 'almost faded recollections' rendered 'fresh and vivid' again by Mehring's account. Alternatively, Lafargue may well have been the main source of Mehring's version of events. Either way, however, I would suggest that we are well advised to treat Mehring and Lafargue essentially as one source as far as the issue of Heinrich Marx's conversion is concerned rather than two that could bear each other out.

Liebknecht, in his Marx memoirs, to return to our main line of argument, subsequently concluded a relatively detailed section on the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* by offering, 'as a sample – and a stylistic sample as well,'¹²⁸ the final section of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage*, no less than one and a half pages of text (equivalent to roughly one full page in the *MEW*). 'With the language of the Hegel school,' Liebknecht then added,

which Marx still speaks in this treatise, the reader may grapple as best he can. The *train of thought* anyone can grasp. Marx understands the Jewish Question as an economic question, as a question of the capitalist system. The persecution of the Jews – the name antisemitism had not yet become fashionable – is mere competitive envy of the Christian huckstering *vis-à-vis* the Jewish huckstering, and only once human society has emancipated itself from this huckstering spirit, i.e. to express it in modern terms, from *capitalism*, will the Jews be emancipated like all other human beings and nations.

¹²⁶ Quoted by Feuer, 'Conversion,' 162.

¹²⁷ Mehring, *Karl Marx*, ix–x.

¹²⁸ Liebknecht, *Karl Marx*, 5.

Here, then, we already find the idea of the *Communist Manifesto* and the *International Workers' Association*.¹²⁹

Liebknrecht's Marx memoirs were, as already noted, also published in Chicago in 1901 in a translation by Ernest Untermann (who prefers to refer to the 'Hebrew Question'). Clearly, then, this final section of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* at least was available in English well before the 1920s.¹³⁰

Now, for all that Liebknrecht's Marx memoirs sought to give themselves a casual and incidental air, it is, of course, no coincidence that they were published in the year following Engels's death.¹³¹ With Engels no longer around, Liebknrecht could claim with some justification to be the only senior figure in the party who could bear witness to the goings on in the Marx household between the late 1840s and the early 1860s¹³² and it seems evident enough that Liebknrecht not only presented these recollections to fulfil his duties as an eye witness while he still could, but that he did so in a very conscious attempt to stake a claim as Engels's true successor at the helm of the movement.¹³³ His comparatively detailed discussion of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and lofty dismissal of the Hegelian diction Marx still employed in his contributions to them most likely reflect an attempt by Liebknrecht to emphasize his intellectual stature and thereby to underscore the legitimacy of his claim. It seems likely that the final section of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* struck him as a particularly suitable 'sample' not least because it was the only part of Marx's contributions to the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* that he felt he could really make head or tail of.

In fact this was by no means Liebknrecht's first close encounter with *Zur Judenfrage*. When, as already mentioned, the *Berliner Volksblatt* published *Zur Judenfrage* in six instalments in October 1890,¹³⁴ Liebknrecht was, after all, already its editor-in-chief;¹³⁵ he had moved from Leipzig to Berlin on 20 September to take over the paper. While still in Leipzig he had already responded positively to the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁰ Cf. Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 421 n13. Carlebach's claim that Stenning's edition of *Zur Judenfrage* in Karl Marx, *Selected Essays* (London: Leonard Parson, 1926): 40–97 reproduced 'only selected passages and summaries' (Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 451) is a crude overstatement, although the version offered there is admittedly incomplete. Stenning primarily omitted longer quotations from the literature cited by Marx. Lest there be any misunderstanding, there is certainly no indication that he felt compelled to censor Marx's more rabid anti-Jewish remarks.

¹³¹ Engels died on 5 August 1895, the preface of Liebknrecht's memoirs is dated 'Ende März 1896'.

¹³² Liebknrecht, *Karl Marx*, iii–iv, vii.

¹³³ For this suggestion cf. also Jan Hans, 'Wilhelm Liebknrechts Erinnerungen an Marx – Zum Subjektbegriff der sich etablierenden Sozialdemokratie,' in Wolfgang Beutin, Holger Malterer, Friedrich Mülner (eds.), *"Eine Gesellschaft der Freiheit, der Gleichheit, der Brüderlichkeit!"* (Frankfurt/Main, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2001) – hereafter Beutin et al. (eds.), *"Gesellschaft der Freiheit"* –, 193–206, here 197.

¹³⁴ 'Karl Marx über die Judenfrage,' in *Berliner Volksblatt* 7, 236–238 [10–12 October 1890] Beilage 1: 1; 7, 240 [15 October 1890] Beilage 2: 1; 7, 242 [17 October 1890] Beilage 2: 1; 7, 244 [19 October 1890] Beilage 2: 1–2.

¹³⁵ For the following cf. *MEGA2* I.2 Apparat, 653–654.

suggestion of Adolph Pichler, a Social Democrat from Hannover, to publish *Zur Judenfrage*.¹³⁶ Pichler had offered to prepare the text for publication since Liebknecht did not have a copy of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* at his disposal.

The short preface to the first instalment pointed out that Marx's 'famous essay on the Jewish Question that has recently been referred to frequently because of its topicality' had been published in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. Since copies of this publication were extremely rare and the publication of a more comprehensive edition of Marx's collected works was hardly imminent, 'we want to make this ingenious [genial] piece of work by the emerging master that has hitherto only been known to a small minority available to the German people by publishing it in the columns of our paper.' Moreover, Liebknecht subsequently planned to publish all the contributions by Marx and Engels to the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* in pamphlet form, including the correspondence between Ruge and Marx ('Ein Briefwechsel von 1843'). Engels had recently signalled his categorical opposition to the plans for a *Gesamtausgabe* that Liebknecht had tried to gain his support for (rather remarkably hand in hand with the author and critic Paul Ernst (1866–1933), at the time a leading representative of the *Jungen* who was expelled from the party in 1891, subsequently launched a major assault on Mehring's *Lessing Legende*, and later played a prominent role in the *völkisch* movement).

Against this background, Engels wrote to Liebknecht on 18 December 1890, specifically questioning the merit of publishing 'this muddled correspondence' between Ruge and Marx 'which is today quite incomprehensible in its Hegelianized [verhegelt] language.' He added that 'I readily give my consent to the reprinting in pamphlet form of such individual pieces by Marx as are comprehensible today without annotation and commentary, *just to their reprinting*, that is, *without any annotation and commentary*.' Any other endeavours he would nip in the bud.¹³⁷

It must soon have become clear to Liebknecht and his peers that an edition of these early texts without any annotation and commentary was hardly a viable project and this presumably explains why Liebknecht's plan to publish the texts from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* was subsequently abandoned. We might note, though, that Liebknecht again asked Pichler to prepare *Zur Judenfrage* for this planned publication which Pichler did in the course of December 1890 and January 1891. At this stage this can of course no longer have been merely a matter of having the text at one's disposal. Hence his decision to enlist Pichler's support again would seem to support my suggestion that, those notorious 'easily understandable passages' apart, Liebknecht may not have felt all that firmly in command of the bulk of *Zur Judenfrage*, *verhegelt* as it was, and was therefore only too happy to let someone else deal with its preparation for publication. What does seem clear enough is that the notion that Liebknecht 'never justified' *Zur*

¹³⁶ I only became aware of this issue after my stay in Berlin and hence have not had the opportunity to check the still extant relevant correspondence between Pichler and Liebknecht on the matter (SAPMO-BArch NY 4034/48).

¹³⁷ *MEW* 37: 527.

Judenfrage is true only in the sense that he would not have understood the need to do so in the first place. Far from being reluctant to refer to it, he counted *Zur Judenfrage* among Marx's authoritative statements and readily took recourse to it when he felt it suited his purposes.

As a competitor the Jew is perceptible everywhere. August Bebel and Zur Judenfrage

The *locus classicus* for any discussion of Bebel's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish is, of course, his much-cited speech at the 1893 Party Congress in Cologne, a speech that has had a remarkably good press with numerous scholars. Rürup has credited it with a 'penetrating analysis of the causes, form and functions of political antisemitism,'¹³⁸ while to Leuschen-Seppel's mind it presents a 'detailed and still valid analysis of the function of antisemitism and its social following.'¹³⁹ Henke too would have us count it among 'the great sociologically substantiated analyses of antisemitism'¹⁴⁰ and Heid, presumably following Rürup,¹⁴¹ has characterized it as 'the second and final "classical" text,' following *Zur Judenfrage*, in the canon underpinning the theoretical discourse on antisemitism among Socialists of Marxist persuasion.¹⁴² That said, Leuschen-Seppel's claim that Scheidemann's infamous lament on the degeneration of the formerly democratic antisemitic movement, published in the *Neue Zeit* in 1906¹⁴³ (the same year in which Bebel's speech was reprinted in an extended second edition), offered 'no substantially new aspects that went beyond Bebel's analysis of 1893'¹⁴⁴ already demonstrates, unwittingly one presumes, that, its 'still valid' analysis notwithstanding, we may be well advised not to get unduly carried away by the anti-antisemitic credentials of Bebel's speech. Scheidemann's lament we shall have reason to return to at the end of this chapter.

The enthusiasm for Bebel's speech cited above is presumably due at least in part to the fact that Bebel's speech is undeniably in almost every respect considerably less offensive in its portrayal of Jewry than *Zur Judenfrage* (and many other relevant pronouncements). The less offensive tone apart, the esteem in which Bebel's speech is held by many also illustrates the vagaries of the kernel of truth approach to antisemitism

¹³⁸ Rürup, 'Sozialdemokratie,' 22.

¹³⁹ Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel, 'Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich 1871–1914,' in Anneliese Mannzman (ed.), *Judenfeindschaft in Altertum, Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Königstein/Ts.: Scriptor, 1981): 65–79, here 73.

¹⁴⁰ Henke, "Jude", 100.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Reinhard Rürup, 'Die Haltung der I. und II. Internationale zur jüdischen Frage,' in *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft* 3 (Freiburg, Basle, Vienna: Herder, 1969): 381–382, here 382. Hereafter Rürup, 'Haltung'.

¹⁴² Heid, 'Hasenclever,' 58.

¹⁴³ Philipp Scheidemann, 'Wandlungen des Antisemitismus,' in *NZ* 24-II, 45 [1 August 1906]: 632–636. Hereafter Scheidemann, 'Wandlungen'.

¹⁴⁴ Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 200.

to which both Rürup¹⁴⁵ and Leuschen-Seppel¹⁴⁶ certainly subscribe. As Jacobs has pointed out, Bebel's speech in fact 'does not deny the anti-Semitic charge of "Jewish exploitation", but merely condemns it as "one-sided".' Nor, for that matter, does it 'express moral outrage at the anti-Jewish calumnies.'¹⁴⁷

In other respects too the entitlement of Bebel's speech to the anti-antisemitic credentials it has often been granted deserves careful examination. Much emphasis has been placed on Bebel's use of irony, especially in connection with his portrayal of antisemitism as an expression of envy felt by lazy or inept Germans *vis-à-vis* determined and diligent Jews, as well as his ostensible insistence on the fact that the irksome character traits of the Jews were a product of the conditions they had endured in the course of their history (rather than immutable characteristics). The consistency of this insistence is, however, questionable as is the extent to which his use of irony really represents a redeeming feature. While Bebel clearly did concede the importance of historical factors he also persistently portrayed them as having reinforced intrinsic Jewish

¹⁴⁵ Cf., for instance, his rather paradoxical statement that 'the nexus between capitalism and Jewry and the exposed position of numerous Jews in the capitalist economy provoked criticism that often had not only an anti-capitalist but also an anti-Jewish thrust' (Rürup, 'Haltung,' 182.) Leaving aside for a moment the issue of just what that nexus supposedly was and how extensive the exposure in question, surely the only way in which the specific 'nexus between capitalism and Jewry and the exposed position of numerous Jews in the capitalist economy' could have provoked anti-capitalist rather than anti-Jewish 'criticism' would have been if those articulating that criticism had felt that the nature of capitalism was blemished by Jewish participation in it. What Rürup presumably meant was that Jewish participation in the economy led to anti-capitalist sentiments being projected onto Jewry, lending them an anti-Jewish as well as anti-capitalist thrust. Either way, his suggestion, as the kernel of truth approach generally does, in fact already presupposes the negative perception of matters (allegedly) Jewish that it claims to explain. On Rürup's position cf. also Holz, *Antisemitismus*, 64–66.

¹⁴⁶ Cf., for instance, her suggestion that the increase in the Jewish share of the population in Saxony (from 0,22% in 1880 to 0,37% in 1910) might explain Dresden's status as one of the bastions of antisemitism (Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 56) or her clear-cut statement that 'the concentration of the Jewish population in Berlin made this city the stronghold of the first antisemitic wave' (ibid., 57.) Leuschen-Seppel is very much inclined to have it all ways in this respect, having previously clarified that non-Jews felt threatened by Jews 'not so much due to a superiority in numbers but due to the fields of their professional activity' (ibid., 54). One cannot help wondering, of course, how Jews might ever have mustered a 'superiority in numbers' likely to scare non-Jews, but that Leuschen-Seppel should subsequently go on to argue at some length for a nexus between the Jewish share of the population and the strength of antisemitism is nevertheless remarkable. That this is in any case ultimately all conjecture is demonstrated, of course, by the situation in Hessen, another major antisemitic stronghold in which the share of the Jewish population was halved between 1880 and 1910. That the number of Jews living in a given locality may have influenced the chances of the antisemites in that locality is not, of course, in and of itself, necessarily a nonsensical suggestion but one that would need to be demonstrated on a case to case basis. Simply to suggest such a nexus when large or rising numbers of Jews happen to coincide with antisemitic successes but then to pass over it in silence when antisemitic successes happen to coincide with small or decreasing numbers of Jews is hardly a tenable strategy. *A priori* large numbers of Jews living in a locality are, after all, just as likely to generate familiarity and harmonious relations as small numbers or the absence of Jews might further irrational distrust of 'the other'. If one were to attempt any generalization on the matter it would have to account for the fact that antisemitism seems to have had a basic appeal throughout Imperial German society quite irrespective of the numbers of Jews living in any given locality.

¹⁴⁷ Jack Jacobs, 'Friedrich Engels and "the Jewish Question" Reconsidered,' in *MEGA Studien* 1998/2, 3–23, here 12.

traits. 'Due to their historical development, the natural inclination and disposition of the Jews to trade [...] has been furthered and developed in the extreme,'¹⁴⁸ he explained.

If a race is persecuted and isolated over a long succession of generations and circumstances compel it to withdraw into itself, then it already follows from Darwin's laws of adaptation and hereditary transmission that the particular characteristics of the race will be developed and perfected more and more over time. The persecution adds its particular imprint to this development and hence Jewry took on its present guise.¹⁴⁹

Now, I am not, of course, suggesting that Bebel's mild-mannered adherence to racial criteria at this point is in any way unusual, let alone particularly emphatic or malicious, given the intellectual and cultural context he and his peers were moving in. What I would question, however, is whether there is room for a conceptualization of this sort in a 'penetrating', 'still valid' analysis some would have us count among 'the great sociologically substantiated analyses' of antisemitism.

As for his use of irony Bebel repeatedly succeeded in arousing the amusement of the delegates, for instance with his reference to the 'additional *malheur*' that burdened the Jew, namely that 'of a conspicuous physical appearance, so that one immediately recognizes the Jew by his nose (Amusement among the delegates).' Hence, 'since he is therefore in the eyes of his foes already distinguished by nature, we find here an additional element that furthers hatred and enmity.'¹⁵⁰ When touching on instances in which Jews had been forced to wear distinguishing garments or markers in the past he again added that 'the characteristic nose was not enough; (Amusement among the delegates.)'¹⁵¹ He also aroused the delegates' amusement by stating that 'throughout all of human history there are only two examples, two peoples, that, despite living fragmented and dispersed among foreign peoples, have maintained themselves in total purity. These are the Jews and the Gipsies. (Amusement among the delegates.)'¹⁵² I am at a loss to explain why the delegates should have found this amusing but suspect that I am probably better off not knowing why. Easier to explain is why he struck a chord with his comrades when claiming that 'in one respect the Jews do distinguish themselves positively, they have adhered strictly to the commandment of their fathers: Be fruitful and multiply like sand at the beach! (Considerable amusement among the delegates.)'¹⁵³ Given that the birth rate had been lower among German Jews than among non-Jewish Germans throughout the nineteenth century and German Jewry was by this time discernibly at the forefront of the bourgeois trend to limit family sizes (preceding similar developments among their non-Jewish compatriots by some two

¹⁴⁸ August Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1894), 4. Hereafter Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*. I will be quoting from this version of Bebel's speech. I have, however, compared it with the original version published in the minutes of the Congress (*Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu Köln a. Rh. vom 22. bis 28. Oktober 1893* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1893) – hereafter *Parteitag 1893* –, 224–237) and shall presently comment on the one instance critical to our discussion here in which the version published in 1894 differed from the version held at the Congress itself.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 6

decades),¹⁵⁴ this was clearly a pertinent and important remark to make in the context of a 'great sociologically substantiated analysis'.

That Bebel's interest in, and knowledge of, contemporary Jewry, sociological or otherwise, was in any case limited is illustrated rather dramatically by a remark he made in the *Reichstag* in the spring of 1904. On 29 February 1904, *Reichskanzler* von Bülow (1849–1929) made a reference in the *Reichstag* to Russian students in Berlin and their radical political activities 'under the leadership of Mandelstamm and Silberfarb',¹⁵⁵ threatening them with deportation, an incident we shall touch upon again towards the end of the final chapter. When Mandelshtam¹⁵⁶ and Zilberfarb,¹⁵⁷ along with a number of other activists, subsequently really were expelled, Bebel took the opportunity on 14 April 1904 to remark that the way in which the names Mandelshtam and Zilberfarb had been utilized in public debate had been despicable and that the two deserved for the truth about their personalities and activities to be made public. Before turning to Mandelshtam and relating his biography at some length, Bebel sought to demonstrate how utterly misguided Bülow had been in mentioning Zilberfarb in this context in the first place. He 'is neither an anarchist nor a terrorist, he is not even a Socialist,' Bebel explained. 'Rather, this Silberfarb is a *Zionist* (Hear, hear! From the Social Democrats); in other words, he is an orthodox Jew and nothing could be further from the mind of a man of his inclination than revolutionary machinations.'¹⁵⁸

In his speech in Cologne Bebel also dabbled in the application of a range of the usual anti-antisemitic 'arguments' with all their ambiguity. 'The Jewish capitalists and entrepreneurs exploit their Jewish racial and religious brethren in just the same way and often even more shamelessly than the Christian capitalists do the Christian workers,'¹⁵⁹ he explained, for instance. Having described the long history of discriminatory measures and legislation, he concluded:

Now, if all this legislation which, as mentioned, has continued in varying forms for almost one and a half millennia did not achieve its goal, then this alone should be proof enough for the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 24

¹⁵⁴ Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 42.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags. XI. Legislaturperiode. I. Session, erster Sessionsabschnitt 1903/1904* – hereafter *Stenographische Berichte – 2: Von der 30. Sitzung am 11. Februar bis zur 56. Sitzung am 12. März 1904* (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1904): 1390.

¹⁵⁶ Presumably the Russian Social Democrat Martyn Nikolaevich Mandelshtam, generally known as Liadov (1872–1947), a former Populist who represented the Bolsheviks at the International Congress in Amsterdam in 1904. His early biography matches the details subsequently related by Bebel in the *Reichstag*. I have not, however, had sufficient time to find any definite confirmation for the assumption that he was the Mandelshtam to whom Bülow was referring. Cf. Roland V. Layton Jr., 'Liadov, Martyn Nikolaevich (1872–1947),' in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* 19: 234–236.

¹⁵⁷ Moshe Zilberfarb (1876–1933), best known for his role as Vice-Secretary and then Minister for Jewish Affairs in Ukraine between 1917 and early 1919. Cf. Yosef Kruk, 'Moshe Zilberfarb (meah shanah lehuledeto),' in *He'avar* 22 (1976): 276–279; on his expulsion from Berlin: 276. Zilberfarb left Germany for Switzerland and completed his legal studies in Berne.

¹⁵⁸ *Stenographische Berichte 3: Von der 57. Sitzung am 14. März bis zur 80. Sitzung am 30. April 1904* (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1904): 2062.

¹⁵⁹ Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 4.

enemies of the Jews that their endeavours are impracticable and would not become practicable even in the unthinkable case that they gained power.¹⁶⁰

Ultimately, 'one could remove all Jews from Germany and the substance of our society *would not be changed by a hair's breadth*. [...] Remove the Jews today and tomorrow so-called Christians will take their place,'¹⁶¹ he reiterated what was clearly one of the all time favourites. That we was quite partial to these conventional argumentative strategies is also borne out by his response to an inquiry from the party veteran Ludwig Kugelmann (1830–1902) in 1898. Writing to Kugelmann on 26 February, Bebel insisted that if Kugelmann had 'heard and seen my remark about the Jewish firm Fraenkel you would be in do doubt about its meaning. Addressed to those on the right it said: you hate the Jews and yet you make laws that allow them to outdo you.'¹⁶²

More crucially, however, to return to our main line of argument, Bebel clearly did to all intents and purposes see antisemitism as a direct product of the socio-economic circumstances. 'Were antisemitism really no more than the product of catch phrases, the result of the work of certain activists,' he explained, 'we would not need to deal with it; (Agreement from the floor) and the current movement as it actually exists would be unthinkable. (Hear, hear!) To dismiss antisemitism with such a claim would move on the very same plane on which our opponents believed for decades they could rebuff us. (Hear, hear!)'¹⁶³ While the underlying sentiments were obviously older, it was 'only with the year 1877' that

this movement gained publicity as a political phenomenon [...] How did this come about? It was the natural effect and consequence of the economic conditions brought upon us in Germany by the great Crash of 1874. (Hear, hear!) [...]

Now, there can be absolutely no doubt that the Jews – I add that when I speak of Jews I am always focusing on the majority of Jews – stood at the forefront of our economic development once they had attained equality in all respects.¹⁶⁴

How this was meant is perhaps best illustrated by a passage from a letter Bebel had written Engels on 24 June 1892, prior to the Party Congress in Berlin at which Bebel had initially intended to hold his speech. 'When one sees,' he wrote there,

how the Jews from the eastern provinces migrate here in droves and with their tenacity and industriousness gradually take control of the entire trade, as in central Germany: Hessen, Baden, Franconia etc. where the entire trade in livestock and other agricultural products is absolutely exclusively in Jewish hands, it is obvious, that the [antisemitic] propaganda finds so fertile a ground.

He then immediately added that 'the movement subverts the parties opposed to us and that is the advantage it has for us.'¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶² SAPMO-BArch NY 4022/130 Bl. 39; I have not yet found time to examine the exact nature of the comments in question and the circumstances in which Bebel made them.

¹⁶³ Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 10–11.

¹⁶⁵ *BWABE*, 550; also quoted by Wistrich, *Socialism*, 132.

Speaking in Cologne, Bebel too grappled with the nexus between the number of Jews and the strength of the antisemites in a given locality. It had been claimed that the recent election results were remarkable in that 'the antisemitic movement found such fertile ground precisely where there are so relatively few Jews,' namely, in Saxony. 'But given the current organization of society it is not decisive whether the Jew is personally in town, crucial is whether, and how, he is perceptible as a competitor. As such, however, he is perceptible everywhere.'¹⁶⁶ This remark really epitomizes the whole ambiguity of Bebel's entire line of argument. Is 'the Jew' supposedly 'perceptible everywhere' as a competitor because his competition can genuinely be experienced everywhere in an empirically verifiable sense of the word or is Bebel simply taking it for granted that even people who are not personally involved with Jews cannot encounter their own specific social reality on the ground without also encountering the 'objective' role that 'the Jew' plays in society as a whole? Assuming Bebel was in fact implying the latter, as I would argue, then it is hard not to sense a disquieting affinity here to the second part of *Zur Judenfrage*, for all that Bebel supposedly belonged to those who 'rarely, if at all, mentioned *Zur Judenfrage* and certainly never justified it.'¹⁶⁷

In any case, since the prescriptions of the antisemites would soon prove futile their movement was doomed, and 'as soon as the antisemitic movement reaches rock bottom it is our turn, [...] then the hour of our harvest will come.'¹⁶⁸ The antisemitic movement 'in its struggle for power will be compelled, in spite of itself, to overshoot its mark,' a trend that was 'already evident,' for instance in Ahlwardt's case. Ahlwardt had

entered the fray arm in arm with the *Junker* establishment and was elected. Gradually, however, the mood of the bulk of his voters has compelled him to issue the slogan: Against Jews *and Junker*! As soon as the point is reached where it will no longer suffice for the antisemites merely to proceed against the Jews and they are compelled to turn on capitalism in general – and their struggle against the Jewish capitalists will automatically propel them there – [...] the moment will also have arrived where our notions can and will fall on fertile ground. We will then win the following we as yet seek to gain in vain (Agreement from the floor.)¹⁶⁹

The libellous antics of the antisemite Hermann Ahlwardt (1846–1914)¹⁷⁰ and the legal proceedings they embroiled him in between 1891 and 1894 clearly marked the high point of Social Democratic ambiguity *vis-à-vis* the antisemitic movement,¹⁷¹ so much so, in fact, that even the otherwise indubitable categorical party-political opposition to party-political antisemitism crumbled momentarily. Previously imprisoned for four months for libelling Bleichröder, Ahlwardt, as is well known, evaded renewed imprisonment for libelling the Jewish-owned armaments supplier Loewe in his infamous *Judenflinten* due to his election to the *Reichstag* in the Pomeranian constituency of Arnswalde-Friedeberg in a by election in November 1892.

¹⁶⁶ Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 43.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷⁰ For the following cf. Peter Pulzer, 'Die Wiederkehr des alten Hasses,' in Michael A. Meyer (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit* 3 (Frankfurt/Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1997) – hereafter Meyer (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte* –, 3: 193–248, here 219–220.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Wistrich, *Socialism*, 109–110.

Returned again in the regular elections in the following year in which the antisemites generally fared rather well, gaining 3.4 per cent of the vote and returning no less than sixteen deputies, he remained in the *Reichstag* until he too fell prey to the general melt down of parliamentary party-political antisemitism in 1903. Once elected, he sought to exploit the publicity the *Reichstag* offered and his immunity as a deputy as best he could to intensify his denunciatory campaign against alleged Jewish corruption and abuse, getting himself into ever more trouble. There could be no doubt that he commanded considerable popular support, many apparently identifying with him as 'one of us' who dared speak out against 'them up there', undaunted by the 'persecution' the establishment subjected him to. It was this anti-authoritarian impulse that the Social Democrats deemed an indication of antisemitism's increasing tendency 'in spite of itself, to overshoot its mark,' and 'turn on capitalism in general.'

Mehring too was vociferous in propagating this notion, embellishing it with vicious anti-'philosemitic' remarks. The *Judenflinten* scandal was a 'satyr play composed by the antisemitic demagogue Ahlwardt,' he wrote in the *Neue Zeit* in May 1892, a satyr play that 'the capitalist clique has set to a hideous racket.' The nonsensical nature of Ahlwardt's contentions was self-evident, Mehring argued. 'It is just as unbelievable that the Prussian military state should simply let a Jewish firm take it for a ride as it is that a factory with an untarnished reputation should, as it were, deliver itself to the gallows, to extract the odd little additional profit from a big deal.'¹⁷² Since Ahlwardt had neither tried genuinely to prove his accusations nor even made a serious attempt to present his case in a manner likely to dupe his readers one was compelled to question his state of mind. 'And yet,' Mehring continued, 'this pamphlet has gone through twenty editions within a few weeks, a series of large public gatherings has listened to its author, rewarded him with wild applause,' and 'celebrated him as the saviour of the fatherland.' How, then, could this be explained? 'Whither this "ignominy of the century", this "ignominious blemish to our international reputation" and however else the despair of the capitalist press expresses itself as it imploringly beseeches the heavens with silent prayers for a solution to the puzzle?' It was a response to capitalist corruption, he explained, perpetrated by 'a system of cliques and nepotism intricately linked by capitalist interest' that 'formed an invisible but unbreakable ring within which mutual back scratching prevails and any resistance is punished with merciless annihilation.' This clique dominated all walks of life.

Not as if it were organized, not as if there were the slightest scrap of paper that testified to its existence! It requires no outward ties for its political interest welds it together indissolubly [...] It knows only one virtue: frenzied profiteering [...] [It knows] only one crime: sins against capitalism [...] Woe betide anyone unfortunate enough to be suspected of such a sin, for indictment and sentencing are one.¹⁷³

It was the pressure exerted by this clique that 'has finally generated the counter pressure' of the antisemitic movement. Huge numbers of people [eine Unmasse] lived in Berlin 'who, as civil servants, teachers, editors, property managers etc. are dependent on the clique and compelled to endure its humiliating tyranny

¹⁷² Franz Mehring, 'Berliner Geschichten,' in *NZ* 10-II, 34 [11 May 1892]: 225–229, here 227–228.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 228.

as they secretly moan and groan; thus they become the weak-willed victims of any daring demagogue bold enough publicly to thump the clique on the nose.' Ahlwardt's first trial had already revealed this pattern. While his claims evaporated almost immediately 'one saw the clique in its element in the background.' With the *Judenflinten* scandal, however, it had outdone itself, as witnessed by the liberal papers where the reader found

everything: distortion and twisting, hushing up and calumny, boycott and denunciations; everything except – a matter-of-fact and convincing word against Ahlwardt. Little wonder, then, that far beyond the circles of Herr Ahlwardt the impression gained ground that a cause defended with such indecent and reprehensible means must itself be indecent and reprehensible.

Hence, 'if the Löwe enterprise has gone through some hard times,' Mehring claimed, then it was 'not due to Ahlwardt's clumsy accusations but thanks to the marvellous defence by the *Freisinnige Zeitung*.'¹⁷⁴ Following his election and the attempts of the liberals to see Ahlwardt ostracized in the *Reichstag* Mehring wrote in early March 1893 that the deputies had 'remained in session as a kangaroo court until they began to squabble violently among one another whether Kaiser Friedrich had or had not called antisemitism the "ignominy of the century". This apocryphal dictum of a dead prince is, as is well known, the living principle and crucial backbone of the *Freisinnige Partei*.' All the same, 'this pathetic ending notwithstanding, this charming comedy did not have to go without applause. For when the victorious deputies,' supposedly victorious over Ahlwardt, that is, 'finally [...] left the chamber, the "Volk" that was blocking the Leipziger Straße in dense masses welcomed them with animated cheers for – Ahlwardt.' It went without saying that the Social Democrats maintained a 'strict reticence' in the midst of the 'parliamentary Ahlwardt racket [Ahlwardtkrakehl]. It has as little to do with the antisemitic monk as it has with the capitalist rabbi.'¹⁷⁵

Four weeks later, as the conflict raged on, Mehring stated that Social Democracy 'takes things as they are and can only consider it welcome progress if the bourgeois parliamentarism with which it has long finished now also begins to lose all credit in the petty bourgeois world [...] A blind chicken occasionally finds a kernel of corn, too, of course,' and Ahlwardt had by no means been off the mark when 'he recently said in the *Reichstag*: you call me the scum of the earth; well then, what sort of politics must you have indulged in if the voters believe me more than you.' However sound and forceful the material presented to demonstrate that Ahlwardt's contentions were libellous, the

petty bourgeois elements simply answer: "Curse and scold as much as you like, we do not care how often you can prove that Ahlwardt has lied. At least the man believes in his cause and hence we believe him ten times more than you who have been seeking to get the better of us in the service of the exploitative capitalist order for decades and continue to do so."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 229.

¹⁷⁵ *Idem*, 'Mönch und Rabbi,' in *NZ* 11-I, 27 [22 March 1893]: 841–844, here 844.

¹⁷⁶ *Idem*, 'Im Wechsel der Zeiten,' in *NZ* 11-II, 28 [28 March 1893]: 1–4, here 2. Hereafter Mehring, 'Im Wechsel der Zeiten'.

If the 'German Panama' of the *Gründer* era had been allowed to transpire for as long as was the case, and the

bourgeois authors, who rebelled against it, the likes of Rudolf Meyer, Glagau, and Perrot, all their intellect and knowledge notwithstanding,¹⁷⁷ were forced to go into exile or die and had to go to seed, then the true reason for this shameful fact lies in the intellectual effeteness of the petty bourgeois masses. Even in the seventies they were already haunted by a vague sense that they had come under capitalism's knife. But this sense was not yet strong enough to break down the short-sighted limitedness of their class critique.¹⁷⁸

Over the two decades since, however, 'a petty bourgeoisie rendered intellectually effete by capitalism has become a ruthless class of rebels [Revoluzer].' It was in fact the economic development that had precipitated this process that

would be quite inexplicable from an ideological point of view, namely, that the petty bourgeois masses who one and a half decades ago sent decent and well informed authors like Rudolf Meyer, Glagau, and Perrot packing today cling frantically to a clown like Ahlwardt. [...] We had hardly dared hope that the capitalist order was already as discredited as a pied piper among the petty bourgeoisie as the last eight days have shown. But that only makes it all the more imperative that the sly speculation of Herr Richter¹⁷⁹ on the magnanimous abhorrence of the working class at the antisemitic racial incitement does not come off. The class conscious workers have long reached a consensus on Ahlwardt and his antisemitic propaganda; Ahlwardt is, as it were, the last straw with which the petty bourgeois elements still hope to erect a hut on the ground of the current society; as soon as this illusion of the dying melts away – and how quickly must it melt away! – one concerted kick by the workers will suffice to sweep away the whole *Ahlwardterei*.¹⁸⁰

It was 'precisely for that reason that we must not forget the capitalist rabbi over the antisemitic monk, we must not hold back the process of the petty bourgeoisie's enlightenment on the nature of the capitalist system.' In a formulation that could hardly be more ambiguous he then added: 'that he has generated the antisemitic rogue makes the capitalist rogue no better. The proletarian interest can only be to do away with

¹⁷⁷ This recognition of the intellect and knowledge of the likes of Meyer, Glagau, and Perrot might seem to question my earlier suggestion that Mehring tended to differentiate more carefully than most of his peers between the duped masses likely to see the light and the antisemitic propagandists who were nevertheless doomed. If, however, we examine Mehring's obituary for Otto Glagau (1834–1892) and Franz Perrot, for instance, it becomes clear that Mehring apparently saw no contradiction between the recognition and occasional praise he bestowed upon them and the clear insistence that they had no future. All that could be said in their praise, he explained there, and all the criticism notwithstanding that their 'philosemitic' detractors deserved, it was by no means his intention to suggest that both men were not responsible for their sad fate. It was no longer possible to fight capitalism within the confines of bourgeois society. It was in order to avoid having to break with bourgeois society that they had withdrawn into the antisemitic swamp and gone to the dogs. At critical junctures such as the present, lack of insight was punished no less harshly than bad faith and in this respect the fate of Glagau and Perrot could only serve as a warning example (Mehring, 'Kapital und Presse,' 99–100.) The generally revered Rudolf Meyer (1839–1899) who published regularly in the *NZ* was, of course, an exceptional case in this respect.

¹⁷⁸ Mehring, 'Im Wechsel der Zeiten,' 3.

¹⁷⁹ Eugen Richter (1838–1906), the leader of the *Freisinnige* party and one of Mehring's favourite enemies.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

the whole family of rogues and to ensure that the father does not benefit from the annihilation of the son and that the son does not benefit from the annihilation of the father.’¹⁸¹

Indeed, Mehring occasionally even felt that the party was mishandling the whole conflict. ‘Your letter again aroused my vehement regret,’ Mehring wrote to Kautsky on 28 March 1893,

that you and the *Neue Zeit* aren’t here; if so, we could do so much more good than is, hopefully, already the case. Particularly in the Ahlwardt and the Hauptmann¹⁸² business – to use these shorthand terms for brevity’s sake – the course being pursued here is not quite right. Thanks to Frau Natalie¹⁸³ and her Jewish blood, good old Liebknecht is far too much of a philosemite and the *Fraktion* too is embroiled in the bourgeois discourse.

The initial stance of the *Vorwärts* on Ahlwardt had ‘tended far too much in the direction of Richter and dealt with the nonsense of the “parliamentary criminal court” in far too serious a fashion.’¹⁸⁴ ‘Generally speaking,’ he reiterated on 1 May 1893,

I do not think that the party has been, and is, operating in quite the right way as far as the Ahlwardt business is concerned. Liars as the antisemitic leaders are, Social Democracy has no reason to have a go at the antisemitic masses [...]

The masses are decent people whom one shouldn’t scold but needs to explain to that they will find their only genuine support in the working class. [...] At the moment the assault is being launched in far too one-sided a manner on the antisemites – to the delight of the capitalists. Surely, a mass movement like antisemitism has to be seen historically; in fact, the more depraved its leaders, the greater the clarity with which the sins of liberal capitalism become visible. [...] One may tear its programme to shreds and brandish its leaders as harshly as possible, but one should also point out the genuinely guilty party, capitalist liberalism. One should neither do the sowing for Herr Eugen Richter nor block ones way into the petty bourgeoisie.¹⁸⁵

And yet the differences cannot have been all that substantial. He had already conceded in his letter to Kautsky on 28 March that ‘Schönlanck has brought matters back on track in the *Vorwärts*. I don’t generally like him, and I am of course hardly pleased,’ that it was Schoenlank¹⁸⁶ who had rectified the matter, ‘especially, since he has taken part of his material from *Kapital and Presse*, but I nevertheless have to

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸² An unrelated issue to do with the playwright Gerhart Hauptmann (1862–1946).

¹⁸³ Wilhelm Liebknecht’s second wife, Natalie Liebknecht (1835–1909).

¹⁸⁴ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 36.

¹⁸⁵ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 41.

¹⁸⁶ Bruno Schoenlank (1859–1901) was the member of the *Reichstag* for Breslau VII from 1893 and Mehring’s predecessor as editor-in-chief of the *LVZ* from 1894 until his death. Mehring and Schoenlank had initially been on extremely friendly terms but fell out in 1892 when Harden informed Mehring that he had seen Schoenlank dining with Lindau which struck Mehring as the ultimate betrayal. It subsequently transpired that the encounter between Schoenlank and Lindau had been far more casual than Harden had suggested and Mehring and Schoenlank were reconciled. The dispute and reconciliation between them was, as we will see in the following chapter, later to resurface as a highly contentious issue during the 1903 Party Congress in Dresden. Mehring’s rash reaction in 1892 was at least in part also a response to the fact that Schoenlank had cooperated with Heinrich Braun to establish a periodical that stood in direct competition to an abortive project Mehring had considered participating in before finally deciding to throw in his lot with Social Democracy. On this episode cf. Ursula Ratz, ‘Aus Franz Mehrings marxistischer Frühzeit. Ein Briefwechsel Franz Mehrings mit Lujo Brentano (1891–93),’ in *IWK* No. 19–20 [December 1973]: 20–44.

acknowledge that he got the *Vorwärts* off the hook in this instance.¹⁸⁷ Back in June 1892 too Mehring had felt compelled to praise the *Vorwärts*. ‘We have repeatedly dealt with Ahlwardt,’ he wrote in the *Neue Zeit* on 29 June 1892. ‘His personality and activities are equally repellent. But the *Vorwärts* is only too right when it says that the way in which the *Freisinnige Partei* combats Ahlwardt threatens to turn him into the “national saint”.’¹⁸⁸

That his basic evaluation of Ahlwardt and his significance was to all intents and purposes identical to that of Bebel and hence, by implication, fully in keeping with the official party line, we have already seen. What we might note once again, though, is that here too Mehring distinguished clearly between the antisemitic activists themselves, on the one hand, and the masses, petty bourgeois or otherwise, ultimately duped by them, on the other, a distinction not always maintained, as we have already seen, with equal clarity by other leading Social Democrats. Bebel and his fellow Social Democrats did more, though, than just articulate their notion of Ahlwardt’s role and significance in articles or speeches. ‘I repeatedly negotiated with Ahlwardt these last few days,’ Bebel wrote to Engels on 18 April 1893 in a letter that seems to have received little attention in the extant literature. ‘The man displays an ignorance and ineptitude that surprised me,’ he continued,

even though I assumed I already knew him well enough. He still hasn’t submitted the motion approved by the President that I prepared for him yesterday. His own people don’t know what he’s going to do. The man is a twerp [...] which is connected to his excessive drinking [...] the six gentlemen in the *Reichstag* are split into three or four factions. It has generally been noted that not one of them has taken the word on the Usury Law. We will throw that at them,

Bebel concluded, ‘when the third reading is over and there’s nothing more they can do about it.’¹⁸⁹ Blumenberg provided two notes for this passage. The final point presents us with yet another variation on the theme of denouncing antisemites by unmasking them as disingenuous, in this case by confronting them with the indictment that they claimed to oppose Jewish usury but were nowhere to be seen or heard when constraints on usury were actually being legislated. As Blumenberg explained, the antisemites Liebermann von Sonnenberg and Böckel in fact did speak during the third reading of the amendment to the Usury Law,¹⁹⁰ rendering Bebel’s plan obsolete. More importantly, however, Blumenberg also explained the background to Bebel’s negotiations with Ahlwardt. Ahlwardt ‘had levelled accusations against members of the *Bundesrat* and the *Reichstag* in the *Reichstag* on 18 and 21 March and asked for the documentation that he wished to present to the *Reichstag* to be examined. Since the [organized antisemitic] parliamentary group did not have the requisite fifteen members, the Social Democrats provided the necessary votes.’¹⁹¹ Whether the Social Democrats in the *Reichstag* supported Ahlwardt (or any of his ‘democratic’ colleagues) in this way on other occasions too I cannot say. Even if it was a one off, though, it does demonstrate how

¹⁸⁷ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 36.

¹⁸⁸ Franz Mehring, ‘Wenn Zwei sich streiten...,’ in NZ 10-II, 41 [29 June 1892]: 449–453, here 451.

¹⁸⁹ *BWABE*, 679.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, loc cit. n5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, loc cit. n4.

seriously Bebel and his associates took their contention that 'antisemitism reaches its apex at a particular stage of our economic development,' as he put it in Cologne, 'and that it will then be compelled to become revolutionary, in spite of itself and with necessity, and thus plays into our hands.'¹⁹²

As is well known, following Bebel's speech the Party Congress unanimously¹⁹³ passed a motion stating its official position on antisemitism.¹⁹⁴ We need not discuss it in detail, although it does seem worth pointing out a remarkable ambiguity that has, to my mind, not been emphasized sufficiently in the extant literature. The penultimate point of the motion states that (in Wistrich's translation)

Since social democracy is the most resolute foe of capitalism – whether its agents are Jews or Gentiles – and since it aims to eliminate bourgeois society by transforming it into a socialist society, thereby ending all domination of man by man, as well as all exploitation of man by man, social democracy refuses to divide its forces in the struggle against the existing State and social order by engaging in false and hence ineffective struggles against a symptom which stands and falls with bourgeois society.

What 'symptom' exactly is the motion referring to here? The motion goes on to say that 'social democracy fights antisemitism as a movement which is directed against the natural development of society but which, despite its reactionary character and against its will, must ultimately become revolutionary.'¹⁹⁵ This is a contradictory formulation, of course. What it most likely intended to say was that Social Democracy combated antisemitism in so far as it was 'directed against the natural development of society' and had a 'reactionary character', much as it was ultimately destined to become revolutionary. Why, after all, should the party fight a movement that 'must ultimately become revolutionary'? If the party did oppose antisemitism until it became revolutionary then the most likely implication would be that the 'symptom' it did not oppose consisted of the (supposedly) Jewish phenomena the antisemitic movement claimed to address. Alternatively, the implication could be that while the party did combat antisemitism in so far as it set itself 'against the natural development of society' it did not oppose it to the extent that it was no more than 'a symptom which stands and falls with bourgeois society.' *Prima facie* this may sound like a somewhat nonsensical suggestion. Given the notions prevalent in the party, however, the suggestion would have seemed perfectly reasonable that antisemitism needed to be combated in so far as it was reactionary but could be largely ignored in so far as it was anti-Jewish and therefore inextricably tied to (and equally doomed as) the phenomenon it was directed against, namely the Jewish particularity that supposedly

¹⁹² Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 24.

¹⁹³ *Parteitag 1893*, 238. The motion had in fact already been passed by the Party Congress in Berlin the year before (*Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu Berlin vom 14. bis 21. November 1892*. (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1892), 294. Hereafter *Parteitag 1892*) 'with a large majority'. We shall have reason to touch upon the somewhat unclear circumstances leading to the postponement of Bebel's speech in Berlin in the next chapter. From the fact that the minutes relate that other motions were passed 'against one vote' (ibid., 291), 'against very few votes' (ibid., 294) and 'with a very large majority' (ibid., 248) it is obvious, though, that Bebel's motion on antisemitism was passed nowhere near unanimously in Berlin.

¹⁹⁴ *Parteitag 1892*, 293–294; *Parteitag 1893*, 223–224; Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 25; for a full English translation cf. Wistrich, *Socialism*, 133.

¹⁹⁵ Wistrich, *Socialism*, *loc cit.*

'stands and falls with bourgeois society'. Perhaps the formulation we have been trying to interpret was in fact intended to cover both implications and hence strikes us as somewhat ambiguous.

While Bebel's speech clearly did portray antisemitic sentiments as an obvious and reasonable, though short-sighted and ultimately futile, response to specifically Jewish phenomena, one can only assume that those scholars later so impressed by it in fact interpreted it as an attempt to grapple with the actual disjunction between antisemitic perceptions and the kernel of truth they coincide with – a rather imperfect attempt, as they would presumably concede, but an attempt nevertheless, and hence a step beyond the crudities of the second part of *Zur Judenfrage*. However, as we have already noticed at one juncture, and as Wistrich himself concedes, his claim notwithstanding that Bebel belonged to those who 'rarely, if at all, mentioned *Zur Judenfrage* and certainly never justified it,' Bebel's speech indeed deployed 'terms reminiscent of the young Marx'¹⁹⁶ and 'even echoed the Marxian phrase that money was the "secular God of the Jews",' accepting 'that one could equate Judaism and capitalism to a limited degree.'¹⁹⁷

On this particular point the extant literature in fact seems a little confused. Wistrich himself noted elsewhere that Bebel had 'repeated the stock formula of Marx about money being the secular God of the Jews,'¹⁹⁸ and Leuschen-Seppel, in an attempt to demonstrate how, to her mind, Bebel had rejected the use to which Mehring had put that 'stock formula', quotes him in a manner that might well suggest to the reader that Bebel was referring to an instance in which Mehring and not he himself had quoted the 'stock formula' in question.¹⁹⁹ Presumably these discrepancies can be explained by the fact that in these particular instances Wistrich and Leuschen-Seppel were quoting from the version of the speech subsequently printed separately as a pamphlet. Their more general comments on Bebel's speech, by contrast, they would seem to have based on the version published in the minutes of the Party Congress. In that earlier version, however, we indeed find only 'echoes' *Zur Judenfrage* and 'terms reminiscent of the young Marx'.

Why do the two versions differ in this way? Because when the motion calling for the separate publication of Bebel's speech as a pamphlet was tabled at the Congress in Cologne, Bebel quickly pointed out that the speech would for this purpose 'of course' have to be revised to make it more comprehensive.²⁰⁰ In the process of this revision Bebel in fact changed relatively little, but one alteration that apparently did strike him as important was the transformation of the reminiscences and echoes of *Zur Judenfrage* already discernible in the speech as it had been held at the Congress into a direct reference. In the version subsequently published separately Bebel inserted a short section claiming that just what he, Bebel, was saying, Marx had expressed

in a text from the forties *Ueber die* [sic!] *Judenfrage* as follows:

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁹⁷ *Idem*, 'The SPD and Antisemitism in the 1890s,' in *European Studies Review* 7, 2 (1977): 177–197, here 183.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*, 'Karl Marx, German Socialists and the Jewish Question, 1880–1914,' in *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 3, 1 (1973): 92–97, here 95.

¹⁹⁹ Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 84.

²⁰⁰ *Parteitag 1893*, 239.

[“] What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest.

What is the worldly religion of the Jew? *Huckstering*.

What is his worldly God? *Money*.

Very well then! Emancipation from huckstering and money, consequently from practical, real Jewry/Judaism, would be the self-emancipation of our time....

In the final analysis, the emancipation of the Jews is the emancipation of mankind from Jewry/Judaism. [”]

What he is saying, then, is: our entire society consists of huckstering and striving for money and is hence a Jewish²⁰¹ society [...] *With the demise of bourgeois society that particular nature of the Jew too will disappear.*²⁰²

It is against this background, I would argue, that we need to interpret Bebel's already cited contention that, 'given the current organization of society it is not decisive whether the Jew is personally in town, crucial is whether and how he is perceptible as a competitor. As such, however, he is perceptible everywhere';²⁰³ and against this background the interpretation I suggested earlier, namely, that Bebel did not conceive of this perceptibility as hinging on what we might accept as empirical verifiability, strikes me as all the more compelling. Of course all this does not invariably imply that Bebel made *Zur Judenfrage* his 'starting-point for an analysis of anti-Semitism or for a general critique of capitalism.' But it does at the very least demonstrate that *Zur Judenfrage* remained an obvious and important source to turn to when it came to lending his speech additional authoritative clout. Moreover, it is extremely telling that when he did so, he automatically turned to the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* and took one of the most notorious of those 'easily understandable' passages out of context that, when taken out of context, as the *Sozialdemokrat* had warned in 1881, could suggest the exact opposite of what Marx had intended to say. And in an important sense he indeed did just that. His interpretation may not have resulted in the exact opposite of Marx's stance, but it was certainly worlds removed from it, and in this respect Bebel's use of this passage does rather epitomize the use to which *Zur Judenfrage* was usually put by those leading Social Democrats who did make references to it.

Now, as we have already seen, explaining the serious notions underlying especially the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* is always a rather murky business since it invariably requires us to rationalize (and thus, by implication, to gloss over) its portrayal of Jewry. There can be no doubt that this portrayal is malicious and spiteful and that it is grounded in traditional forms of stereotyping, the application of which demonstrates not only a lack of, and indifference to, empirical knowledge but also genuine contempt for Jewry both past and present. Even so, while it is difficult to determine precisely to what extent this contempt was not only an expression of more general conceptual constraints but may indeed itself have contributed to them, it does seem fair to say that while it certainly over-determines the central ideas that Marx develops in *Zur*

²⁰¹ In the second edition published in 1906 Bebel in fact substituted the even more problematic and emotive term 'verjudet' for the straightforward term 'jüdisch' used here in the first edition. Cf. August Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus. Rede auf dem sozialdemokratischen Parteitage in Berlin. Mit zwei Nachträgen. Zweite durchgesehene Auflage* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1906), 13.

²⁰² Bebel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 11.

²⁰³ Ibid., 20.

Judenfrage one would be hard pressed to demonstrate that it actually determined his line of thought or, as it were, diverted it from the path it would most likely have taken if only Marx had nurtured a more rational attitude towards Jewry. One notion basic to the whole idea of *Zur Judenfrage* and crucial for our understanding at this particular juncture is, put as simply as possible, the assumption, leaning heavily on Feuerbach, that religious consciousness (and ideology more generally) is essentially a "compensatory projection and that the religious notions prevalent in a social group are basically a reflection, albeit ordinarily a distorted reflection, of the way in which the structure of that social group curtails the potential of its members to associate comprehensively in mutually beneficial ways. The critique of religion facilitates the recognition of this nexus but once that point is reached, and here Marx sheds his Young Hegelian and Feuerbachian egg shells, it is obviously futile to want to change the world for the better by focusing on a most likely distorted reflection of the actual problems rather than the problems themselves. Only the solution of those problems can precipitate a state of affairs in which the need for religion becomes obsolete. Clearly then, differing forms of religious consciousness must reflect differing (deficient) social realities. Judaism differs from Christianity not because its adherents stubbornly cling to (partially) differing sets of sources that propound (partially) differing traditions, but the adherence to different religious notions reflects a need to compensate for different social conditions and constraints. At best, a particular religious consciousness formed by a particular set of conditions and constraints might initially predispose the social group that holds it to adapt with greater ease to a particular change in the conditions and constraints governing another social group with which it becomes involved but ultimately, until a fundamental revolutionary transformation renders religion obsolete altogether, the social conditions and constraints will always form religious consciousness and not vice versa. The religious particularity of the Jews, then, is a reflection of their social particularity. Their prominent role in the money economy at a time when the money economy was still located at the fringes of society was reflected in a particular religious consciousness that was as marginal to society as the money economy and that was perceived of by society as being as peculiar and unsettling as the money economy. To the extent that the money economy had become, or was becoming, integral to society as a whole, the religious consciousness it had previously generated in the Jews was also becoming integral to society as a whole, be it in an expressly religious or in a more secularised, ideological guise. Only comprehensive, social emancipation can render the need for this form of consciousness that was previously specific to Jewry but now pervades society in general obsolete for Jews and non-Jews alike. It is in this sense that 'the *social* emancipation of the Jews,' as opposed to their merely formal or political emancipation, would signal 'the emancipation of society from Judaism/Jewry.'

It is impossible to grasp this without carefully reading both parts of *Zur Judenfrage* in conjunction. One need not accept Marx's notion as valid or desirable to concede that it is worlds removed from the way in which Bebel understood the particular 'easily understandable passage' that he chose to quote in order to lend additional authority to his speech. Where Marx concluded that the comprehensive social emancipation

of the Jews presupposed the comprehensive emancipation of society as a whole and would hence, were it to transpire, signal the obsolescence of the conditions and constraints that had once generated their particular religious consciousness and now fettered Jews and non-Jews alike, Bebel's emphasis lay on the fact that the 'demise of bourgeois society' would also herald the disappearance of the 'particular nature of the Jew.' We really need to take his optimistic assurances that it will soon 'no longer suffice for the antisemites merely to proceed against the Jews,' that they would hence be 'compelled to turn on capitalism in general,' and that 'their struggle against the Jewish capitalists will automatically propel them there,' at face value. The message that Marx's vision in *Zur Judenfrage* was being enlisted to underscore here was simply: Your accusations against the Jews are right but if you really want to get them you will need to trawl more deeply. The chasm gaping between Marx's vision and the rather more sturdy form in which it subsequently tended to reappear in such references to *Zur Judenfrage* as were made by leading Social Democrats presumably resulted not least from the fact that Marx had sought to address the paradigmatic significance of what he understood to be the 'Jewish Question'. Bebel and his peers, by contrast, were groping for a response to antisemitism. For Marx, the 'Jewish Question' was, as we have seen, in fact two questions. One could be answered unconditionally by granting Jews the formal or political emancipation to which they were, to his mind, indubitably entitled. The other hinged on the same problems that non-Jews too would need to surmount in order to gain comprehensive social and human emancipation and its solution hence presupposed a more complex process. As we saw, it was ultimately this differentiation that both allowed and compelled Marx to insist on the disjunction of emancipation and assimilation and reject Bauer's 'conflation of right and morality'.

Rather tellingly, while attitudes in the party generally tended to reassert that conflation of right and morality *vis-à-vis* the Jews, Social Democrats generally did opt for a radical disjunction between the two in their dealings with the antisemites. While the Jews who stood on their dignity rather than giving their utmost to securing a form of general emancipation rendering their Jewish existence obsolete were portrayed as wilfully setting themselves against the inevitable course of history, the antisemites were primarily depicted as being in no position to forego their antisemitism until the objective conditions compelled them to transform the cryptic anti-capitalism already inherent in their antisemitism into fully-fledged anti-capitalism proper and subscribe to the Socialist cause. The prevalent assumption seems to have been that one ultimately had to subscribe to the Marxist scheme of things to recognize antisemitism's futility even on its own terms (not to mention the fact that it might be politically and morally wrong).

Systematically speaking, this is not quite as far-fetched a contention as it might seem at first sight. After all, one could indeed argue that antisemitism too is one of those forms of religious or ideological consciousness that are generated as a compensatory projection and distorted reflection of a particular set of social conditions and constraints and can therefore only be rendered obsolete with the abolition of that set of conditions and constraints. The question that arises at this point is not, of course, one that can simply be answered one way or the other. Rather, it is indicative of the fundamental dialectics that govern the

relationship between structural determination and human agency within the Marxian mode of analysis, a problem generally associated with Marx's remark at the beginning of the first section of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (first published in 1852) that 'men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, not under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under extant circumstances directly given and handed down [to them],'²⁰⁴ a remark now prone to feel as stale as all 'proof texts' almost invariably do when they have been excessively belaboured over long stretches of time and with decreasing discrimination. 'Ideology is a process,' as Engels explained in a much cited letter written to none other than Franz Mehring on 14 July 1893 that heaped enthusiastic praise on his *Lessing-Legende*, 'which the ostensible thinker indeed undertakes consciously but based on a false consciousness. The motives that really drive him remain unknown to him; otherwise the process would not be an ideological one.' He also added, though, that one of their critics' fundamental misunderstandings was the assumption that because the adherents of historical materialism denied ideological developments their independence of material developments 'we would also deny them any *historical impact*.'²⁰⁵ The implications of this issue for our particular context here would merit a careful examination in their own right, something I am in no position to undertake at this point. Suffice it to say that it does seem remarkable how differently the balance sheets were drawn up on this score. Antisemitism was seen as a transitory phenomenon that was best understood as deterministically generated by objective conditions but one that in spite of itself would open up the realm of human agency to its proponents. 'Philosemitism', by contrast, was seen as an equally transitory phenomenon that was best understood in a manner heavily emphasizing the role of human agency and the extent to which its proponents needed to be held accountable for it, even though the objective conditions pre-determined its inevitable disappearance anyway. Although the demise of both phenomena was supposedly a foregone conclusion, philosemitism was seen to call for a persistent and preferably vitriolic onslaught while the antisemites were best treated with patience and any unduly harsh behaviour that might alienate them needed to be avoided.

Transcending the Jewishness of bourgeois society. Matters Jewish in Die heilige Familie

One will have to concede in defence of Bebel and Liebknecht and their peers that in one respect at least it is considerably easier for us to interpret and contextualize *Zur Judenfrage* as we have done throughout this chapter than it was for Bebel in Cologne or for Liebknecht when writing his Marx memoirs, namely to the extent that we can directly trace the development of Marx's stance by comparing *Zur Judenfrage* with the relevant three sections, written but a year later, in *Die heilige Familie*.²⁰⁶ Carlebach approached this issue by pointing out that it was 'curious that in spite of the extensive literature' on *Zur Judenfrage* 'virtually no

²⁰⁴ MEW 8: 115.

²⁰⁵ MEW 39: 97–98.

²⁰⁶ MEW 2: 91–95, 99–104, 112–125.

attempt has been made to explain why Marx practically re-wrote²⁰⁷ it in *Die heilige Familie*, raising the question 'why he should have considered it necessary to do so.' In fact, 'most of the scholars who have written on Marx's "Jewish question" have ignored the second version altogether,' Carlebach contended, and even those few who, like Avineri, had 'noted the less hostile attitude' towards Jewry in *Die heilige Familie* 'offer no explanation for it.'²⁰⁸ It seems that Carlebach was in fact conflating two issues at this point. The reasons for Marx's decision to engage the issue again are easily enough explained. 'Bruno Bauer & Consorten' were, after all, the 'holy family' whom *Die heilige Familie* set out to destroy, and what Marx did in the three sections dealing with matters Jewish was, as Avineri already pointed out, 'take[s] sides in the argument between Bauer and a host of Jewish polemicists,' emphasizing that 'in spite of the fact that' the latter were generally speaking 'far inferior to Bauer as polemicists,' he nevertheless did 'not get the better of them.'²⁰⁹ On the other hand, Carlebach's suggestion that Marx 'practically re-wrote' *Zur Judenfrage* in *Die heilige Familie* seems to suggest that the notions reflected in the two texts are substantially at odds and, by implication, that Marx set out to 're-write' *Zur Judenfrage* with the intention of publicly setting the record straight on his attitude towards matters Jewish, an intention that Avineri and others had failed to account for. There can, however, to my mind, be no doubt that for Marx his renewed discussion of the matter in *Die heilige Familie* was simply an outgrowth of his continued critique of Bauer. This is borne out not least by the fact that Marx's references to Bauer's Jewish critics drew not on their original contributions to the controversy but on Bauer's responses to them.²¹⁰

Of course Carlebach was right when he stated that 'Marx set out to correct the inadequacies of the earlier essays in the *Holy Family*,'²¹¹ but this was part of an ongoing process in which Marx clarified his thought, *inter alia*, in a sustained confrontation with Bauer's position, epitomized in part by his stance on matters Jewish. Put bluntly, not everything written in one year to clarify an issue addressed in the year before amounts to a 're-writing' designed to replace rather than simply develop a position formulated the year before and in this particular instance we not only have no evidence to suggest that Marx felt an urgent need to set the record straight specifically on *Zur Judenfrage*; the very fact that he subsequently had no qualms about including *Zur Judenfrage* in the collection of his *Gesammelte Aufsätze* planned by Hermann Becker²¹² (which in the event never got beyond the publication of the first part in April 1851 because of

²⁰⁷ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 174.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁰⁹ Shlomo Avineri, 'Marx and Jewish Emancipation,' in *JHI* 25, 3 (1964): 445–450, here 446. Hereafter Avineri, 'Marx'.

²¹⁰ Bruno Bauer, 'Neueste Schriften über die Judenfrage,' *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 1, 1 (December 1843): 1–17 and 1, 4 (March 1844): 10–19.

²¹¹ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 176.

²¹² Hermann Heinrich Becker (1820–1885), a leading revolutionary in the Rhineland in 1848/1849, edited the *Westdeutsche Zeitung* between May 1849 and July 1850, joined the *Kommunistenbund* in 1850 and was among those sentenced during the *Kölner Kommunistenprozeß* (1852). Later a deputy for the *Fortschrittspartei* in the Prussian *Landtag* and *Norddeutscher Reichstag*, he eventually joined the National Liberals and became *Erster* and then *Oberbürgermeister* of Dortmund (1871–1875) and finally *Oberbürgermeister* of Cologne.

Becker's arrest the following month)²¹³ demonstrates that he had no undue misgivings about his first attempt to grapple with the issue, much as his subsequent treatment in *Die heilige Familie* had obviously moved beyond the earlier formulations and clarified the matter yet further. I would suggest, then, that we read the relevant sections of *Die heilige Familie* as a check and corrective for *Zur Judenfrage* not only in the sense that the former superseded the latter but also in the sense that it allows us to determine more clearly (where ambiguities exist) the likely actual thrust of *Zur Judenfrage* in the first place.

Carlebach, to point out just a few crucial aspects, is entirely right when he emphasizes that in the later text 'the vigorous polemic of the first essays is transferred from the Jews to Bauer.' Also correct is his suggestion that *Die heilige Familie* stresses 'the historical necessity of social and political development' by drawing a sharper 'contrast of the positive and negative aspects of civil society,' thus 'implicitly' allowing for 'a more positive view of the role of the Jew in civil society as an agent of change.'²¹⁴ In fact, as Avineri pointed out, in *Die heilige Familie* 'Marx takes the degree to which Jews enjoy political and civil rights as the criterion for the modernity of any particular state,' making it perfectly clear that 'the Rights of Man [...] have first of all to be achieved in order to be transcended,'²¹⁵ an issue that Na'aman has also stressed. With Bauer, Na'aman explained, 'Jewry disappears without having participated in the process of emancipation; for Marx [it disappears] after having participated in civil emancipation [...] This distinction is fundamental,' he added, but it was one that could be 'easily overlooked' because the malicious tone in *Zur Judenfrage* seemed to render the 'distorted imagery' of Jewry as the most aggressive representative of bourgeois domination a more likely and catchy interpretation.²¹⁶

The slightly later text offers its perhaps most dramatic clarification *vis-à-vis* *Zur Judenfrage* in the seemingly unremarkable formulation of a single sentence expressly designed to paraphrase the earlier text. There he had demonstrated, Marx explained, that the task of 'transcending [aufzuheben] the Jewish essence in fact amounted to the task of transcending the Jewishness of bourgeois society [das Judentum der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft], the inhumanity of present-day practical life epitomized by the money system [Geldsystem].'²¹⁷ We might note in passing the use of the term 'aufzuheben' here. Given the Hegelian background of the whole debate there can be little doubt that Marx used this term intentionally to denote no mere abolition by negation but the process by which, within the Hegelian scheme of things, a new state of affairs can only transcend an earlier one if it contains and consummates the valid and perfectible elements inherent in that earlier state of affairs. More crucially for our discussion here, however, one of the major problems we have with the interpretation of *Zur Judenfrage* (and German texts on antisemitism and matters Jewish more generally) is of course that the term 'Judentum' can cover the three concepts Judaism, Jewry, and Jewishness. Hence the final clause of the much-cited last sentence of the second part of *Zur*

²¹³ Cf. *MEGA2* I.1 Apparat, 976–979; I.2 Apparat, 651; I.10 Text, 493–497.

²¹⁴ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 176.

²¹⁵ Avineri, 'Marx', 449.

²¹⁶ Na'aman, *Marxismus*, 15.

²¹⁷ *MEW* 2: 116

Judenfrage, the contention that ‘die gesellschaftliche Emanzipation des Juden ist die Emanzipation der Gesellschaft vom Judentum,’ can imply either society’s emancipation from Judaism or from Jewry (though not, in this form, from Jewishness). Either way the formulation can lend itself to interpretations implying the need for society to purge itself of an essentially extraneous Jewish influence. The formulation in *Die heilige Familie*, by contrast, that it is ‘das Judentum der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft’ that needs to be transcended can, in this form, only refer to ‘the Jewishness of bourgeois society’. This remains problematic enough, to be sure, especially with hindsight. Not only has the supposedly anti-antisemitic strategy of denouncing the antisemites as the ‘real’, albeit ‘uncircumcised’, Jews proved (at best) perfectly futile, but the suggestion that the Jewish influence has long ceased to be a merely extraneous one and has in fact seeped into the very heart of non-Jewish society, thus all the more insidiously corrupting its very essence, has turned out to be a particularly potent and dangerous one integral to modern antisemitism. But then Marx was no historian of antisemitism and antisemitism not strictly speaking the concern of *Zur Judenfrage*, much as Bauer’s position may in part have prefigured the dynamics of the modern antisemitism that would emerge (and Bauer himself would help precipitate far more effectively elsewhere) in the decades to follow.

If we read both parts of *Zur Judenfrage* together it is clear that Marx’s main concern was with the suggestion that the formal emancipation of the Jews presupposed their assimilation. This suggestion he rejected because, on the one hand, the actual basic nature of the state currently refusing that formal emancipation was no better than that of the Jews anyway, and because any process of genuine human emancipation hinged on a transformation of the critique-worthy material conditions that generated particular (religious) identities, on the other. As we saw, the assumption that those identities could be changed as long as the conditions they reflected remained unaltered was, to his mind, as nonsensical as the suggestion that the conditions themselves could be changed by assaulting their reflection in those identities; this aspect too, we might add, is developed with far greater clarity in *Die heilige Familie* than in *Zur Judenfrage*.²¹⁸ Now that the previously exceptional and peripheral social conditions that had generated the hitherto exceptional and peripheral Jewish identity were becoming characteristic of society as a whole, society as a whole would itself become ‘Jewish’. On the level of formal or political emancipation that implied that the Jews were if anything then better prepared to exercise full citizenship rights than the non-Jews; on the level of comprehensive human emancipation the implication was that the conditions generating the now generalized ‘Jewishness’ of society as a whole would have to be transcended to facilitate the human emancipation of Jews and non-Jews alike. Needless to say, this interpretation of Marx’s line of argument again represents a rationalization and its formulation in fact remains ambiguous; there can be not doubt of course that Marx took great pleasure in the second part of *Zur Judenfrage* in demonstrating that the process he envisaged as leading to full human emancipation was one that would do away not only with the ‘Jewishness’ of society as a whole but also with all the unpleasantness he and his

²¹⁸ Cf. especially *Ibid.*, 116–117.

contemporaries contemptuously associated with real-existing Jewry; do away with Jewry's unpleasantness, that is, not, we might add, the individuals constituting it. The particular ambiguity or luxury of dwelling on this unpleasantness and its negation he had clearly left behind in *Die heilige Familie*. The focus was now emphatically on society's need to rid itself of its own essential 'Jewishness', not on its ability to rid itself of Judaism or Jewry as alien entities. What, by contrast, had not only not changed, as we have already seen, but in fact became even more explicit in *Die heilige Familie* was his fixation on the *Geldsystem*.

Clearly, then, reading not only both parts of *Zur Judenfrage* together but reading *Zur Judenfrage* in conjunction with the relevant sections of *Die heilige Familie* makes the way in which *Zur Judenfrage* was generally dealt with in the party all the more questionable. But then *Die heilige Familie* was not only inordinately more difficult to get hold of than *Zur Judenfrage* but its very existence and significance was far less present in the minds even of leading Social Democrats. The claim that it only really became available with its publication in Mehring's *Nachlaßausgabe* thus ultimately holds truer of *Die heilige Familie* than it does of *Zur Judenfrage* and one will obviously not be able to hold Mehring accountable for the publication of one but not the other. What is in fact quite remarkable is that Mehring's introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* in the *Nachlaßausgabe* not only offered what even Carlebach concedes is 'a good summary of the positions of Feuerbach, Bauer and Marx', but even 'concluded with a final statement which interestingly enough draws more on Marx's second version of the Jewish question in the *Holy Family* than on the original essays.'²¹⁹

What Mehring provided, then, was a relatively accurate paraphrase of *Zur Judenfrage* that stressed the importance of both parts and the need to read them in conjunction. It certainly did the double essay more justice than the other references we have come across, and he even lent it additional clarity by drawing on the less ambiguous formulations in *Die heilige Familie*. Yet all that did not prevent him too from subscribing to the fundamental misunderstandings of Marx's stance prevalent among his peers. One can speculate of course to what extent it may have been the strength of his anti-Jewish sentiments rather than the prevalence of those misunderstandings among his fellow Social Democrats that allowed (or compelled) him to maintain his blindness *vis-à-vis* these misunderstandings despite his sustained dealings with the sources, but the fact remains that to this extent he was in no way out of step with most of his peers.

Beating the life out of liberal philosemitism. Mehring's specific spin on Zur Judenfrage

The point at which Mehring's introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* genuinely did go beyond the extant discourse in the party was in his already mentioned appreciation of Bauer and his Young Hegelian milieu. That this appreciation went beyond attitudes previously articulated in the party does not necessarily imply that it was incompatible with accepted attitudes, but the extent to which he sought to ascribe this appreciation to Marx as well clearly amounted to an outright misrepresentation. We have already noted this appreciation in

²¹⁹ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 270–271.

connection with the ‘conflation of right and morality’ so readily subscribed to by many in the party while the rejection of its formulation by Bauer had in fact been Marx’s very point of departure in *Zur Judenfrage*. That ‘as far as Bauer’s conceptualization went, Marx acknowledged its consistency,’²²⁰ as Mehring claimed early on in his discussion of *Zur Judenfrage* is a misleading formulation, and there can be no doubt that Mehring was indeed eager to portray his own affinity with Bauer’s contempt for the ‘philosemites’ as one shared by Marx.

Mehring began his discussion of the second part of the essay with a survey of the emergence of the ‘Jewish Question’. ‘Much as the Jewish money might [*jüdische Geldmacht*] extended itself with the capitalist mode of production and made itself indispensable for the governments,’ he explained,

the dogged resistance that absolutism and feudalism pitted against the revolutionary transformation of bourgeois society precluded the political emancipation of the Jews.²²¹

Of all the sins committed by the governments of the *Vormärz* era, however, this one, relatively speaking, stirred the mass of the nation least. The murderous role that Jewish usury had played in the dissolution of the feudal order had aroused an inordinate amount of hatred against Jewry and not just among the peasants and artisans sucked dry by usury [*ausgewuchert*].

Over time, however, Jewry, or to be more specific, ‘Jewry as a class won far too much power as a result of the economic development for it not to take on the constraints that still fenced in its actual rule,’²²² and hence the ‘Jewish Question’ was firmly set on the agenda.

‘It is well known,’ Mehring conceded, ‘that the vanguard of our classical literature and philosophy was not exactly well disposed towards the Jews, with the sole exception of Lessing, their bourgeois representative,’ he continued, reciting one of the mantras dearest to his heart, ‘who, though his friendliness towards Jews had nothing in common with the philosemitism of today, felt that the political suppression of the Jews violated the bourgeois *Weltanschauung*. [...] There was, however, another side to this coin,’ he went on, turning to an issue on which Bauer had placed the utmost emphasis.

Jewry did not contribute to the glorious work of our great intellectuals and poets [*Denker und Dichter*]; Moses Mendelssohn was anything but a path-breaking thinker and it is precisely the commendable part of his activities, his attempts to cultivate the Jews, that demonstrates how remote Jewry was from the intellectual life of the nation.²²³

Bauer bent over backwards, of course, to emphasize that a Jew, as a Jew, could make no contribution to the development of the arts, the sciences or scholarly endeavours²²⁴ because these transpired in and through history while Jewry not only stood outside history but was fundamentally characterized precisely by the fact that its very existence set it against the course of history.²²⁵ ‘The Jew’ led ‘a war of annihilation [*Vertilgungskrieg*] against history’ and ‘this war of annihilation is a graver crime than the war his ancestors

²²⁰ Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* I: 347.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

²²² *Ibid.*, 354.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 353; for Bauer’s comments on Mendelssohn cf. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 82–83.

²²⁴ Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 9–10.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

were required to lead against the Canaanite hordes.²²⁶ Bauer concluded this not from empirical evidence, needless to say, but posited it by means of a philosophical deduction that to his mind followed self-evidently from the Hegelian notion that Judaism (like all other historical religions ultimately superseded by Christianity according to this scheme of things) had become irredeemably obsolete and that anything partially valid that might ever have inhered in it could find its consummation only in Christianity (just as anything valid in Christianity would presumably find its ultimate consummation in the Atheism envisaged by Bauer). It was not only the course of historical development, then, that post-Biblical Jewry by its very existence set itself against but also the consummation of any potential for perfection that might have been inherent in the biblical Judaism it professed to be grounded in. 'Not the daughter is ungrateful *vis-à-vis* her mother,' Bauer explained the situation between Judaism and Christianity, 'rather, the mother will not acknowledge her daughter because she represents the true essence of that which went before and that which went before has lost its true essence once its consequence has appeared [...]. If one of them exists, the other does not.'²²⁷ Hence Jewry was not even capable of providing a comprehensive account of its own essence, since in order to do so it would have to perceive of itself as the precursor of Christianity.²²⁸ To Bauer's mind it had fallen to none other than Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (1654–1704) to produce a valid account of Judaism's essence with his *Entdecktes Judenthum*, a work that was of course in fact indubitably the most influential Judaeophobic compendium of the early modern period and has remained a significant source of religious anti-Judaism ever since its first publication at the end of the seventeenth century. Should a superior account supersede Eisenmenger's work one day the one thing one could be sure of, Bauer added, was what it would be no Jew who produced it.²²⁹ Admittedly, Christians too were impaired in this respect and ultimately incapable of genuine theoretical and scientific achievements (until they finally turned atheists), but their form of prejudice [Befangenheit] was nevertheless a considerable advance on that of the Jews.²³⁰

While Mehring felt a strong affinity for Kant, he never seriously engaged Hegel and his discussion of the Hegelian origins of the Marxian project never went beyond a paraphrasing of the pronouncements that Marx and (especially) Engels themselves had made on the matter and occasionally it reflected Lassalle's understanding of Hegel more than that of Marx and Engels.²³¹ Bauer's categorical denial of the Jews' aptitude for artistic, scientific or scholarly endeavours obviously struck a strong chord with Mehring's preconceptions and seems to have given rise to one of the few occasions on which he wholeheartedly took on board a genuine product of Hegelian (though not Hegel's) philosophical labour, albeit as ostensibly

²²⁶ Ibid., 79.

²²⁷ Ibid., 16; cf. also *ibid.*, 45.

²²⁸ Ibid., 85.

²²⁹ Ibid., 86.

²³⁰ Ibid., 87.

²³¹ Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*, 96; Grebing, Kramme, 'Franz Mehring,' 83; Fülberth, *Proletarische Partei*, 51–52; Lars Lambrecht, *Intellektuelle Subjektivität und Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1985), 207. Hereafter Lambrecht, *Subjektivität*.

empirical material supposedly bearing out his own prejudices. That said, no one would suggest, of course, that Bauer himself had shed a previously positive or indifferent attitude towards Jewry because he felt compelled by the logical implications of Hegelian thought to adopt a negative one instead. The Hegelian concept did, however, provide him with an opportunity to lend a sense of sophistication, detachment and necessity to his negative preconceptions. 'It may be that our notion of Jewry seems even harsher than the one we have come to expect from the opponents of Jewish emancipation,' Bauer explained towards the end of his introduction, as if he were not one of them. 'It may be that it really is; but my only concern can be its veracity.'²³²

Bauer's case is in many ways typical for what was most likely the prevalent long-term influence of Hegel's thought on Judaism and Jewry. Few are likely ever to have penetrated the intricacies of Hegel's relevant pronouncements on the matter anyway, not least given that Hegel himself had never come up with a comprehensive solution that genuinely satisfied him and his accounts therefore varied in certain aspects. The very fact that Christianity did not directly supersede Judaism in his scheme of things already indicates that its utility for more common forms of political discourse and polemical purposes was in any case limited. What was catchy though and clearly struck a chord with extant preconceptions was the concept of historical progress with its notion that that which was superseded was irredeemably obsolete and saw its valid elements contained in that which had superseded it. Within the parameters of the Enlightenment discourse the debate on Judaism's alleged inferiority as a purely revealed or positive religion incompatible with natural religion could, at least in theory, be reopened if it could be conclusively proven that Judaism was not as immutably tied to its initial revelation as its critics claimed and hence perfectible after all; in an important sense just that was, of course, what the reform movement set out to achieve. The Hegelian model rendered that option impossible even in theory. Judaism was obsolete and the realization of its possibly perfectible elements now transpired elsewhere. Clearly this offered a water tight case. That history obviously could not be turned back went without saying and within this scheme of things nothing that might be presented in defence or praise of original, as it were 'pre-obsolescent', Judaism could claim to underscore the legitimacy of contemporary Judaism or a continued distinct Jewish existence.

As is well-known Hegel himself, his highly critical notions of Judaism notwithstanding, nevertheless supported the Jewish claim to equal rights.²³³ In this context Avineri has argued that 'Hegel's view on the

²³² Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 3.

²³³ As is well known, the *locus classicus* for Hegel's support of formal Jewish emancipation is a passage in the commentary to § 270 (in conjunction with § 209) of his published *Rechtsphilosophie*. Moreover, as Avineri first pointed out, Hegel was closely involved with one of his students, Friedrich Wilhelm Carové, who subsequently followed Hegel to Berlin and whom Hegel made an abortive attempt to have appointed as his assistant there. Carové, in turn, was the leader of the pro-Hegelian majority in the *Heidelberger Allgemeine Burschenschaft* that carried a motion in 1818 permitting the admission of Jewish students (Shlomo Avineri, 'A Note on Hegel's Views on Jewish Emancipation,' in *JSS* 25, 2 (1963): 145–151, here 148–149. Hereafter Avineri, 'Hegel's Views'). Intriguingly enough, the one occasion on which Hegel held his lectures on the Philosophy of Right while in Heidelberg was in the winter of 1817/1818, in other words 'in the period immediately preceding the decision' of the *Burschenschaft* (ibid., 148), so that Hegel's

granting of civil rights to Jews' was 'completely divorced from his historico-philosophical attitude towards the immanent content of Judaism,' allowing him to take a position that was indeed truly 'remarkable in his generation.'²³⁴ One might wonder, though, whether this unusual position may not in part have resulted from his notion that Judaism had once been a valid partial expression of truth whose perfectible elements had not simply been negated but genuinely *aufgehoben*. Taken seriously, this notion may well have put him in a better position than most of his contemporaries to shed the conviction prevalent among them that empirical contemporary Jewry invariably shared historical Judaism's alleged particular lack of perfectibility. Clearly he ascribed no particular emancipatory aptitude to Jewry and his preparedness to see equal rights granted to them sprung from his unwavering confidence in the ultimate superiority of the universal over the particular more generally and not from any specific quality of Jewry but at least he obviously did not think of Jewry as saddled with a particular emancipatory inaptitude, as the bulk of his contemporaries did. *Ex negativo*, we are given an indication that this may well have been linked to his historico-philosophical scheme of things after all by the way in which Bauer combines his stand against the granting of equal rights to Jewry with a dismissive attitude towards the ostensible Hegelian underpinning of his argument. 'Judaism too represented a truth once,' he concedes at one point, only to continue: 'but how many truths has history come up with since!'²³⁵

To return to Mehring's account in his introduction to *Zur Judenfrage*, 'the emancipatory struggle of the Young Hegelians against Christianity could not, of course, transpire without Judaism too being criticised but this,' he claimed, 'was done in a perfectly historical way.' Feuerbach, for instance, had 'analysed Judaism as the religion of practical egoism,' and as if rehabilitating Bauer were not enough of an achievement, Mehring then continued to explain that 'the Nuremberg Professor Daumer had' admittedly

remarks in favour of granting equal rights to Jewry at the very least cannot but have helped stimulate Carové's faction and were most likely made in direct support of its cause. The problem with this particular line of argument, when Avineri first presented it, was that the published version of the *Rechtsphilosophie* dates from 1820 and transcripts of earlier versions only subsequently emerged. Following the publication of the Homeyer transcript of the lecture series held by Hegel in his first year in Berlin (1819), Stepelevich for one was quick to argue that the now available sources did 'not indicate that Hegel remarked on Jewish civil rights prior to 1820' (Lawrence S. Stepelevich, 'Hegel and Judaism,' in *Judaism* 24, 2 (1975): 215–224, here 224 n33.) Now, this is in any case a problematic objection since the extant transcripts by their very nature can hardly vouch definitively for the fact that something was or was not said by Hegel in the lecture theatre. In this particular instance, however, the subsequent publication of the Wannenmann transcript of the lecture series actually delivered in 1817/1818 demonstrates that Hegel did remark on the matter in the lecture theatre. Rather surprisingly, Ilting's synopsis in his edition suggests only one parallel to § 270 of the published *Rechtsphilosophie* in the Wannenmann transcript, namely, § 71. In fact, however, § 159 of the Wannenmann transcript develops an argument in favour of granting Jewry equal rights that essentially parallels that made in the comments on § 270 of the published version. Cf. Karl-Heinz Ilting (ed.), *G.W.F. Hegel. Die Philosophie des Rechts. Die Mitschriften Wannenmann (Heidelberg 1817/18) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818/19)* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1983), 92, 191. Cf. also my forthcoming entries on Hegel, Feuerbach, and the Young Hegelians in Levy, *Encyclopedia*. I am indebted to Professor Avineri for corresponding with me on a number of issues concerning Hegel's attitude to matters Jewish.

²³⁴ Avineri, 'Hegel's Views,' 147.

²³⁵ Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 81,

'applied somewhat cruder instruments'²³⁶ [...] But if Daumer ascribed blood cults and the slaughter of their own and other people's children to certain Jewish sects, then he did so only in order to add that Christianity too had known human sacrifice in its midst for considerable periods of time.' Bauer too, Mehring then claimed 'saw the greater emancipatory aptitude of Christians resulting from the fact that the apex of inhumanity had to be reached in order to gain humanity'. Now, this formulation either reeks of disingenuousness or, more likely, demonstrates just how thin the ice was that Mehring moved on in his attempt to deal with Bauer's philosophical diction. Not that Mehring had paraphrased Bauer incorrectly, Bauer had indeed made remarks to that effect.²³⁷ But he did not, of course, use the term 'inhumanity' [Unmenschlichkeit] in the sense in which it is commonly used, he essentially used it instead of the term 'theocentric'. Because both Judaism and Christianity were theocentric their central focus was not on man but on God, it was 'non-human' (rather than inhumane). Bauerian Atheism, by contrast, would be anthropocentric and thus 'human' (rather than humane). This clearly seems to have passed Mehring by and he obviously took pleasure in dissolving the ambiguity between the concepts human/non-human, on the one hand, and humane/inhumane, on the other, exactly in the wrong direction.

'Fatuous as the Jewish lamentations' aroused by these 'critics of Judaism' had been, he continued, one did have to concede, though, that the Young Hegelians had indeed failed to find 'a solution to the question how Judaism had been able to survive for so long alongside Christianity and how it could be overcome.'²³⁸ At this point 'the decisive step was only undertaken by Marx.' To emphasize the significance and merits of *Zur Judenfrage* Mehring subsequently added

that forty years after the publication of this text by Marx the Imperial Court Preacher Stöcker and Professor Wagner unrolled the filthy handkerchief of reactionary antisemitism as their banner and travelled through the land trying to persuade the workers gagged by the *Sozialistengesetz* that the Jew Marx had indeed attacked the industrious and diligent manufacturers but never the Jewish usurers; it would be a pity were this glorious triumph of Christian-Germanic truthfulness ever forgotten.²³⁹

His already cited remark at the end of the text that its 'historical concept of the Jewish Question' deserved to become the 'common intellectual property of the modern working class' was followed by the concluding comment that 'this concept admittedly beats the life out of liberal philosemitism but it is precisely that which makes it the most effective antidote to reactionary antisemitism.'²⁴⁰

²³⁶ For a particularly succinct outline of the truly hair-raising 'research' by Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800–1875) cf. his 'Vorläufige Anzeige. Der Feuer- und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer als urväterlicher, legaler, orthodoxer Cultus der Nation historisch-kritisch erwiesen durch G. Fr. Daumer,' in *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* No. 46 [24 February 1842]: 183–184.

²³⁷ Cf. Bauer, 'Fähigkeit,' 62–63, 68.

²³⁸ Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* I: 355.

²³⁹ Ibid., I: 356.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., I: 492.

We might add that Mehring even managed to insert an anti-‘philosemitic’ remark supporting Bauer into his introduction to the relevant sections of *Die heilige Familie* although it is perhaps rather telling that it was one of Bauer’s more even-handed comments that he paraphrased approvingly in this context. As we saw, Marx emphasized that Bauer had not got the better of his Jewish opponents although he was essentially the superior polemicist. This Mehring reiterated and then added that at least in one respect one could still understand Bauer’s contempt for the discourse prevalent at the time. On the one hand, ‘the Jewish spokesmen called for the “authorities to silence” the critics of Judaism,’ on the other, ‘the Christian-Germanic rowdies saw “Jewish money” behind every broom that threatened to infringe on their rot and decay and raved wildly that “the Jews have usurped almost the entire press”.’ Hence one could well understand if ‘Bauer exclaimed: “What an ill-fated struggle where both sides resort to such empty rhetoric and denunciations!”’ Bauer had been mistaken, however, in his assumption that this state of affairs signalled the imminent exhaustion of both parties. ‘He was to live just long enough,’ Mehring then added rather ominously, ‘to see that this delightful rhetorical tit for tat [holde Wechselreden] was still as alive in the eighties as it was in the forties.’²⁴¹

Now, Bauer’s involvement with the emergence of modern antisemitism went rather further, of course, than that he merely happened to live long enough to compare its rhetoric with that of the debates of the 1840s and Mehring knew this full well. When Max Schippel published excerpts of Bauer’s article on Jewry in Wagener’s *Staats- und Gesellschafts-Lexikon*²⁴² in the *Neue Zeit* in May 1893,²⁴³ obviously without realizing that Bauer was the author, Mehring informed Kautsky on 7 June that ‘Schippel is wrong, incidentally, if he attributes the articles on Jewry in Wagener’s Lexikon to the East-Elbian Junkerdom. They are by Bruno Bauer.’²⁴⁴ Kautsky, who was apparently also not aware of Bauer’s authorship of the article, replied on 12 June that he found Mehring’s information on the matter ‘very interesting.’²⁴⁵

Now, as Rotenstreich pointed out, the stance formulated by Bauer at this juncture indeed went ‘far beyond the boundaries of contemporary conservative thought,’²⁴⁶ not least in its ‘emphasis on the racial aspect and its special application to the Jews.’²⁴⁷ His position was hence ‘indicative of a new stage in the discussion of the Jewish problem,’²⁴⁸ signalling a ‘significant evolution of anti-Jewish and anti-emancipationist thought.’²⁴⁹ For anyone genuinely interested in the matter the innovative nature of Bauer’s stance must

²⁴¹ Ibid., II: 83.

²⁴² ‘Judenthum,’ in Hermann Wagener (ed.), *Neues Conversations-Lexikon. Staats- und Gesellschafts-Lexikon* Pts. 97–100 (1862): 599–692. The section on post-Biblical Jewish history (614–671) is more well-known in the edition published separately with a short introduction as Bruno Bauer, *Das Judenthum in der Fremde. Separat-Abdruck aus dem Wagener’schen Staats- und Gesellschafts-Lexikon* (Berlin: F. Heinicke, 1863).

²⁴³ Max Schippel, ‘Die Konservativen und der Antisemitismus,’ in *NZ* 11-II, 37 [31 May 1893]: 298–302.

²⁴⁴ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 43.

²⁴⁵ Fonds 201: 50.

²⁴⁶ Rotenstreich, ‘Bauer Controversy,’ 33.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 35.

have stood out all the more discernibly given that Wagener himself had published a classic formulation of the conventional Conservative attitude in his *Das Judentum und der Staat* only 5 years earlier,²⁵⁰ although it would seem that Wagener and his Conservative backers genuinely failed to recognize the originality of Bauer's position.²⁵¹

Moreover, in his final year, Bauer had stood at the helm of an openly and aggressively antisemitic journal, *Schmeitzner's Internationale Monatsschrift*.²⁵² It was against this background that Ludwig Philippson (1811–1889), as Carlebach also pointed out,²⁵³ called Bauer 'the actual father of antisemitism' when he died in 1882.²⁵⁴ That Bauer's stance and that of 'the East-Elbian Junkerdom' could not simply be thrown together was in an important sense a valid observation, then, but how likely is it that this is what Mehring had in mind when he pointed out that the article in question was by Bauer? It is hard not to assume that Mehring simply felt that Bauer deserved to be singled out because whatever else one might say about or against him, he stood above the prevalent 'rhetorical tit for tat' then as he had done in the 1840s.

For our discussion here all this raises two crucial questions. Why, firstly, did Mehring go to such lengths to formulate his appreciation for Bauer and credit Marx with his own anti-'philosemitism' in this obviously untenable way and, secondly, how consciously disingenuous was he in doing so? Wistrich's contention that Mehring was effectively construing *Zur Judenfrage* as an alibi for his own anti-Jewish sentiments and preconceptions ultimately hinges on two basic premises: firstly, that Mehring consistently sought to cover his back by taking recourse to proof texts by Marx and Engels and was highly reluctant to criticize them where he was at odds with their position; secondly, that the anti-'philosemitism' he was ascribing to Marx was actually a marginalized position in the party. To my mind, neither of these assumptions can be maintained. There can be no doubt that Mehring cherished the opportunity to portray his affinity to Marx and Engels or, as we saw, the trust placed in him by individuals closely associated with them, and he conspicuously basked in their praise when he received it. On the other hand, one of the hallmarks of his entire career in the party was his determination to take on party myths and question the canonized accounts of the party's historical and ideological development, and he clearly had no qualms at all about publicly contradicting Marx or Engels if that was what he thought it took. The most obvious illustration of this was his sympathetic treatment of Lassalle (and in part even of Schweitzer). In this context he persistently maintained that Marx and Engels, for all their superiority in the lofty heights of ideological discourse, had lost touch with the realities for which Lassalle was just the man. Another example is the way in which he

²⁵⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 27–32.

²⁵¹ Ernst Barnikol, 'Bauers Mitarbeit an Hermann Wagens Konservativem Staats-Lexikon und in dessen "Berliner Revue"', in *Idem, Bruno Bauer. Studien und Materialien* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1972) – hereafter Barnikol, *Bauer* –, 347–353, here 352.

²⁵² Cf. *Idem*, 'Bauers literarisches Testament in seiner Würdigung von Karl Philipp Moritz,' in *Idem, Bauer*, 425–454; cf. also Moggach, *Philosophy*, 186.

²⁵³ Carlebach, *Karl Marx*, 147.

²⁵⁴ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 46, 17 [25 April 1882], 282.

adopted Rosa Luxemburg's stance on the Polish question in the *Nachlaßausgabe* and used his introduction there to explain why Marx's and Engels's stance on the matter could no longer be upheld.²⁵⁵ His almost wilfully iconoclastic approach to accepted doctrines and traditions embroiled him in numerous conflicts and it is no coincidence that the pretext that led to his *de facto* removal from the *Neue Zeit* in 1913 sprung from a renewed controversy in which he had criticized Marx's and Engels's assessment of Lassalle as profoundly misguided. That he should have chosen intentionally to misrepresent Marx in this particular instance although he had no qualms about setting him straight whenever else he disagreed with him therefore seems rather unlikely and all the more so since, as I have argued, his anti-'philosemitism', though perhaps particularly outspoken and vitriolic, nevertheless was hardly as marginal as has been suggested and certainly represented no taboo within the party. This would suggest that Mehring was in fact perfectly convinced that he portrayed matters correctly in his introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* and *Die heilige Familie*. Again we can only speculate whether his personal anti-Jewish sentiments and preconceptions may have done more to nurture this ability to get things desperately wrong despite the evidence to the contrary that was immediately at hand than the fact that his account tallied so easily with the fundamental misconceptions prevalent in the party anyway. Presumably it was a mixture of both. Were we to assume, though, that he really did stand relatively alone with the particular idiosyncrasies just discussed, then we would have to account for the fact that none of his peers seem to have noticed or taken issue with the obvious discrepancies between the material Mehring was commenting on and the way in which he commented on it. This, to my mind, clearly implies that Mehring's annotation of *Zur Judenfrage* and *Die heilige Familie*, including the obvious misrepresentations it contained, was ultimately the outflow of a common set of perceptions shared and accepted by most his peers rather than the expression of an exceptional and marginalized individual stance.

Mehring's introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* presumably proved most influential not among those who read *Zur Judenfrage* but among those who subsequently utilized Mehring's introduction instead of the text itself. This is rather blatantly illustrated by Scheidemann's already mentioned lament on the degeneration of the antisemitic movement published in the *Neue Zeit* in 1906. It was not his intention to theorize about antisemitism or matters Jewish, Scheidemann explained there. Suffice it to say that an 'excellent article on the Jewish Question' could be found in Marx's literary *Nachlaß* which 'the editor of the *Nachlaß*, Franz Mehring, has prefaced with an instructive essay.' Scheidemann then quoted not Marx but two passages from Mehring's introduction quoted above. The first dealt with the 'murderous role that Jewish usury had played in the dissolution of the feudal order' and 'the peasants and artisans sucked dry by usury'; the second dealt with the Jewish 'standard bearers of bourgeois democracy' who immediately became 'vicious reactionaries when the consequences of some civil right infringe on some specifically Jewish interest' thus giving rise to Bauer's discussion of the 'Jewish Question' in the first place. 'Here,' Scheidemann added,

²⁵⁵ Cf. Mehring, *Nachlaßausgabe* III: 44, 270.

‘we see the roots of antisemitism *in nuce*.’²⁵⁶ Then he went on to discuss in detail how the likes of Böckel and Ahlwardt had entered the fray with democratic, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian demands and promises but had degenerated into lackeys of the Conservatives and *Junker*. His formulations are unusually stark and crude. Hence I am almost inclined to think that Leuschen-Seppel is being overly strict on Bebel with her already mentioned claim that Scheidemann offered ‘no substantially new aspects that went beyond Bebel’s analysis of 1893.’²⁵⁷ That said, one would certainly be hard-pressed, though, to demonstrate that Scheidemann’s stance, including the crass use it made of Mehring’s introduction to *Zur Judenfrage* in an attempt to enlist Marx’s authority without actually engaging Marx’s text, was an exceptional one fundamentally at odds with the attitudes prevalent in the party.

²⁵⁶ Scheidemann, ‘Wandlungen’, 632.

²⁵⁷ Leuschen-Seppel, *Sozialdemokratie*, 200.

Chapter 3

The former antisemitic leader who came with Mehring's warm recommendation:

The case of Hans Leuß

The Congresses of Eisenach (1869), Gotha (1875), and Erfurt (1891) apart, the Party Congress in Dresden in 1903 is probably the best-known Congress of the German party prior to World War I. It saw a major showdown between revisionists and Marxist traditionalists and ended with an apparently clear-cut victory over the revisionists which subsequently proved a pyrrhic victory, not least because it created a false sense of security among centrists and radicals alike. Far more dramatic and emotive than the heated debate on grand strategic issues that led to this showdown, however, was a related debate that raged, all in all, for some two and a half days (14–16 September) and concerned – Franz Mehring.

You live solely on lies: Ambushed in Dresden

We need discuss the all-out attack on Mehring launched at the Congress in Dresden only in as much detail as is required to illustrate the context in which the issue of Mehring's dealings with Hans Leuß was raised. This assault essentially represented a form of rearguard action and had its roots in a dispute concerning the conditions under which party journalists could and should contribute to the non-Socialist press, a debate that had been initiated by the *Neue Zeit* following the publication of an article on 'Parteimoral' by the young journalist and party member Georg Bernhard (1875–1944) in Harden's *Zukunft*.¹ By our undoubtedly rather more cynical present-day standards, Bernhard's piece was innocent enough. Its basic contention was that the leaders of political parties generally tended to find it politically expedient on some occasions not to confront the membership with all the implications of their political convictions and that this applied to the leaders of Social Democracy too. Under pseudonyms, Bernhard in fact wrote both a regular column on the state of the stock exchange for the *Zukunft* and contributed regularly to the *Welt am Montag*, and with hindsight it is all the more obvious that his forays into the Social Democratic press (and party) were little more than a fleeting biographical episode; Bernhard who, incidentally, later died in exile in New York where he had worked for the Institute of Jewish Affairs during his final years, is, of course, best known for his tenure as editor-in-chief of that pillar of respectability, the *Vossische Zeitung*, from 1914 to 1930. This particular piece published in the *Zukunft* in 1903 was, however, apparently his first explicitly political article printed there and it clearly portrayed the Social Democratic leadership in a way it was hardly likely to find palatable, hence its ability to arouse a hefty response.

Mehring nurtured a long-standing and passionate enmity for Maximilian Harden (1861–1927) and detested his journal. In the early 1890s Mehring and Harden had been on friendly terms for a short while following Harden's involvement in the Lindau case, the dispute that had ultimately precipitated Mehring's departure

¹ Georg Bernhard, 'Parteimoral,' in *Zukunft* 23 [10 January 1903]: 79–81.

from the *Volks-Zeitung*. At the time Mehring perceived of Harden as a radical democrat who, for all his (to Mehring's mind merely confused) enthusiasm for Nietzsche, was on the verge of seeing the Socialist light and hence deserved a little tolerance, patience and gentle prodding. Harden had in fact already begun to publish under the pseudonym Apostata at the time, signalling his departure from the democratic cause, and it soon became evident that his planned journal, the *Zukunft*, would propagate a vision of the future altogether different from the one Mehring had in mind when he suggested Harden give it that title. Far from moving towards Socialism Harden discovered his heart for Bismarck and became one of the most outspoken representatives of the tendency that saw Germany go to seed under Bismarck's successor Leo von Caprivi (1831–1899) and never ceased to enthuse and fantasize about how much better everything could and would have been handled along Bismarckian lines. That said, Harden's political orientation was nothing if not highly complex, and his Bismarck adulation by no means precluded him from remaining a thorn in the side of the bourgeois establishment, maintaining a fundamental anti-liberalism and anti-capitalism spiced with anti-Jewish and anti-'philosemitic' rhetoric (his own Jewish extraction notwithstanding) that was by no means as incompatible with the prevalent discourse within Social Democracy as Mehring and others would have liked to believe. Harden in any case published a wide range of authors covering an array of positions which made it extremely difficult to pin the *Zukunft* itself down unambiguously. Mehring's disappointment that Harden had not been propelled into the Socialist camp, as he had assumed he inevitably would be, will have been mixed with a sense of embarrassment at his own lack of judgement in this instance. Against this background the fact that he and Harden in some respects undoubtedly continued to hold more in common than either of them cared to admit must have been a cause of profound unease to Mehring. This unease can only have made it seem all the more imperative to set himself off against Harden as emphatically and aggressively as possible.

To give an indication of the lengths to which Mehring was prepared to go in this respect we need only mention his involvement in the ridiculous lawsuit between Hans Delbrück (1848–1929) and Harden which grew out of the bitter dispute between the historians Hermann Oncken (1869–1945) and Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915) that had brought the so-called *Methodenstreit* to a head. Delbrück had published Oncken's critique of Lamprecht in his *Preußische Jahrbücher* while Lamprecht had long been a regular contributor to the *Zukunft* and as the controversy gathered pace the two publishers too began to trade mutual insults and then sued each other. In this connection Mehring offered to serve Oncken as a witness to help shred Harden's reputation and however legitimate his criticism of Lamprecht's historiographical project may have been, it nevertheless beggars belief that Mehring should have had no qualms about becoming involved in this conflict, albeit admittedly at its periphery, on the side of Lamprecht's conservative detractors simply to spite to Harden. When the court vehemently recommended the two parties withdraw their cases against one another Mehring published the material he had hoped to present in court as a pamphlet and Harden responded with a rejoinder in the *Zukunft*² which Mehring in turn took on in a second edition of his initial

² Maximilian Harden, 'Notizbuch,' in *Zukunft* 26 [4 March 1899]: 395–407.

pamphlet.³ Essentially, each claimed he could unmask the other as an opportunist at heart. Harden claimed that Mehring had cooperated and maintained friendly relations with him despite knowing about his political orientation all along. Mehring, by contrast, denied this vehemently and argued that the very fact that he had judged Harden so wrongly demonstrated the latter's subterfuge at the time. Much of the material already dealt with at length in this exchange was subsequently to resurface during the assault on Mehring at the Congress in Dresden.

Moreover, he had recently been embroiled in yet another acrimonious conflict involving the *Zukunft*. During Harden's imprisonment for *lèse-majesté* in 1899 the Social Democratic publicist Arthur Berthold had functioned as acting editor and was officially responsible for the *Zukunft*. While under Berthold's supervision, the *Zukunft* had reprinted parts of an extremely nasty review of Mehring's *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* by the prominent bourgeois historian of the labour movement, Georg Adler (1863–1908), which was first published in the *Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft*.⁴ The sections of the review that the *Zukunft* deemed worthy of being made known to a wider audience claimed that Mehring had lifted extensive passages from his earlier anti-Socialist history of the movement but now arbitrarily drew diametrically opposed conclusions from them, often by merely changing single words to invert the argument. Essentially, then, Adler had offered yet another variation on the theme that Mehring was not to be trusted because of his chequered political past. The ensuing dispute with Berthold over his responsibility for the publication of this attack on Mehring turned into a protracted and messy affair leading to proceedings before a court of arbitration on 3 June 1902. In the end, Berthold was harshly reprimanded but not expelled from the party. Ordinarily, as the chairman of the court of arbitration, the long-standing treasurer of the *Parteivorstand*, Alwin Gerisch (1857–1922), explained at the Party Congress in Munich in the autumn of 1902, a comrade acting as Berthold had done would of course be expelled. Berthold, however, was 'a party comrade whose mental structure is altogether idiosyncratic [eine ganz eigenartige seelische Organisation]' and 'there will never be another Berthold in the party.' Hence 'the majority felt compelled to take this personality, this individuality into account,' when settling for the strongest possible reprimand that could be directed at a party member.⁵ Perhaps more importantly, however, Mehring too was reprimanded by the court of arbitration for having taken Berthold to task in an unduly injurious form. Mehring promptly transferred his disappointment and outrage at this outcome onto the two arbitrators appointed at his behest, Rosa Luxemburg and Arthur Stadthagen (1857–1917), a radically inclined lawyer who contributed regularly to, and was later one of the editors of, the *Vorwärts* and represented the constituency of Potsdam VI Niederbarnim in the *Reichstag* from 1890 until his death.

³ Franz Mehring, *Herrn Hardens Fabeln. Eine nothgedrungene Abwehr. Zweite durch ein Nachspiel vermehrte Auflage* (Berlin: Hermann Walther, 1899).

⁴ Georg Adler, 'Parodistische Geschichtsauffassung,' in *Zukunft* 28 [16 September 1899]: 488–497. For the original review cf. *Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft* 1 (1898): 613–638 and 722–730.

⁵ *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Parteitage der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu München vom 14. bis 20. September 1902.* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1902): 249–250.

Luxemburg did her best to dispel his anger; had she and Stadthagen insisted on the publication of an official minority opinion against the critique directed at Mehring, their adversaries would have pulled the plug on the much harsher critique of Berthold, she explained.⁶ We might note in passing that Luxemburg's and Mehring's joint editorship of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* was terminated three weeks after the arbitration decision.⁷ Although we are still not entirely clear on the exact reasons that finally led to this decision, the dispute on the outcome of these arbitration proceedings will hardly have helped consolidate their mutual trust and a viable working relationship between them. Mehring subsequently addressed a complaint against the arbitration decision to the party's central control commission. As its long-standing chairman (from 1893 until his death), Heinrich Meister (1842–1906), reported to the 1903 Party Congress in Dresden, the commission's members had been unanimous in their condemnation of Berthold's behaviour but due to the absence of one member the debate on his expulsion had concluded with a tied vote.⁸

Little wonder, then, that Mehring found Bernhard's collaboration with the *Zukunft* a particularly apt opportunity to raise the more general issue of the collaboration of Socialist journalists with the non-Socialist press.⁹ That said, to infer from this background that Mehring's motives in the subsequent dispute were merely (or even primarily) of a personal nature is nevertheless unwarranted. Admittedly, the fact that he had an old score to settle with Harden and his *Zukunft* helps explain why he had systematically collected the material on the *Zukunft* which he now utilized to denounce the collaboration of Social Democratic journalists with it as paradigmatic for the vagaries of such collaboration more generally; but that does not alter the fact that the *Zukunft* had indeed provided him with ample material over the years to help him illustrate those vagaries. Conversely, those within the party who chose to make their association with the *Zukunft* the test case for their plea for a more relaxed attitude towards collaboration with the non-Socialist press also knew exactly what they were doing and could hardly pretend to be surprised by the controversy they unleashed in the process. More substantially, however, there can be no doubt that the party press, for all that it achieved and all its virtues, remained persistently under-funded and under-resourced and dogged by mediocrity and narrowness. This was in part the result of material conditions for which there was no quick fix; in part, however, it was also clearly the result of the reluctance of some of the better educated and more intellectually-minded members of the party who had the requisite literary talent to commit themselves fully to the party press. While their often thinly-veiled disdain for the mediocrity and narrowness of much of the party press and consequent desire to contribute to periodicals of higher intellectual and literary stature may well have been understandable, it was equally clear that the quality of the party press could hardly be raised without the unreserved commitment of those who effectively chose to

⁶ Fonds 201: 839–840, published in *RLGB* I: 637–640.

⁷ Cf. *RLGB* 1: 640–641.

⁸ Meister informed Mehring on 30 October 1902 that the control commission had upheld the decision of the court of arbitration (Fonds 201: 1136).

⁹ *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Parteitage der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu Dresden vom 13. bis 20. September 1903* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1903): 154–155. Hereafter *Parteitag* 1903.

concentrate their efforts elsewhere. One can well imagine that people like Mehring who, despite their own misgivings and personal reluctance, had dedicated themselves fully to the improvement of the party press, were frustrated and angered and genuinely anguished by this behaviour and I would suggest that it is here that Mehring's vehemence on this issue originates, rather than in his personal feud with Harden.

Kautsky later stated¹⁰ that it was in any case he who had first come across Bernhard's text in the *Zukunft* and that he had subsequently asked Mehring to write a critique of it for the *Neue Zeit*.¹¹ In response to this critique four Social Democrats closely associated with Harden and the *Zukunft* addressed a complaint to the *Parteivorstand*. Apart from Bernhard himself the complaint was signed by Heinrich Braun, the reformist publicist and editor (until 1903) of the independent *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* who also happened to be Victor Adler's brother in law, his ambitious third wife, the author Lily Braun (1854–1927), who was previously married to Georg von Gizycki and involved with his *Ethische Kultur* activities, and, finally, the former Pastor turned Social Democrat (after a spell with Naumann's National Social movement) and regular contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, Paul Göhre (1864–1928).¹² Mehring's article, they argued, amounted to an unjustified blanket denunciation of party comrades who contributed to the *Zukunft* and sought to curtail their freedom of expression. It was the responsibility of the *Vorstand* to prevent such attacks on innocent party members by putting the *Neue Zeit* in its place. The *Vorstand* rejected the complaint and added that it intended to publish a general clarification of the issue of contributions by party members to the non-Socialist press. It did so on 2 March 1903. Of course party members could contribute to, and even edit, non-Socialist publications that did not subject the party to 'malicious or spiteful criticism', the *Vorstand* declared. To avoid potential conflicts of interest it was, however, in the interest of the party that members who did hold responsible positions with such non-Socialist periodicals refrained from holding a responsible position in the party at the same time.

Now backed by the prominent lawyer and revisionist deputy for the constituency Berlin III, Wolfgang Heine (1861–1944), who also belonged to the regular contributors to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, and by none other than Arthur Berthold, the complainants responded by reprimanding the *Vorstand*: instead of addressing their complaint it had commented on a matter it had not been asked to comment on. On the general issue of collaboration with the non-Socialist press 'we already had our *own* opinion to which we shall allow ourselves to adhere in future too.' Thereupon the *Vorstand* again dismissed their complaint and added that the general issue would be referred to the Party Congress. The closer the Congress came the clearer it became that the position of the *Vorstand* on collaboration with the non-Socialist press was backed

¹⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹¹ Franz Mehring, 'Konzessionsschulzes,' in *NZ* 21-I, 16 [14 January 1903]: 481–484. Hereafter Mehring, 'Konzessionsschulzes'. Cf. also Bernhard's rejoinder, 'Parteimoral,' and Kautsky's reply to Bernhard, 'Nachwort der Redaktion,' in *NZ* 21-I, 19 [4 February 1903]: 602–606.

¹² For the following cf. 'Bericht des Partei-Vorstands,' in *Parteitag 1903*: 11–48, here 21–22, and Heinrich Braun, *Zur Frage der Freiheit der Meinungsäußerung und des Verhaltens der Leipziger Volkszeitung. Eine Mitteilung an den Dresdener Parteitag* (Berlin: publ. by the author, 1903). Hereafter Braun, *Freiheit der Meinungsäußerung*.

by the bulk of the party.¹³ It was felt by many to be, if anything, then too timid, and there could be no doubt that any attempt to present the *Zukunft* as a journal worthy of the participation of Socialist authors was in any case doomed. At the same time it also became increasingly clear that the revisionist cause with which the complainants were all closely associated and which was most viciously opposed not least by the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* with Mehring at its helm, was hardly heading for a field day in Dresden either. Against this background the complainants apparently decided that if they stood no chance against the message they could at least try to kill the messenger: never mind the merits of this particular case, who, given his chequered past, was Mehring to reprimand others for their lack of ideological purity and instances in which they might have strayed from the straight and narrow!

The party leadership became aware in the course of the summer that something was brewing. Perhaps hoping he might thus be able to defuse the conflict, Bebel wrote to Kautsky on 10 August 1903, requesting that he ask Mehring whether he would 'place his material on the *Zukunft* at my disposal to use against Braun and comrades in Dresden. It need only be the most characteristic articles of the last ten years. I think it is better if he leaves the attack to me. Hand over in Dresden would suffice.'¹⁴ 'I shall have it out with Bernhard, and with Harden and Hein Braun as well, if he should feel like a fight,' Bebel then wrote to Mehring on 9 September, only days before the Congress began. 'I'm assuming that you are also coming to Dr. I think that is necessary, not least to guarantee instant correction, but also to avoid even letting it appear as though you were ducking the deliberations. Watching a dispute with the revisionists from afar is in any case only half as pleasant.'¹⁵ Mehring himself had published a detailed article in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*¹⁶ on the same day reiterating his case against Harden and the *Zukunft* and ruling out the legitimacy of any collaboration with it, offprints of which were subsequently distributed at the Congress. Braun, in turn, came to Dresden with a pamphlet 'on the issue of free speech and the behaviour of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*'¹⁷ while Bernhard had prepared a pamphlet on 'Herr Doctor Franz Mehring and the art of quoting,'¹⁸ much of which harked back to Adler's claims in the *Zukunft*.

On the afternoon of the first full day of the Congress, 14 September 1903, Heinrich Braun then mounted the most astounding attack on Mehring.¹⁹ Whether criticism was 'malicious and spiteful' was always likely to be contentious and the *Vorstand*'s ruling hence an ambiguous one, he argued. Moreover, in the past

¹³ According to the minutes, the motion tabled by the *Vorstand* was eventually carried with 283 votes to 24 (including Braun, Edmund Fischer, Göhre, Heine, Quarck, Vollmar and Südekum) and four abstentions (including Bernstein) (*Parteitag 1903*, 263). I have not yet been able to clear up the discrepancy with Fricke's data according to which only 263 delegates attended the Congress (Fricke I: 341). Perhaps, given the overwhelming majority for the motion, no distinction was made between regular delegates and other members present.

¹⁴ *BWABK*, 155.

¹⁵ Fonds 201: 745, published in *ABARS* 9, 63–64.

¹⁶ Franz Mehring, 'Die Partei und die Hardensche Zukunft,' in *LVZ* 10, 208 [9 September 1903]: Beilage 2: 1–2.

¹⁷ Braun, *Freiheit der Meinungsäusserung*.

¹⁸ Georg Bernhard, *Herr Doctor Franz Mehring der Citierkünstler* [Dresden 1903].

¹⁹ *Parteitag 1903*, 162–171.

Socialist authors had occasionally contributed even to non-Socialist periodicals that clearly did subject the party to ‘malicious and spiteful criticism’, a point we shall return to. Quite apart from the material side of the issue, however, ‘the issue also has a personal side.’ The whole dispute had been unleashed by Mehring. No one, however, who knew the full truth about Mehring’s chequered past would think of him as being in a position to pass judgement on the loyalty of others towards the party. Why did Mehring’s peers not know that full truth? Because Mehring covered his tracks in the most masterly fashion. ‘You live solely on lies,’ Braun exclaimed.²⁰ He then presented to the Congress a number of instances in which Mehring had, to his mind, misrepresented his past. This same man now rampaged through the party, questioning the integrity of others and terrorizing everyone who deviated from his own personal notion of the straight and narrow. As an anti-Socialist Mehring had sought to damage the party from the outside. Now he was doing it all the more harm on the inside by sowing discord both within German Social Democracy and between the German party and its brother parties abroad. ‘There is perhaps only one man in Germany who could take pleasure in Mehring’s rabble-rousing and party-destroying activities, namely, the Prussian police minister,’ Braun concluded. ‘Hence I say: as an enemy you (directed at Mehring) posed no danger to us, and you would pose no danger to us if you became our enemy again. [...] But we need to protect ourselves against you as a dangerous friend who endangers the very core of our party’s continued existence!’²¹

Following speeches by Kautsky and Stadthagen in Mehring’s defence and an additional critique by Edmund Fischer which we shall come back to, it was mainly Bernhard who laid into Mehring yet further on the following morning.²² Rather spectacularly, his critique was based in part on quotes from Mehring’s private correspondence with Harden. Little of what he had to say was genuinely new, much as it may have taken delegates aback who were not familiar with Mehring’s earlier dealings with Harden and the already mentioned material he had previously published on the matter. Bebel who was clearly agitated all along and had repeatedly interrupted both Braun and Bernhard responded in great detail in the afternoon.²³ He launched a massive broadside against Harden and the *Zukunft* and squarely defended Mehring, clarifying many of the issues that Braun and Bernhard had raised. He also conceded, though, that he had repeatedly found Mehring a ‘psychological enigma’,²⁴ coining a phrase of which Mehring was never to hear the last and of which Mehring scholars too have proved immensely fond.

Mehring, who was in any case no charismatic speaker, was utterly overwhelmed by the situation. He had been warned just before the Congress that something was being planned against him, he told the delegates. It had now become clear that his opponents had spent weeks and months preparing this ambush against him. They had spent all that time compiling material pertaining to the last twenty five years of his life and he was in no position to come up within a day or two with all the material required to counter the claims

²⁰ Ibid., 167.

²¹ Ibid., 170–171.

²² Ibid., 202–209.

²³ Ibid., 210–229. Excerpts in *ABARS* 7-II: 438–463.

²⁴ Ibid., 216, cf. also 221.

they had spent weeks and months putting together.²⁵ 'I have never made a secret of the fact that some twenty years ago I levelled grave, excessive, and unjust accusations against the party,' he stated. 'Had I, upon seeing matters more clearly, tried to force myself on the party and the party had told me it wanted nothing to do with me, I would have found that totally acceptable. I have never forced myself on the party, however; there is not one line I wrote for the party which I was not asked to write by someone in authority.' Hence those who now questioned the legitimacy of his role in the party were in fact questioning the party authorities to task who had asked him to play that role. The attack on him was 'more cowardly and sordid and perfidious than anything that has ever transpired within even the most decayed of social classes,' and he would therefore 'terminate my activities for the *Neue Zeit* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* [...] until the competent authorities that have heard the accusations against me and can examine them, call on me to resume them.'²⁶

To facilitate his rehabilitation, Mehring then began to compile and annotate the relevant material which he published as *Meine Rechtfertigung* in late October, some five weeks after the Congress.²⁷ Both while Mehring prepared his defence and after it had been published, the controversy raged on, claims and counterclaims abounding in the party press, and Mehring subsequently published a second edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung* within little more than a fortnight,²⁸ extended by an appendix in which he sought to address the issues that had been raised in the meantime.

What began to emerge within days of the Party Congress was that a number of leading revisionist and reformist Social Democrats had not only been casually associated with Harden but had in fact met him regularly for the best part of a decade as part of a regular dinner circle hosted by the leading reformist and leader of the Bavarian party, Georg von Vollmar (1850–1922), and his wife Julia von Vollmar, *née* Kjellberg (1849–1923).²⁹ At the same time it became clear that the initiative for the ambush in Dresden had by no means been Harden's. In fact, on at least one occasion he had clearly rejected Braun's explicit plea to spearhead the assault. Harden had, however, allowed Heine to examine Mehring's correspondence earlier in the year and sent the material to Dresden when Heine requested it again immediately before the Congress. Heine had then passed it on to Bernhard who had used it as mentioned above. Harden now staunchly claimed he had not realized what Heine's intentions were and Heine, in turn, contended he had

²⁵ Ibid., 248–249.

²⁶ Ibid., 250.

²⁷ The first reference to the fact that the pamphlet had actually been published that I have been able to find is in the *LVZ* 10, 245 [22 October 1903] Beilage 1: 1–2.

²⁸ The *LVZ* announced that the second edition had just been published under the rubric 'Nach dem Dresdner Parteitag,' in *LVZ* 10, 260 [10 November 1903] Beilage 1: 1–2.

²⁹ One of Julia von Vollmar's invitations is still among Harden's papers. 'We are in Berlin now for the winter,' she wrote on one 26 October (probably in 1901), 'and would like not to be bored on one evening a week as is usually the case but instead to indulge in pleasant conversation [...] If you want to participate, we should be most pleased!' She also wrote to Harden after the 1903 Party Congress of Dresden, assuring him, on 20 September 1903, 'that I do not doubt your personal integrity for a moment.' Her husband had intended to speak in his defence at the Congress but the debate had ended before he could do so (BArch Koblenz N 1062/108.)

strongly advised Bernhard against using the material in the way he then had. Harden also provided documentation for the fact that Heine, Bernhard, and the Brauns, all of whom save Lily Braun (who had not attended the Congress)³⁰ had distanced themselves from, and to varying degrees joined in the general criticism of, Harden and the *Zukunft* in the course of the proceedings, had given him unsolicited assurances prior to the Congress that they would defend both him and his work and their association with him.³¹

As Bebel explained at a constituency meeting in Berlin on 6 October, 'having now studied *pro* and *contra*, I have to say: should I be forced to revise anything I said in Dresden, then only what I said against Harden.' Given the dealings the comrades in question had had with Harden before the Congress, Harden could expect them 'not to deny and abandon and besmirch him.' Their behaviour was 'the saddest and most shameful that I have come across in my long party life [...] The position I am in is far from pleasant. It is infuriating to have to admit that the opponent has behaved more decently than one's own party comrades.'³²

The *Parteivorstand* finally decided on the issue on 23 November. In a statement published the following day it informed the party that it had carefully scrutinized all the material that had accrued since the Congress and had consequently decided to ask Mehring to take up his work for the *Neue Zeit* again.³³ At the same time, the party leadership in Leipzig asked him to resume his work for the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*.³⁴ Arbitration proceedings were subsequently initiated against Bernhard, Göhre, Heine, and Heinrich Braun. They dragged on until May and June 1904. In Göhre's case the proceedings were terminated following his resignation as a deputy, the other three were reprimanded to varying degrees but all in all the outcome was highly inconclusive, none of them being expelled. Mehring was left extremely dissatisfied and increasingly despondent, so much so, that he apparently contemplated resignation again.³⁵ Heine subsequently added further insult to injury by issuing a statement in which he denied certain

³⁰ Cf. *Parteitag 1903*, 189 and 433.

³¹ For these revelations cf. especially Harden's three-part article 'Bebel und Genossen,' in *Zukunft* 44 [26 September 1903]: 495–514, 45 [3 October 1903]: 1–20, and [10 October 1903]: 47–65. Hereafter Harden, 'Bebel und Genossen.' Substantial excerpts were reprinted in the *LVZ* 10, 221 [24 September 1903] Beilage 2: 1–2; 10, 227 [1 October 1903]: 1–2, and 10, 233 [8 October 1903] Beilage 2: 1 and in the *Vorwärts* 20, 231 [3 October 1903] Beilage 1: 1–3 and 20, 237 [10 October 1903] Beilage 1: 1–2. Lambrecht first drew attention to the *Zukunft* as an important source for the Congress in Dresden and offered the most comprehensive account of this background to date (cf. Lambrecht, *Subjektivität*, 174 ff. and 271 n174.) The correspondence with Bernhard, the Brauns, and Wolfgang Heine on which Harden based his case still exists among Harden's papers in the *Bundesarchiv* (Koblenz) (N 1062/14, 20, 49) and generally bears out his account published at the time.

³² August Bebel, 'Bebel über den Dresdner Parteitag,' in *LVZ* 10, 232 [7 October 1903] Beilage 2: 1–2.

³³ 'Der Parteivorstand gibt bekannt,' in *LVZ* 10, 272 [25 November 1903] Beilage 1: 2. Reprinted in *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Parteitage der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten vom 18. bis 24. September 1904* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1904): 42–43. Hereafter *Parteitag 1904*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁵ Cf. Josef Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*, 52.

assumptions on which the arbitrators' lenient assessment of his case had rested.³⁶ Both Kautsky and Zetkin urgently advised Mehring against resignation, much as they shared his sense of disappointment and outrage at the outcome of the arbitration proceedings.

Now, among those who felt the need to restate their case following the publication of Mehring's *Meine Rechtfertigung* was Edmund Fischer, the revisionist deputy for Zittau (since 1898) and regular contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (and subsequently to Heinrich Braun's *Neue Gesellschaft*). Fischer's already mentioned critique of Mehring in Dresden had introduced the issue of Mehring's dealings with the former antisemitic deputy Hans Leuß as a case in point. Leuß, Fischer now stressed, had not been rejected by the party because he was an 'adulterer and perjured convict,' as Mehring had apparently suggested, but because of 'the fact that we were expected to welcome with open arms the *former antisemitic leader*, who had thus come a cropper in his own party, and who came with *Mehring's warm recommendation*, in order to let him play a role in our rows.'³⁷ Certainly, if an accusation of this sort were made against a public figure today, there could be no doubt what its thrust is. Are we looking here, then, at an instance in which Mehring's sympathies for an individual with undeniable antisemitic connections led him into open conflict with the rest (or at least the majority) of the party while Mehring was apparently refusing to acknowledge the nature of the conflict thus generated, even though it had rather dramatically exploded in his face at the Party Congress?

More than dull anti-Jewish incitement: The antisemitic deputy Hans Leuß

Who, then, was Hans Leuß, and what was the nature of Mehring's involvement with him? Born in December 1861,³⁸ Leuß came from a seafaring family that had lived on the Friesian islands of Langeoog and then Spiekeoog for the best part of two and a half centuries. Turned eighteen, he enrolled at the *Gymnasium* in the (mainland) Friesian town of Aurich and began to work as a journalist. In 1881 the Conservatives of Hessen and Waldeck appointed him editor-in-chief of their *Kasseler Journal* and he was subsequently drawn into the Conservative election campaign of 1887 in Schaumburg-Lippe. In late 1888, Adolf Stöcker appointed him founding editor of the Christian-Social party organ *Das Volk*. It was here that

³⁶ Wolfgang Heine, 'Erklärung,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 3 [16 May 1904]: 4.

³⁷ The copy of the article in question from *Der arme Teufel aus der Oberlausitz*, the weekly edited by Fischer, which I used is unfortunately among those clippings collected at the time by Vollmar (IISH Vollmar 3413) that bear no date. I have as yet not been able to locate any holdings of the paper for the time in question. The article ends with a postscriptum referring to Mehring's related statement in the *LVZ* of 28 October and hence presumably appeared in the edition immediately following that date. Hereafter Fischer, 'Armer Teufel'.

³⁸ The following section on Leuß is based on the obituary by Albert Weidner, 'Hans Leuß' Lebensgang,' in *WaM* 26, 40 [4 October 1920] Beilage: 1. Hereafter Weidner, 'Leuß'. Cf. also the summary of this obituary in Franz Gerrit Schulte, *Der Publizist Hellmut von Gerlach (1866–1935)* (Munich, New York: K G Sauer, 1988): 269 n19. Hereafter Schulte, *Gerlach*.

Leuß met one of the other young hopefuls of the antisemitic movement, Hellmut von Gerlach (1866–1935), who was to become a life-long friend. As Gerlach later recalled in the speech he held at Leuß' funeral, he was still a legal trainee at the time and voluntarily contributed to the *Volk* on a daily basis while Leuß had edited the paper together with Heinrich Oberwinder (1846–1914), the former Viennese leader of the Lassalleans who was subsequently suspected of being a police informant and had now found his way to the antisemites. 'He was a fireball, still full of an unbridled temperament that often manoeuvred him into the most embarrassing situations,' Gerlach recalled. Leuß 'drove people mad, be it out of rage or enthusiasm.' He and Leuß had been temperamentally very different, though. "I want to persuade, you want to convince," that is how he once characterized the difference. He carried people away but he also let himself be carried away.³⁹ We will have occasion to return to the relationship between Leuß and Gerlach. In 1890, Leuß abandoned the Christian Social party for the more anti-authoritarian and more militantly antisemitic German Social party on whose ticket he was elected to the *Reichstag* for Eschwege-Schmalkalden in 1893, which was certainly no mean achievement for a man in his early thirties. While a deputy he submitted a contribution to the *Zukunft* which Harden published in May 1894. It offers us an interesting insight into his frame of mind at the time.⁴⁰

He assumed, Leuß begun, that Harden would welcome the opportunity to present his readers with a description of 'the cause, motives, principal notions, intentions and experiences' of the antisemitic movement by one of its participants. He had been reading the *Zukunft* since early 1893 and had repeatedly come across utterances in it 'that indicated their authors' objective approach to antisemitism. The antisemites are, after all, not exactly spoilt in this respect,' indeed, given the rough treatment they usually encountered, 'we antisemites are somewhat surprised if we occasionally encounter an attempt in the non-antisemitic press to judge this movement objectively.' Not least the Social Democrats misrepresented the antisemitic movement by claiming that it had 'exclusively *economic* causes'. In fact, however, there was far more to it. It was certainly 'not true that Stöcker had "started it"; the boot is on the other clerical foot.' The *Zentrum* had started the anti-Jewish campaigning during the *Kulturkampf*. The crucial impulse [Anstoß], however, had been given by the position taken by 'the "Jewish" press' in the *Kulturkampf*, 'just as, back in Spain, the impulse for the expulsion of the Jews had been given by the assault [Attentat] of the "Marranos", the *nuevos Christianos*, on the Catholic church.' Others had been perturbed by the undue 'legislative influence of the Jews (Lasker and Bamberger)'⁴¹ and attributed their economic difficulties and the failure to rein in market forces and curtail the *Gründerei* to this influence. Against this background, Stöcker had brought antisemitic convictions to the Protestant masses but then concentrated too exclusively on Berlin. 'Had Stöcker invested half the effort he squandered on Berlin in the provinces and gone beyond

³⁹ Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Hans Leuß †' in *WaM* 26, 40 [4 October 1920] Beilage: 1. Hereafter Gerlach, 'Leuß'.

⁴⁰ Hans Leuß, 'Die antisemitische Bewegung,' in *Zukunft* 7 [19 May 1894]: 327–332.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 327.

the oratory to undertake actual organizational work he would stand at the helm of an antisemitic *Fraktion* of between fifty and eighty deputies today.⁴²

The antisemites had been 'very substantially furthered' by the inauguration of the *Abwehrverein*. 'The founders of this *Verein* overlooked the fact that a very extensive cross section of the German people which had remained passive *vis-à-vis* the antisemitic movement by no means nurtured friendly feelings for the Jews [judenfreundlich] and were annoyed when they were suddenly expected to support the Jewish cause.' The propaganda activities of the *Abwehrverein* had 'increased to a quite extraordinary degree the demand for antisemitic writings,' for many had only become aware of the existence of these writings due to their denunciation by the *Abwehrverein*. Throughout history, other nationalities had had exactly the same experience with the Jews.

As clever as the Jewish nationality is in other respects, however apt it is in asserting its interests and acquiring influence and power: when defending itself against attacks, it always becomes imprudent and excessive. Had the German Jews responded to the first stirrings of antisemitism in the late seventies and early eighties with a little preparedness to act against the deplorable state of affairs, had they imposed greater reticence upon themselves in the press and the economy, the antisemitic movement would have been nipped in the bud whereas now it not only achieves direct electoral successes but has carried its stance into the other parties (the Conservatives, the National Liberals and the *Zentrum*).

The 'strong participation of Jewish politicians in the Social Democratic propaganda,' by contrast, was yet another element that had aided the antisemitic movement.⁴³

Having witnessed more than enough Jewish abuses, 'tolerance at any price' was now increasingly being replaced by 'national egoism'. It was surely beyond doubt that any 'judicious assessment' of the antisemitic movement

must concede that it represents the outrage, the revolt of a people that is rebelling against a powerful Other [mächtig gewordenen Fremdthum] and seeks to shake off this Other. One may deem such rebellions justified or not, one may see in them a source of vigour or just a barbaric brutalization – the fact itself, however, one should concede [...]
The national energy of a people draws strength from opposition to the Other [das Fremde], against an Other that it feels and recognizes as disgraceful and oppressive [ein als schändlich und bedrückend empfundenen und erkanntes Fremdthum].

Rather remarkably, Leuß then added that

it is well worth examining the now unfortunately largely forgotten writings from the beginning of the century, from the period of Napoleonic rule, under this aspect; if one compares them with the more outstanding antisemitic writings of today – one will be amazed by the similarity in spirit between them.

Far from promoting violent anti-Jewish instincts, however, the antisemitic movement was in fact doing the exact opposite: it was channelling those instincts in an orderly fashion conducive to the nation's

⁴² Ibid., 328.

⁴³ Ibid., 329.

reinvigoration. Moreover, he contended, 'the awareness of the great superiority in numbers precludes any idea of a bloody struggle [blutige Auseinandersetzungen].'⁴⁴

The antisemitic movement recognized full well that 'antisemitism alone would be one-sided.' Admittedly, the programmes of the antisemitic parties were as yet still in a process of gestation, they were not, however, 'restricted to antisemitic negation but also turn on many of the "achievements" of the liberal era; they have taken up the economic aspirations of the farmers and artisans as well as a whole range of social and other issues.' Hence it was 'unjust [...] to accuse antisemitism of amounting to no more than dull anti-Jewish incitement [öde Judenhetze].'⁴⁵ All the notions aired as to how Jews and Germans might one day be thoroughly separated were as yet 'pie in the sky'. For the time being the antisemitic movement aspired to no more than 'the abolition of emancipation, the prohibition of ritual slaughter (and later perhaps the elimination of circumcision), and before all that' it simply hoped that 'the progress of the movement itself would neutralize Jewish influence.'

The common suggestion that any wholesale removal of the Jews would still leave enough individuals more than happy to take on the roles previously played by the Jews was erroneous. Social conflict was essentially a product of negative and divisive qualities that were ultimately of Jewish origin, foremost among them the unstoppably contaminating addiction to profit [die Alles durchseuchende Profitwuth]. No other negative quality was remotely as contagious. Society would only rise from the squalor and corruption of this addiction if the Jewish example was eliminated. Then, however, it would be able to shed the contamination Jewry had brought upon it. It was in any case undeniable, Leuß concluded his discussion in the *Zukunft*, that the antisemitic movement brought out the best in its supporters who showed a degree of enthusiasm and dedication that immunized them against the fanaticism of Social Democracy while the 'old parties' had become so lacklustre that only reliance on the state's instruments of power allowed them to persevere.⁴⁶

Leuß' spectacularly promising career was in fact to come to an abrupt and equally spectacular end later that year.⁴⁷ Involved in an adulterous affair he became embroiled in court proceedings initiated by his partner's husband which were designed to trap him. Ultimately he was required either to admit the adultery, which he felt would have betrayed the confidence of his partner, or to perjure himself. He opted for the latter and apparently never regretted this decision. His long standing colleague at the *Welt am Montag*, Albert Weidner (1871–1946), who had belonged to the *Friedrichshagener* circle as a young man,⁴⁸ based his obituary of Leuß largely on some very general autobiographical notes that Leuß had apparently made on

⁴⁴ Ibid., 330.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 331.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 332.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hans Leuß, *Aus dem Zuchthause. Verbrecher und Strafrechtspflege* (Berlin: Johannes Råde, 1903): 14–45. Hereafter Leuß, *Aus dem Zuchthause*.

⁴⁸ Cf. Zucker, 'Gustav Landauer,' 259 *n1*.

the request of the *Landesmuseum* in Neustrelitz⁴⁹ only days before his sudden death. Weidner quotes Leuß as writing there that “‘I adhered only to my conscience back then and I judge my offence in exactly the same way now as I did then: in the conflict between the two duties – meanest breach of confidence or contempt of the law – I chose the way I had to choose if I was to avoid having to despise myself.’”⁵⁰ When his partner subsequently broke down in court and admitted the affair, Leuß’ previous denial notwithstanding, he was sentenced to *Zuchthaus* and imprisoned in Celle for forty months.⁵¹ Two previous custodial spells for press offences, in one case of nine days, in the second of four weeks,⁵² clearly had not prepared him for what was now to come. His health suffered irreparably during his imprisonment and his increasing outrage at the whole prison system was aggravated yet further when the formalities required to allow him to see his dying father were drawn out so extensively, even though his final release was in any case only weeks away, that his father died before he reached his parental home. His mother had already died during his first year in prison.⁵³ His previous political career irredeemably over, he developed increasing ambitions as a writer and left the prison with a collection of poems that struck him as worthy of publication. Moreover, he had used the leave granted belatedly on the occasion of his father’s death to contact Harden whom he promised contributions for the *Zukunft* as soon as he was finally released.⁵⁴ Perhaps he contacted other publicists with similar suggestions at the time.

Boycotted by the bourgeois world: Leuß turns to Mehring

Although we know little of the details, it seems beyond doubt that not only his former associates, but also the somewhat more enlightened sections of the establishment and bourgeois press subsequently showed the ex-convict the door wherever he tried his luck. Increasingly desperate, it was at this juncture that Leuß first approached Mehring. He did so, according to Mehring’s subsequent account in the *Neue Zeit*, ‘on the erroneous assumption that I still had close relations to the bourgeois press.’ He had hardly been able to offer Leuß any encouragement, though, and the one suggestion he did make promptly proved futile.

The dull slaves of dull prejudice presented him with the dim-witted response: One knows who you are, one knows who you are! Even well-meaning people said to him: as a decent man you had to act as you did, but–! As Leuß quite rightly wrote to me: “I could stomach it, if it were the *adultery* (which destroyed no marriage, incidentally, that was not already doomed without the adultery) that was held so massively against me, but it is only ever the *perjury*!” And I add: it is not even because of the *perjury*, it is all down to the *Zuchthaus* sentence.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ From my inquiries with the current museum in Neustrelitz, the *Stadtarchiv* of Neustrelitz, and the *Landeshauptarchiv* in Schwerin it is clear that should the *Landesmuseum* ever have received the autobiographical notes mentioned by Weidner they have since been lost.

⁵⁰ Weidner, ‘Leuß.’

⁵¹ Leuß, *Aus dem Zuchthause*, vii.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2 and 9.

⁵³ Cf. Leuß’ letter to Harden, written on 13 March 1898 (BArch Koblenz N 1062/65).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁵ Franz Mehring, ‘Gedichte von Hans Leuß,’ in *NZ* 17-II, 47 [9 August 1899]: 665–668, here 666. Hereafter Mehring, ‘Leuß’.

It was against this background, Mehring continued, that

I readily agreed to Leuß' request that I preface his poems here, although I have made no secret of the fact that that may well do him more harm than good with the bourgeois audience. He is, however, of the opinion that it would mark a step forward if at least one person took it upon himself to push open the door at this point, and I sincerely hope that this opinion does not prove erroneous.⁵⁶

How, then, did Mehring preface the selection of Leuß' poems he now had published in the *Neue Zeit* in order to 'push open the door' for him at least at this one point? Mehring clearly shared the notion that Leuß' decision to perjure himself had essentially been an honourable one, a notion with which he hardly stood alone, as he pointed out. No less a paper than the *Vorwärts* had conceded the honourable nature of Leuß' motives at the time of the trial. Turning to Leuß' previous political track record, Mehring characterized him as a 'tireless, extremely skilful propagandist' both in his oratory and in his writing. 'He regarded antisemitism as his cause,' Mehring explained, 'which was neither rare nor unnatural among the youth growing up under the influence of the formative experiences of the year 1870. Nevertheless, an unbridled love of freedom remained at the heart of his nature throughout.' Somewhat ironically from our point of view it then transpired that Mehring had asked none other than Gerlach for a reference on Leuß.

Herr v. Gerlach, who knew him back then and whose judgement can count as sound, given that he is the most talented among the younger publicists of the bourgeois press, recently wrote to me about Leuß, saying: 'He was an idealist through and through.... Whatever he did he did forcefully; no matter what he undertook, he was always involved with all his soul... As a Friesian he was a dyed-in-the-wool liberal [freiheitlich gesinnt bis auf die Knochen] [...]' For a full-blooded nature of this type antisemitism could only be a transitional orientation and so it was.

We might note in passing that this assessment of Leuß' development might seem to contradict my earlier suggestion that Mehring, in contrast to many of his peers, tended to distinguish between the masses temporarily duped into supporting the antisemitic movement but destined to see the Socialist light and the activists whose antisemitism would spell their undoing. I would argue, though, that Mehring essentially assumed Leuß never to have been a proper antisemite in the first place and simply thought of his earlier antisemitic activism as a youthful aberration, ultimately counting him among the duped rather than those who did the duping. Leuß had, Mehring continued, already been well on the way to reforming himself when he was 'torn from political life by his conviction.' Apparently Mehring took Leuß' own assurances that he had already begun to question his antisemitic orientation at the time of his conviction at face value. This is an issue we shall return to. What, then, had been his crime? 'As a publicist, an advocate of the oppressed and the persecuted, he had met a woman who became an intimate companion [vertraute Gefährtin] for him during the years of struggle,' Mehring explained in a somewhat enigmatic turn of phrase which either alludes to something we do not know about or would indeed seem to classify Leuß' antisemitic activities as a form of advocacy for the oppressed and persecuted. 'To protect her he perjured

⁵⁶ Ibid., 666.

himself,' and 'it was to its credit that the *Vorwärts* unhesitatingly conceded the right of the political opponent' in this instance.⁵⁷

On his release he had 'found all the doors to the bourgeois world closed, of course.' He wanted his poems published and it was after a number of abortive attempts to do so that he had turned to Mehring to ask his advice.⁵⁸ Whether Leuß' poems 'reveal a genuine and original poetic talent or merely reflect a hard human fate in the soul of an aesthetically refined and forceful man, I dare not decide since I know only some of them.' Soon, however, the public would be able to form its own opinion since Leuß had now found an 'unprejudiced' publisher in Johann Sassenbach.⁵⁹ 'I believe they will make their way, that human beings, to whom nothing human is strange, will not read them without being deeply moved.'⁶⁰

The publication of his poems apart, Leuß had emerged from his imprisonment with another goal, however, namely, to enlighten the public about the desperate and unworthy state of the prison system. To 'portray the land of the unfree in the free and humane way in which he wants to portray it' would indeed be a worthwhile enterprise, Mehring explained, and doubly so at a time 'when the corrupt theory of someone like Lambroso blinds capitalist society to one of its most dreadful dark sides.' With the accomplishment of this goal, Leuß 'would reap honour and distinction from the misfortune of the imprisonment for which he was morally not responsible,' just as 'many a brave comrade' had done in the past 'in this topsy-turvy world of bourgeois society.'⁶¹

Subsequently, it was not only agreed that Leuß should contribute a number of pieces on the state of the prison system to the *Neue Zeit*, but he also began to work for a number of the leading Social Democratic papers, among them the *Vorwärts* and the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Not everyone in the party was as happy to have Leuß on board, however, and the matter was discussed in the *Fraktion* in December 1899 and again a year later, when it was finally decided that Leuß should no longer be allowed to publish under his name in the Social Democratic press. This development, too, we will need to return to.

There can be little doubt that Leuß had never intended to place all his eggs in one basket anyway and he spread his activities relatively widely from the outset, certainly more widely than those were likely to find acceptable who held that the ethos of the party journalist presupposed ideological purity and required that one abstain from publishing in media where that purity was not guaranteed. Among the latter Mehring was, of course, notoriously one of the most outspoken and it was precisely this issue which had given rise, as we saw, to the bitter conflict erupting in Dresden, hence making the matter of Mehring's strictness or leniency *vis-à-vis* Leuß in this respect a potentially contentious one. *Inter alia*, Leuß had worked as a consultant on social affairs for the papers published by the Ullstein publishing house and began to write regularly for the *Welt am Montag* which his friend Hellmut von Gerlach, himself by now no longer an organized political

⁵⁷ Ibid., 665.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 666.

⁵⁹ Hans Leuß, *Humanis homo!* (Berlin, Paris: Sassenbach, 1899).

⁶⁰ Mehring, 'Leuß,' 667.

⁶¹ Ibid., 668.

antisemite but a supporter of Friedrich Naumann's National Social movement, first edited, according to his own recollections, in 1901.⁶² One of Leuß' articles for the *Welt am Montag* saw him imprisoned again for a month for a press offence and it was during this time that he completed the bulk of his book on the prison system,⁶³ *Aus dem Zuchthause*, large parts of which consisted of the articles he had already presented (or originally hoped to present) in the *Neue Zeit*. It was finally published to considerable acclaim in October 1903, just after the Party Congress of Dresden.

Take the case of Hans Leuß: Dresden 1903

It was against this background, then, that Fischer had raised Leuß' case to underscore the critique of Mehring aired by himself and others in Dresden. Not that he was entirely opposed to the *Vorstand's* stance on the conditions under which party members should contribute to the non-Socialist press, he explained there. 'In part the motion tabled by the *Vorstand* has expressed my sentiments too,' Fischer conceded. 'I do, however, find it outrageous – and have made no secret of this fact – that this whole initiative is entirely the result of one of Franz Mehring's personal disagreements.'⁶⁴ 'The whole issue,' he claimed, 'dates from Adler's article against Mehring in the *Zukunft*. [...] I found it outrageous that the struggle against the *Zukunft* had been led since the publication of Professor Adler's article. Before that one was allowed to write for the *Zukunft*,' now it was no longer tolerated. Not that he approved of Berthold's behaviour. 'I would have preferred it if he had been expelled,' but that did not alter the fact that 'Mehring has taken up this matter for personal reasons' and then blown it out of all proportion.⁶⁵ He could hardly say, though, Fischer continued,

that I've found the *Neue Zeit* to be so adamant about "cleanliness" in other instances. Take the case of Hans Leuß. Leuß was an antisemitic deputy sent to prison for an act of perjury he had committed, as Mehring claims, for honourable reasons. Maybe; but he hadn't seduced his friend's wife for honourable reasons. In any case, he was finished and then approached Mehring, who sang his praise: he had a strong democratic bent etc. Leuß was allowed to write for the *Neue Zeit*. At the same time he wrote articles for the *Zeitgeist* section of the *Berliner Tageblatt* (From the floor: for the *Welt am Montag* too). Nobody mentioned anything about "cleanliness" then [...] The *Reichstagsfraktion* had to intervene to ensure that this sense of cleanliness was given its due. I found that outrageous, primarily, however, the so-called revisionists were the ones who made the concerted effort to see a cleanly state of affairs reasserted. (From the floor: Heine!) Yes, indeed, Heine was the one who spoke most vehemently against Leuß.

The dividing line between those who had supported and those who had opposed the notion that Leuß should be allowed to work under his name in the party press had not, however, coincided with the dividing

⁶² Hellmut von Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links* (Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1937): 162. Hereafter Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links*.

⁶³ Weidner, 'Leuß'.

⁶⁴ *Parteitag 1903*, 176, in part reprinted in Franz Mehring, *Meine Rechtfertigung. Ein nachträgliches Wort zum Desdner Parteitag* (Leipzig: Verlag der Leipziger Buchdruckerei, 1903): 12. Hereafter Mehring, *Rechtfertigung*.

⁶⁵ *Parteitag 1903*, 177.

line between revisionists and non-revisionists (the 'old school [alte Richtung]', as he called them), and it was presumably for this reason and because Leuß himself had not written in support of the revisionists that he had been welcomed in the way he was. Hence the issue of 'cleanliness' had not been raised on this occasion as it had been now that Mehring had seen fit to do so for purely personal reasons.⁶⁶

In the first edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung*, Mehring set aside a whole section for 'Der Fall Leuß'. Whether Leuß had seduced his friend's wife for honourable or dishonourable reasons he was in no position to judge, he stated. On such matters he was inclined to subscribe to the biblical stricture that it was for those without sin to cast the first stone.⁶⁷ That Leuß had perjured himself for honourable reasons, however, was, he reiterated, something that Wilhelm Liebknecht had readily acknowledged in the *Vorwärts* at the time of the trial. Leuß had turned to him, Mehring explained, a year or two after he had been released. He had been 'on the brink because bourgeois society had hermetically shut him out.' Initially he had sent him to the then chairman of the Berlin Press Association

whom I happened to know and assumed to be a relatively unprejudiced man. But he, too, was without pity and showed him the door. Only then did I agree to his request that I recommend a publisher for his poems to him, write a short review of those poems, and provide him with an opportunity for a periodical publication portraying the awful conditions in the prisons. As the publisher I recommended comrade Sassenbach to him, I published a short review of his poems in the *Neue Zeit*, and asked comrade Kautsky to accept a number of essays by Leuß on prison discipline for the *Neue Zeit*.

All in all, Leuß had submitted three or four articles to the *Neue Zeit* that offered valuable insights into the topic. Mehring had known that Leuß also wrote for the *Welt am Montag*, not, however, of his collaboration with the *Berliner Tageblatt*. But then this had been of no concern to the party, since Leuß had not been a member. 'Later, when Leuß begun to write for one of the party's dailies,' the *Reichstagsfraktion* had dealt with the matter. 'I have the decision before me in the original version sent to me by comrade Auer to pass on to Leuß.' It had allowed for a continued collaboration but subjected it to substantial restrictions. While Leuß had written nothing more for the *Neue Zeit* after that, he had written for the *Vorwärts*, the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, and the *Münchener Post*.

At this point things had, admittedly, on at least one occasion not unfolded in an altogether 'cleanly' fashion. But it was not he, Mehring, who had been to blame for that blemish, for in this instance he had in fact been the one who restored 'cleanliness' where revisionists had surrendered it. The events in question had transpired in the immediate vicinity of Edmund Fischer who should pay closer attention to events on the banks of the Elbe before condemning goings on in Friedenau and Steglitz (where Kautsky and Mehring, respectively, lived). Fischer was right, though, in stating that neither the revisionists nor their opponents had presented a united front in connection with Leuß. In fact, while Kautsky and Liebknecht had been the only representatives of his own camp to support his approach he had found himself united on this matter

⁶⁶ Ibid., 176.

⁶⁷ Mehring, *Rechtfertigung*, 12–13.

with the revisionists Auer, Eisner, Gradnauer, Südekum and Adolf Müller. Leuß' most outspoken opponents, on the other hand, had been Meister and Wurm, both of whom were stalwarts of the 'old school'.⁶⁸

Whether Leuß still worked for the party press he did not know; he had not seen him for more than two years.

I am told that he is currently one of Bernhard's pals at the *Berliner Morgenpost*; he also made a contribution to Harden's *Zukunft* a while back which I came across by coincidence. All in all Leuß was, or is, a bright man, with whom I quite enjoyed being in contact. He felt somewhat indebted to me for the modest favours I was able to do him. Three years ago he already said to me, in the presence of witnesses, full of genuine concern for my well being, that I was too carefree and would one day break my neck before quite knowing what had hit me; he claimed to have heard the following statesmanlike dictum somewhere: as soon as Bebel is dead we shall throw the whole mischievous bunch out. Back then I simply laughed at him, today I am no longer so certain.⁶⁹

This 'curious prophetic gift' Leuß had certainly not acquired from the 'old school', though, because he, Mehring, had been the only representative of this camp with whom Leuß had had personal dealings.⁷⁰

Leuß' collaboration with the Vorwärts was exclusively Mehring's doing:

Eisner and Gradnauer intervene

At this point, two of the revisionists with whom Mehring had supposedly found himself united on the issue of the party's dealings with Leuß now took issue with his version of events. Writing in the *Vorwärts* of 25 October 1903, its two leading editors, Kurt Eisner (1867–1919) and Georg Gradnauer (1866–1946), disputed Mehring's account in *Meine Rechtfertigung*. There was something peculiar about Mehring's version of events, they began somewhat ominously. Not that it was 'in any way strictly speaking wrong'. But even so the reader would be compelled to conclude from it 'something other than the truth.' Mehring had sought to give the impression that the decision of the *Vorwärts* to collaborate with Leuß had resulted from its revisionist orientation. The 'whole truth', however, was that 'Leuß' collaboration with the *Vorwärts* and the continuation of this collaboration is essentially down to *Mehring's influence*.' He had

still supported his protégé with a warmth that we found most sympathetic, even when misgivings about this collaboration were being voiced in the party. From Mehring's *Rechtfertigung* one could easily conclude that the *Neue Zeit* had been loyal enough to the party to close its pages to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁹ This presumably alludes to an incident in the spring of 1901. On 5 March 1901 (her official birthday), Rosa Luxemburg wrote to Clara Zetkin: 'And here's another interesting piece of news. When the bourgeois Philips (editor of the deceased "Neuland", you know who I mean) recently went to see Wolfgang Heine (to discuss the Leuß matter with him), he [Heine] commented as follows: "Oh this protector of Leuß and the whole radical bunch, one will have to do away with these people; we are only waiting for Bebel and a few old comrades to leave us, before we have a thorough clean-out!"... Hence, Claire, pack your suit cases in anticipation of the grand cleansing of the Augean stables' (RLGB I: 517).

⁷⁰ Mehring, *Rechtfertigung*, 14.

Leuß whereas the *Vorwärts*, the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, and the *Münchner Post* had been less unscrupulous.⁷¹

In fact, however, the *Neue Zeit* had no longer been at liberty to publish texts by Leuß anyway, because the *Fraktion* had already asked the journal to terminate its collaboration with Leuß on 23 November 1899.

‘On 12 August⁷² 1900 the *Fraktion* discussed the issue again and decided that it was not in the interest of the party that Leuß work *under his name* in a literary capacity for the party or that he hold some other responsible post or be employed as a regular contributor.’ Even so, it was still possible, of course, to employ Leuß as an anonymous contributor. On the evening of that same day, ‘we were together with Mehring and Leuß. Mehring pleaded fervently for the continued employment of the author and we promised to do so, as long as the relevant party authorities agreed.’

About three quarters of a year later the ‘inevitable conflict’ between Leuß and Mehring arose; inevitable, to Eisner’s and Gradnauer’s mind, because Mehring was notoriously so unbalanced and quarrelsome that it was only a matter of time before he picked a fight with everyone with whom he was ever involved. Consequently Mehring had written to say that he had, some time ago, vouched for Leuß and now needed to retract that guarantee. Another letter had followed in which he had explained his changed attitude by giving a detailed description of the personal circumstances of ‘his friend’ Leuß. ‘It would have been desirable that Mehring portray our relationship with Leuß with sufficient clarity to preclude any wrong conclusions. Hans Leuß’ collaboration with the *Vorwärts* was exclusively Mehring’s doing, just as he subsequently requested that we terminate this collaboration. Needless to say,’ though, they conceded in conclusion, ‘we did not publish Leuß’ contributions merely for Mehring’s sake but because they merited publication.’⁷³

While Fischer now felt the need to offer the explanation for his decision to bring up the case of Hans Leuß in the first place with which we began this whole discussion, Mehring immediately submitted a short response to the *Vorwärts*, stating the he would deal with Eisner’s and Gradnauer’s accusations in the imminent second edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung*. It was this statement that Fischer’s article referred to in a postscriptum. He had only mentioned Leuß, Fischer now explained,

to demonstrate that the quest for “cleanliness” within the *Neue Zeit* was very one-sided and only directed against certain people. Mehring says that Leuß had not been a party comrade. But in the *Reichstagsfraktion* it was announced that Mehring had advised Leuß to register with the *Vertrauensmann* in his constituency!

⁷¹ This must be a mistake. Eisner and Gradnauer obviously meant exactly the opposite. Since the German words for scrupulous (*skrupulös*) and unscrupulous (*skrupellos*) are relatively similar, this is a comparatively easy mistake for a distracted author or typesetter to make. Mehring reprinted the passage uncorrected (*ibid.* [2nd ed.], 49).

⁷² In fact, the *Fraktion* discussed the issue again on 12 December 1900.

⁷³ Kurt Eisner, Georg Gradnauer, ‘Franz Mehring und der *Vorwärts*,’ in *Vorwärts* 20, 250 [25 October 1903] Beilage 1: 2. Hereafter Eisner, Gradnauer, ‘Mehring’.

There is no other reference to this claim in any of the sources I have been able to identify. Its evidential value is, of course, in any case ambiguous. Even if Mehring's advice, should he have given it in this form, had implied that he wanted Leuß to become a party member it would not alter the fact that Leuß had not been and was not a member of the party. Moreover, should Leuß have asked Mehring how best to go about becoming a member of the party, what might Mehring have been expected to answer him, no matter how he may have felt about the matter, other than that Leuß would need to discuss it with his constituency *Vertrauensmann*? It was at this juncture that Fischer had added his clarification that the opposition within the party had been directed not against Leuß the 'adulterer and perjured convict' but against the 'former antisemitic leader' who had mounted his quest for a responsible position within the party equipped with 'Mehring's warm recommendation.' As he pointed out with some justification, Mehring's 'short review' of Leuß' poems had 'in fact covered three and half pages in petit type' and had thus been rather 'more than a "short review" of his poems!' To Fischer's mind it had been the 'warmest possible recommendation to admit him into our party. Given my limited comprehension of honour, character, party comradely tact and modern literary manners,' Fischer continued,

I, like many others, could not understand this peculiar introduction of the former antisemitic chieftain, with whom we had previously concerned ourselves dozens of times in the press and in leaflets, into our party. And it was also Mehring, of course, who persuaded the editors of the *Vorwärts* to employ Leuß as a contributor. As Eisner and Gradnauer explain in the *Vorwärts*, however, it was also Mehring who sought to arrange for the *Vorwärts* to show Leuß the door again. That's Mehring for you!

He then reiterated that it had been the *Fraktion* that had 'concerned itself with the matter and restored the "cleanliness" in the *Neue Zeit*' when Leuß had become 'more and more visible as a party comrade in public,' that 'very same cleanliness that the *Neue Zeit* was so vocal about when directed at certain other party comrades! Since "cleanliness" was made an issue at the Party Congress I thought it appropriate to mention *this* case, too,' Fischer concluded, adding that 'Mehring is in no position to play the stickler for principles and party schoolmaster [...] It was that and nothing else that my intervention was intended to demonstrate.'⁷⁴

The whole truth indeed! Mehring responds

Mehring's response to Eisner and Gradnauer forms the sixth and final part of the additional section he now published with the second edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung*. It was noteworthy, Mehring remarked, that the two had commented on this issue 'in the greatest detail even though they themselves say that my account contained "nothing [that is] in any way strictly speaking wrong."' Yet his account had nevertheless supposedly created a certain 'impression'. 'Due to the "arrangement of my sentences" I have allegedly created the "misunderstanding" that Leuß' case, too, was a matter of revisionism and radicalism, [a

⁷⁴ Fischer, 'Armer Teufel'.

suggestion] which would have to be considered nothing short of a mockery of current debate in the party.' If anyone had made himself guilty of such mockery, however, it was in fact Fischer, 'for whose words and actions I cannot, fortunately, be held in any way responsible.' He, Mehring, had in fact been the one who refuted this notion 'in my "not strictly speaking wrong version of events"'. According to Eisner and Gradnauer, though, he had nevertheless been 'dogged by the misfortune of creating "wrong impressions"' and the two had therefore fearlessly taken it upon themselves [als todesmutige Männer] to throw "'the whole truth'" at him.

'Nobody who is still in command of his senses and has not lost all respect for the truth could conclude from my account that the *Neue Zeit* acted more loyally towards the party in connection with Leuß' case than the *Vorwärts* or other party papers,'⁷⁵ Mehring argued. 'To counter Fischer's accusation that Leuß had presumably been supported by the *Neue Zeit* because he had not written in support of the revisionists I stated that while Leuß had no longer written for the *Neue Zeit* following the decision of the *Fraktion* he had contributed to other party publications,'⁷⁶ publications that were

hardly of an emphatically Marxist bent. But, say Eisner and Gradnauer, as of 23 November 1899 the *Neue Zeit* was no longer at liberty to publish anything by Leuß. Well, Leuß in fact wrote a total of three articles for the *Neue Zeit*, all under his name; one of these, a short report of hardly three and a half pages [...] was published before 23 November,⁷⁷ the other two, however, on prison discipline, amounting to between 14 and 15 pages, were published *after* 23 November,

namely, in the second half of March 1900.⁷⁸ 'The *whole* truth indeed!'

As far as the events following the decision of the *Fraktion* of 12 December 1900 to ban Leuß from publishing in the party press under his name were concerned, Eisner and Gradnauer had themselves carefully refrained from presenting the whole truth. That evening

it was not just "we, Mehring and Leuß" who were together, but a fifth man joined us whose name Eisner and Gradnauer do not mention; with good – or rather: with bad – reason. I was in no way responsible for Südekum's decision to grant Leuß such extensive leeway in the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung* that the displeasure of the press commission was consequently aroused

and the commission had then 'disallowed this collaboration altogether.' Südekum had taken this decision of the commission for 'an infringement of his editorial rights and tendered his resignation.' It had been these events that had brought the matter before the *Fraktion* on 12 December 1900.

Early that evening Leuß visited me, informed me that he had arranged to meet Südekum [...] and suggested that I accompany him. Since I was interested in the matter I went along. Südekum in turn came from the *Reichstag* with Gradnauer, and Gradnauer phoned the *Vorwärts* to say that Eisner should come over as soon the editorial work was through, which he then did.

⁷⁵ Mehring, *Rechtfertigung* [2nd ed], 49.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 49–50.

⁷⁷ Cf. Hans Leuß, 'Das Verbrechen als sozialpathologische Erscheinung,' in *NZ* 18-I, 7 [8 November 1899]: 213–216.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hans Leuß, 'Disziplin in Strafanstalten,' in *NZ* 18-I, 25 [14 March 1900]: 783–790 and 18-I, 26 [21 March 1900]: 820–826.

Naturally we discussed the decision of the *Fraktion*. Essentially it had backed the press commission in Dresden and Südekum would now have to go, while it had placed Leuß in a position which, in my opinion, he needed to think through on his own. Whether he was able and willing to collaborate with the party press under the conditions set out by the *Fraktion* was a matter on which, to my mind, no third party should seek to advise him. As far as I could see, he took the matter with perfect calm, while Südekum openly expressed his dissatisfaction.

Later that evening they had moved on to another venue and Mehring walked there with Gradnauer at his side. Gradnauer, himself a former editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* and at the time the member of the *Reichstag* for the constituency Dresden II, had ‘used the opportunity [...] to say to me: We cannot be doing with a press row in Dresden; try to persuade Leuß to resign voluntarily so that Südekum can stay; it goes without saying that we would then have to do all we can to see Leuß through.’ He, Mehring, had

answered: as far as I know Leuß he really will resign voluntarily as soon as he realizes that Südekum wants to stay and he will already have noticed that quite a while ago, but you are certainly right in this respect: if the matter is to be fixed as you wish, then it is imperative that Leuß doesn’t go to the dogs in the process. It was then decided that Gradnauer and Eisner would employ Leuß as best they could for the *Vorwärts* and that they would at the same time seek employment for him in Hamburg while I offered to address a request to Leipzig.

That is what happened on the evening of 12 December 1900. Eisner and Gradnauer know that full well, but although they know better they claim that I pleaded “fervently” that they employ Leuß for the *Vorwärts* and that the collaboration was “exclusively” my doing. They intentionally distort the truth so as to be able to construe the “inevitable conflict” and apply the wretched accusation that I distil party issues from personal sympathy and antipathy. But let’s move on!

All their attempts to ‘find however modest an existence for Leuß within the framework of the *Fraktion*’s decision of 12 December’ had, in the event, ‘proved unfeasible. From Hamburg and Leipzig came the concurring response one would not hesitate to employ Leuß,’ but there were simply no vacancies. Hence Leuß had ‘looked around for alternative sources of income and organized his life on a different basis.’ He had done so in ways which had (and still) struck him, Mehring, as being ‘incompatible with his collaboration with the party press, however legitimate and impeccable’⁷⁹ his behaviour

might seem by bourgeois standards. I repeatedly discussed this with Leuß in great detail and these awkward debates then resulted, as always happens in such cases, in personal ill-feeling as well; I could not but stand to my opinion while Leuß referred to the fact that he had obligations towards third parties that made it imperative for him to establish a secure existence which we would not be able to attain under the material and moral pressure of the *Fraktion*’s decision of 12 December 1900. Hence he stopped visiting me in July 1901.⁸⁰

Thus he had ‘lost all control’ over Leuß’

activities and since he was generally perceived of in the party as, and indeed to some extent really had been, my “protégé” it would perhaps have already been my duty then, in all instances in which I could assume that I shared the responsibility for his collaboration with the party press, to decline that responsibility. Assuming that Leuß would give up his work for the party press anyway, given his new orientation, I thought I could just wait and see how things go, though, and I certainly no longer recognized Leuß’ pen in the *Vorwärts*.

⁷⁹ Mehring, *Rechtfertigung*, 50.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 50–51.

Three months later, however, this assumption turned out to be erroneous. I found out by coincidence that Leuß was still contributing to the party press

and that he was doing so

under circumstances which made it my inescapable duty to distance myself from the matter. These circumstances⁸¹ are well known to the editors Eisner and Gradnauer; both of them know that it was not a personal whim but a sound cause that forced me to write to them in November 1901: should Leuß still be working for the *Vorwärts* I could no longer uphold whatever guarantee I had offered for him in the past; I could explain my reasons should they ask me to do so. Thereupon Gradnauer immediately responded, in Eisner's name as well, to request that I explain my reasons since Leuß was in principle still in the employ of the *Vorwärts*, even though he had not submitted anything for a long time. Hence I gave them the requested information which naturally had to refer to Leuß' personal circumstances.

Now Eisner and Gradnauer portrayed the matter as if Mehring had denounced Leuß out of the blue and on his own initiative. Not least, the way in which they now sought to make 'a big thing of this confidential information that they had asked me for as editors of the *Vorwärts* [...] amounts to so grave a violation of the press secret, a violation of the bounden duty of any editorial board so intentional as has never occurred before in the Socialist press and not even in the decent bourgeois press.'⁸²

Now, the entire dispute involving Mehring in and after Dresden was documented and commented upon at great length in the party press and especially in both the *Vorwärts* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. By and large the *Vorwärts* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* presented the same material, however divergent their evaluation of it might be. Occasionally, however, they also reprimanded one another, at least implicitly, for supposedly suppressing pertinent material which was then usually supplied belatedly by the paper that had previously failed to do so in order to fend off the accusation of bias or censorship. The careful examination of both papers for the period in question which I have undertaken is hence highly likely to render a full picture of the dispute, and I have certainly found no indication that Eisner or Gradnauer made any attempt to refute this account of their joint dealings with Leuß given by Mehring in the second edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung*. We therefore have no reason not to accept that account as largely accurate.

The whole truth indeed? A letter to Wilhelm Bloss

This is in a sense all the more remarkable since Mehring's account was in fact inaccurate on at least one count. In his version of events he had only become involved with the second decision of the *Fraktion* concerning Leuß in December 1900 and its implications after the decision had been made and had then, ultimately to back up Gradnauer's suggestion, agreed to seek employment for Leuß in Leipzig.

⁸¹ Cf. below n122.

⁸² Ibid., 51.

In fact, however, he had written to the veteran deputy, party journalist and popular historian Wilhelm Blos (1849–1927) about the matter before the *Fraktion* convened on 12 December 1900. Having represented the Thuringian constituency of Reuß ältere Linie (Reuß-Greiz) in the ill fated *Reichstag* of 1877/1878 and again from 1881 to 1884, Blos first sat in the *Reichstag* for Brunswick from 1884 to 1887 and then again between 1890 and 1906 and from 1912 to 1919. At the time in question, he had already written his widely read histories of the French Revolution,⁸³ the Paris Commune,⁸⁴ and the German Revolution of 1848/1849⁸⁵ and published a popular edition of the history of the German *Bauernkrieg* by the radical historian and theologian Wilhelm Zimmermann (1807–1878) who had been removed from his chair in Stuttgart 1851 as a result of his revolutionary activities in 1849 and whose history of the *Bauernkrieg*, first published between 1841 and 1843,⁸⁶ was highly influential among leading Marxists.⁸⁷ Later a staunch Majority Socialist and supporter of the Imperial war effort, Blos was hardly a radical at the time either, as borne out not least by the subsequent revelation of his participation in Vollmar's exclusive dinner circle, but he nevertheless seems to have been well respected throughout the party.

'May I burden you with a request?' Mehring asked Blos in a letter written on 10 December 1900. 'In the coming days the *Fraktion* will have to decide whether to maintain its earlier decision to exclude Leuß from regular employment in the party press or not. I would now like to ask you, if at all possible, to support the humane position. His perjury and imprisonment notwithstanding,' Leuß had paid a high enough price for his earlier sins and surely deserved to be forgiven. Leuß should not be begrudged the in any case limited amount of employment in the party press he was likely to gain, 'not least because he does his job well. You can ask any party comrade who knows him, all of them will judge him just as I do. You would do a good deed if you did your bit to avoid robbing the poor devil of what little firm ground he has to stand on and has found it hard enough to secure, and it is only for this reason that I ask you to do so,' Mehring concluded.⁸⁸

⁸³ Wilhelm Blos, *Die Französische Revolution. Volksthümliche Darstellung der Ereignisse in Frankreich von 1789 bis 1804* (Stuttgart: J H W Dietz, [2nd ed.] 1888).

⁸⁴ Wilhelm Blos, *Zur Geschichte der Kommune von Paris* (Brunswick: Wilhelm Bracke, [2nd ed.] 1876).

⁸⁵ Wilhelm Blos, *Die deutsche Revolution. Geschichte der deutschen Bewegung von 1848 und 1849* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1891).

⁸⁶ Wilhelm Zimmermann, *Allgemeine Geschichte des großen Bauernkrieges. Nach handschriftlichen und gedruckten Quellen* 3 Pts. (Stuttgart: Köhler, 1841–1843).

⁸⁷ Wilhelm Blos (ed.), *Dr W Zimmermann's großer deutscher Bauernkrieg. Illustrierte Volksausgabe* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1891). For its influence cf. for instance Engels's remarks on Zimmerman in his preface to the edition of his *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg* (1850) republished in 1870 (*MEW* 7: 531). Mehring listed Zimmermann among his sources for the section on the Reformation in the text book that grew out of his lectures on German history at the *Parteischule*, his *Deutsche Geschichte vom Ausgange des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1910/1911), cf. *GS* 5: 51. Rosa Luxemburg too was familiar with Zimmermann's work, cf. her letters to Kostja Zetkin and Mathilde Jacob in *RLGB* III: 211 and V: 53.

⁸⁸ SAPMO-BArch, N 2027/29, Bl. 8–9.

Had Mehring forgotten about this letter or consciously decided not to mention it in his account of events? Yet another possibility is that he had confused matters in his recollection. At the time Blos already contributed regularly to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and he was later widely expected to succeed Schoenlank as editor-in-chief in Leipzig. It had in fact been his decision to remain in Brunswick which precipitated Mehring's decision to suggest his ill-fated joint editorship with Rosa Luxemburg.⁸⁹ It is therefore not altogether implausible that he may have recalled writing to Blos after the new decision of the *Fraktion* to ask him about the possibility of gaining employment for Leuß in Leipzig, although he had in fact approached Blos before the decision, at a time when Schoenlank was still alive and on his post⁹⁰ and Blos had not even been a contender for the leading post in Leipzig. Should Mehring have chosen not to approach Schoenlank directly, perhaps to avoid embroiling him in the conflict, given his already weakened mental health, the editor he would most likely have contacted would have been Friedrich Stampfer (1874–1957), a reformist party journalist situated firmly on the party's right wing who was later the Majority Socialist editor-in-chief of the *Vorwärts* (between 1916 and 1919). He worked for the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* from 1900 to 1902 and developed aspirations of his own to succeed Schoenlank which were finally dashed when Mehring and Luxemburg took over the paper. There was clearly no friendship lost between the two men. Moreover, Stampfer had subsequently been the cause of a controversy between Eisner and Mehring which had now provided additional ammunition for the massive conflict unfolding after Dresden. Hence Mehring might well have preferred to remember a version of events in which he had approached Blos rather than Stampfer to seek employment for Leuß in Leipzig.

All this speculation aside, the evidence considered so far hardly bears out the assumption that Mehring was intentionally seeking to play down his support for Leuß anyway. Specifically in connection with the events on 12 December 1900 he clearly was doing his best to place all genuine responsibility firmly with Südekum and Gradnauer, hence the fact that he had attempted to influence Blos (and possibly other deputies) before the *Fraktion* convened to make its decision was somewhat inconvenient. It was also foolish, to be sure, and had made it unduly easy for Fischer to score a point, to dismiss his detailed preface to Leuß' poems in the *Neue Zeit* as a 'short review'. On the other hand, it is hardly as if Mehring was trying to deny his support for Leuß more generally. As we saw, he stated clearly in the first edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung* that Kautsky and Liebknecht had been the only representatives of his own camp to support his approach towards Leuß while he had found himself united on this matter with the revisionists Auer, Eisner, Gradnauer, Südekum and Adolf Müller. In his response to Eisner and Gradnauer in the second edition he readily conceded, as already quoted, that Leuß 'was generally perceived of in the party as, and indeed to some extent really had been, my "protégé",' and explained that he had subsequently written to the *Vorwärts*

⁸⁹ Cf. Mehring's letter, copied by Luxemburg in her letter to Leo Jogiches of 1 February 1902 (*RLGB* I: 590).

⁹⁰ Schoenlank was finally institutionalised on 6 May 1901 and died in the Leipzig University psychiatric clinic on 30 October 1901 (*RLGB* I: 521 n45).

in late 1901 to clarify that 'I could no longer uphold whatever guarantee I had offered for him [Leuß] in the past.' On balance, that surely does not amount to a coordinated effort to deny his earlier support for Leuß and his failure to mention his letter to Blos cannot therefore have been part of such an effort.

Leuß' contributions merited publication. Why was the collaboration with Leuß deemed problematic?

Conversely, Gradnauer and Eisner themselves, much as they contented in their critique of Mehring's version of events that 'Leuß' collaboration with the *Vorwärts* was exclusively Mehring's doing,' had, as we saw, at the same time concluded by clarifying that 'we did not publish Leuß' contributions merely for Mehring's sake but because they merited publication.'⁹¹ It seems rather obvious, then, that Gradnauer and Eisner were taking issue not so much with the fact that Mehring had supported Leuß despite his faults, whatever they were actually assumed to be, but simply with the fact that he was supposedly not telling the truth about what exactly had transpired in this context.

The two leading *Vorwärts* editors had, as mentioned, published their ostensible refutation of Mehring's version of events on 25 October. That their critique was hardly informed by profound misgivings about Leuß himself is borne out not least by the fact that the *Vorwärts* of 28 October, the same edition in which Mehring's statement that he would deal with Gradnauer's and Eisner's critique in the second edition of *Meine Rechtfertigung* was published, led with an editorial praising Hans Leuß' newly published book *Aus dem Zuchthause*. Regarding Leuß' past it explained that 'his crime did not harm his reputation in unprejudiced circles and that which may have been all too human about the events leading to that crime,' the adultery in other words, did his reputation 'no harm in the eyes of the prejudiced because it is common practice among them. Enough! It is not the man we wish to speak of but his work.' Clearly, then, the author of this editorial shared the assumption that Leuß' reputation might be considered compromised, if at all, then due to his conviction. Moreover, he also took Leuß' contention that he had already begun to reform himself prior to his conviction at face value, mentioning that Leuß himself related in the book how, being the 'former antisemitic deputy' he *then* was, he had entered prison with all the prejudices of the establishment.⁹²

Mehring by no means stood alone with his general attitude towards Leuß, then, and while he obviously had an interest in asserting that he had told the truth on this matter as on any other matter it is hard to see why he should have felt a need to deny or minimize the significance of his dealings with Leuß. This is perhaps a good juncture, then, at which to take stock and contemplate what consistent motives and strategies, if any, we can actually identify on the part of the participants in this dispute. Why was the involvement of Mehring (and others) with Leuß deemed critique-worthy and why, more generally, did those opposed to Leuß' aspirations within the party oppose them in the first place? It is, of course, tempting, to follow Fischer's

⁹¹ Eisner, Gradnauer, 'Mehring'.

⁹² 'Aus dem Zuchthaus,' in *Vorwärts* 20, 252 [28 October 1903]: 1.

lead here and interpret his contention that the opposition to Leuß was directed not against the ‘adulterer and perjured convict’ but against the ‘former antisemitic leader’ to the effect that it was Leuß’ attitude towards matters Jewish that was at stake here. In fact, however, the sources not only offer nothing to support this conclusion but in fact make it extremely obvious that the term ‘antisemitic’ was applied here, as so often, merely to denote party-political affiliation without any reference to specific notions of, or attitudes towards, Jews. That Leuß was no longer affiliated with party-political antisemitism was, of course, beyond doubt and all the more so since his old associates had in any case disowned him, no matter what his own intentions might have been. On the other hand, the issue that we would probably be inclined to think of as the crucial one, namely whether, or to what extent, his perceptions of, and prescriptions for, matters Jewish had changed was apparently never even raised in this dispute.

If we return to the point at which Fischer first enlisted Leuß’ case against Mehring in Dresden the actual thrust of his argument is quite clear. As we saw, Fischer claimed to accept the stipulations of the *Vorstand* governing the involvement of party journalists with the non-Socialist press in broad terms. What he criticized, however, was the fact that the whole debate had, in his opinion, sprung from the personally motivated vendetta of a man who applied the standards of journalistic ‘cleanliness’ opportunistically when and if it suited him. One instance in which it had suited him not to apply those standards, this the indictment, had been the case of Hans Leuß. His past notwithstanding, Mehring had sung his praise and ‘Leuß was allowed to write for the *Neue Zeit*. At the same time he wrote articles for the *Zeitgeist* section of the *Berliner Tageblatt*,’ in other words for a non-Socialist paper with which, going by the rules now spelt out by the *Vorstand*, a party journalist should not (have) cooperate(d). His critique of this state of affairs Fischer in fact directed, not against Mehring as one of the editors of the *Neue Zeit*, but, none too surprisingly, against its *de facto* editor-in-chief: ‘Nobody mentioned anything about “cleanliness” then, comrade Kautsky! (From the floor: Very good!)’⁹³ Kautsky had spoken immediately before Fischer and had explained that ‘wariness of anyone who comes to us from the bourgeois parties and used to fight against us’ was ‘a principle of mine, which some of you should do more to embrace.’⁹⁴ Leuß, however, Fischer now retorted, Kautsky had welcomed without the reservations he usually maintained *vis-à-vis* such newcomers. Why? Presumably because Leuß was not a revisionist. The *Fraktion* then ‘had to intervene to ensure that this sense of cleanliness was given its due.’⁹⁵ Clearly, Fischer was in no way concerned specifically with Leuß’ antisemitism (in any sense of the word) but with Leuß as someone who should have encountered Kautsky’s wariness because he ‘came to us from the bourgeois parties and used to fight against us’ but had in fact received preferential treatment and thus demonstrated the hypocrisy and opportunism with which the standards of ‘cleanliness’ were applied by the editors of the *Neue Zeit* to some but not to others.

⁹³ *Parteitag 1903*, 176.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 176

It was in the same sense that he subsequently reiterated, as we saw, that ‘I, like many others, could not understand this peculiar introduction of the former antisemitic chieftain, with whom we had previously concerned ourselves dozens of times in the press and in leaflets,’ a former opponent by party-political affiliation, in other words, ‘into our party.’ Hence his decision to mention Leuß’ case, quite literally, as we already saw him maintain, only in order ‘to demonstrate that the quest for “cleanliness” within the *Neue Zeit* was very one-sided and only directed against certain people’ and that ‘Mehring is in no position to play the stickler for principles and party schoolmaster.’⁹⁶

He also used to act with indescribable contempt towards the party. The intervention of the Fraktion

How, then, and why, had the *Fraktion* intervened to restore ‘cleanliness’ in the *Neue Zeit*? As already, mentioned, the *Fraktion* discussed Leuß’ situation twice, once towards the end of 1899 and again a year later. The *Fraktion* only began to keep regular minutes in December 1898 and until 1914 these minutes generally documented only the decisions reached without offering much insight into the preceding debates.⁹⁷ The minutes for 23 November 1899 merely relate that the *Fraktion* had, ‘following a suggestion by comrade Meister, accepted Bebel’s proposal to inform the editors of the *Neue Zeit* of the wish of the *Fraktion* that it no longer accept contributions from the author Leuß.’⁹⁸

Fortunately for us, Bebel wrote to Kautsky the following day to inform him of the decision and explain the matter. The fact that Leuß was collaborating with the *Neue Zeit* ‘although his reputation was not only badly compromised but he also used to act with indescribable contempt towards the party’ had led to a debate in the *Fraktion*. ‘Meister brought the matter up at the behest of the comrades in Hannover who became aware of it due to the fact that the *Hannoverscher Courier* remarked on the matter. They are particularly outraged because Leuß used to be in Hannover⁹⁹ and they know him.’ It is possible, of course, that Bebel felt Leuß was ‘compromised’ by his antisemitic past rather than his criminal conviction (or perhaps some other more recent occurrence). On the other hand, the nuances of his formulation which are more obvious in the German original make it more plausible that his focus here was actually on something more recent than Leuß’ earlier career as an antisemitic deputy. It had been remarked, he wrote, that Leuß ‘nicht nur schwer kompromittiert wurde, sondern auch früher sich gegen die Partei bodenlos gemein benommen habe.’

⁹⁶ Fischer, ‘Armer Teufel,’

⁹⁷ Erich Matthias, Eberhard Pikart (eds.), *Die Reichstagsfraktion der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1898 bis 1918* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966) I: cxcvi. Hereafter Matthias, Pikart, *Reichstagsfraktion*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹⁹ Leuß’ earlier activities in Hannover were reflected not least in his pamphlet: Hans Leuß, *Was ist von unserem Magistrat zu halten?* (Hannover: C. F. W. Warnecke, 1893).

This formulation surely suggests that Leuß' contemptible behaviour towards the party transpired prior to whatever it was that subsequently compromised his reputation, in which case we could most plausibly interpret that contempt as belonging to his phase as an organized political antisemite, while the subsequent set of events compromising his reputation would most likely be his conviction and imprisonment (or something even more recent). This, in turn, would imply that the misgivings of the *Fraktion*, to the extent that they hinged on Leuß' antisemitic connections at all, resulted from the anti-Socialist activities that had been part and parcel of his antisemitic activism and in no way specifically from his stance on matters Jewish. At the very least, Bebel's formulation would seem to suggest that it was the contempt with which Leuß had previously treated Social Democracy, rather than whatever was assumed to have compromised his reputation as such, that had tipped the scales for those Social Democrats who now made an issue of his attempts to gain a foothold in the party.

One aspect emerging from Bebel's account certainly seems interesting, namely, that those who made Leuß' situation an issue at this point did so not because they themselves had registered Leuß' forays into the party and felt the need to address his political or personal past (for whatever reason) but because a non-Socialist paper had reported on the matter. This seems rather odd, given that that report was in fact barely four lines long and simply related in a perfectly matter-of-fact way that 'the former antisemitic deputy *Leuß* sought to enter the Social Democratic fold through Franz Mehring's mediation and succeeded.' The most recent edition of the *Neue Zeit* had already brought an essay by him, it added.¹⁰⁰ Now, the edition of the *Neue Zeit* in question was by then at least a week old, and Leuß' poems, along with Mehring's detailed and friendly preface, had been published almost exactly three months earlier. Neither, in an of itself, seems to have precipitated any protests within the party. Not Leuß' publications in the *Neue Zeit* as such would seem to have been the problem, then, but the suggestion (formulated somewhat ambiguously) that he had entered the Social Democratic fold, in other words, that he had become a member, an issue complicated yet further by the question just how Mehring and the *Neue Zeit* might have gone about bringing Leuß into the fold, a task that, at least in formal terms, clearly lay beyond their competence and remit. In any case, as Bebel

¹⁰⁰ *Hannoverscher Courier* 46, 22263 [21 November 1899, Morgen-Ausgabe]: 3. The paper names as its source the L.C. ('Nach einer Meldung der "L.C."'). Without having checked the matter thoroughly, one possibility would be that this source was the *L.C.-Zeitung*, the periodical of the Coburger Landsmannschafter-Convent, one of the unquestioningly antisemitic student fraternities. Its concern would presumably have been Leuß' 'betrayal' of the cause, rather than wariness that Leuß' (former) antisemitism might contaminate Social Democracy. As for the *Hannoverscher Courier*, it had in fact rather gleefully reported a defection from Naumann's National Social movement to the Social Democrats only days earlier, adding that Naumann should perhaps reconsider the value of his political work if its fruits were ultimately harvested by Social Democracy. The source of this report was none other than the *Vorwärts* ('Nationalsoziale und Sozialdemokratie,' in *Hannoverscher Courier* 46, 22259 [18 November 1899, Morgen-Ausgabe]: 3). This would suggest that the butt of any polemic intent the *Hannoverscher Courier* may have had in reporting Leuß' forays into the Social Democratic party would also most likely have been that murky world of hybrid organizations that subjectively sought to straddle the main political divides and have it all ways, foremost among them Naumann's movement and the Christian Social trend it had seceded from, rather than any major disquiet at the fact that Mehring had supposedly manoeuvred him under the wings of Social Democracy. At this stage, however, all this can be little more than conjecture.

explained to Kautsky in a distinctly distanced manner, 'the final result was that I am supposed to inform you and Mehring in the name of the *Fraktion* that the *Fraktion* requests' that Leuß' role as a contributor be discontinued. 'I already wrote to Mehring about this last night and also sent him the relevant item [Meldung] from the *Hannoverscher Courier* which concerns him directly.'¹⁰¹

It would seem that Leuß was in fact deemed to have discredited himself quite recently in some manner I have not as yet been able to identify. On 28 November, Bebel informed Kautsky that 'Richter has just given me the attached item that confirms what was suggested but could not be proven in the *Fraktion*. This report will make it easier for you to speak out against L[euß]; needless to say you can also inform Mehring of the report. It will cover his back too.'¹⁰² The most likely explanation, to my mind, would be that the material in question provided evidence of the fact that Leuß was contributing rather liberally to the non-Socialist press in a manner not deemed compatible with his work for the party press.

There is certainly nothing to suggest that the initiative against Leuß at this point may have hinged on Mehring's support for him, let alone that it might have been intended as a covert assault on Mehring. Mehring, as so often, would seem to have contemplated such a connection nonetheless. Obviously responding to misgivings aired by Mehring of which Kautsky seems to have informed him, Bebel wrote to Kautsky on 29 November that 'Mehring was involved in the affair *solely* because the comment of the *Hannoverscher Courier* mentioned his name as the one who brought L[euß] to the *Neue Zeit*. Without this remark, no one would have thought of him. He is utterly mistaken if he thinks he has been implicated in some other way.'¹⁰³

On the same day Wilhelm Liebknecht, as the editor-in-chief of the *Vorwärts*, wrote to Leuß. The fact that the Moscow archivists inventorized this letter as addressed to one G. Leyss is perhaps a good indication of just how little attention Leuß' case has received in the past. His attempts to employ him for the *Vorwärts* had met with resistance, Liebknecht informed Leuß. 'Accusations have been levelled the validity of which I am currently examining and which have nothing to do with your trial.' It would seem, then, that Liebknecht had not yet received the information confirming those apparently novel misgivings against Leuß that Bebel had passed on to Kautsky. He would be in touch again soon, Liebknecht continued, adding that he sincerely hoped that Leuß would succeed in carving out an independent position for himself.

Leuß noted on the top of the letter that he had received it on 30 November and then sent it on to Mehring, writing to him on the back of Liebknecht's letter:

I shall not respond until I have spoken to you – perhaps to the effect that I must request that I be told what the issue at hand was so as to enable me to defend myself.

It is more than obvious, of course, that *in fact* the trial is the decisive reason for the action against me. Were it not for that, his friends would [...] welcome my move/conversion with pleasure.

¹⁰¹ *BWABK*, 124–125.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 127.

Presumably Mehring subsequently went to discuss the matter with Liebknecht, with Leuß' letter in hand, which would explain how it found its way back among Liebknecht's papers.¹⁰⁴

Neither Mehring nor Kautsky were willing simply to give in to the request of the *Fraktion* concerning the immediate termination of the collaboration between Leuß and the *Neue Zeit*, and Bebel too apparently remained far from convinced of the need for such a step and would seem to have suggested to Kautsky that the matter might as yet be smoothed over if the *Neue Zeit* clarified its position. Hence Kautsky issued a statement dated 6 December in the *Neue Zeit*, relating in the name of the editorial team that the recent publication of an article by Hans Leuß in the *Neue Zeit* had

variously led to the assumption that the author [...] was thus being recognized by the editors as a member of the Social Democratic party.

This assumption is erroneous. We have neither the right, nor do we feel the calling, to determine the party membership of our contributors. Moreover, we have never found it incompatible with the tasks of our journal to open our pages to contributors who obviously do not belong to our party, if their contributions seemed useful to our cause or had no prospect of being published in the bourgeois press.¹⁰⁵

Leuß had offered the *Neue Zeit* a series of articles 'in which he wanted to portray his experiences with the prison system. Nobody will doubt that this subject is of the utmost importance to us and that Leuß is in a position to offer us substantial observations on the matter.' He had proposed this series of articles to the *Neue Zeit* 'based on the pertinent assumption that he would be able to speak his mind more freely in our journal than in the bourgeois press.' Against this background all the 'conclusions' regarding Leuß' relationship with the party drawn from the publication of the one introductory article published so far, were surely 'obsolete'.¹⁰⁶

The minutes for the meeting of the *Fraktion* on 6 December 1899 consequently report that 'Bebel informed the *Fraktion* of a statement by the editors of the *Neue Zeit* arguing that contributions to the *Neue Zeit* did not imply party membership. The *Fraktion*, however,' was obviously not appeased and expressed 'the wish: the editors of the *Neue Zeit* should in future reject contributions from L[euß] and also refrain from publishing the already accepted pieces.'¹⁰⁷ As Bebel subsequently explained, 'the *Fraktion* is very moral, especially Paul Singer,' who had asked whether Kautsky's statement on behalf of the editorial team meant that the *Neue Zeit* would refrain from the publication of Leuß' remaining articles and had forced the motion ruling out their publication. 'If you do intend to publish the subsequent articles,' Bebel concluded, 'the easiest thing to do would be to present them under a pseudonym and a different title, that way both sides receive their due.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Russian Centre for Preservation and Research of Modern Historical Documents (RCChIDNI, former IML/CPA), Fonds 200: Wilhelm Liebknecht, Opus 1.1: 670 (IISH Microfilm Holdings).

¹⁰⁵ Karl Kautsky, 'Die Veröffentlichung des Artikels von Hans Leuß,' in NZ 18-I, 11 [6 December 1899]: 324–325.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 325.

¹⁰⁷ Matthias, Pikart, *Reichstagsfraktion*, 25. Matthias and Pikart erroneously claim that the NZ subsequently did not publish further contributions by Leuß (ibid. n5).

¹⁰⁸ BWABK, 127.

Bebel's report, Kautsky now retorted, 'greatly surprised me, Mehring and I had agreed with Meister and Wurm that we issue our statements that clearly testify to the fact that Leuß' collaboration is of an entirely apolitical nature, so that his articles on the prison system, which I committed myself to accept, can no longer be used against us.' The option of continuing the collaboration with Leuß beyond that had no longer been under consideration.¹⁰⁹ Personally he 'felt quite indifferent' towards Leuß and indeed had no intention of accepting further contributions from him, Kautsky reiterated. He would not, however, renege on a commitment he had already entered into unless it was absolutely necessary and hence felt deeply embarrassed by the demand of the *Fraktion*. That said, the matter might as yet find an altogether different resolution since the remaining articles had not yet been written and the *Neue Zeit* would in any case only publish them if they met the journal's standards 'in every respect'.¹¹⁰

We might note at this point that the correspondence between Bebel and Kautsky from which we have been quoting was edited by Kautsky's second son Karl (1892–1978). He himself stated in the introduction that 'as the last surviving member of Kautsky's immediate family I was, although no professional historian, even so capable of illuminating otherwise dubious connections contributing to the characterization of many a half forgotten personality.' He had been all the more capable of doing so since he had 'grown up [...] in the atmosphere' of the editorial dealings of the *Neue Zeit*.¹¹¹ It is obvious that this claim is clearly more credible for the last decade or so of Kautsky's career as the journal's editor-in-chief and that his son was certainly too young at the time to remember the particular set of events we are looking at here. That does not necessarily rule out, though, that his comments on Leuß' case, to the extent that they were based on recollections at all, may correctly reflect the way in which this case was later recalled and talked about in the Kautsky household.

It is therefore interesting to note that the only explanation offered by Karl Kautsky Jr. in connection with the correspondence we have just reviewed is that Leuß had been imprisoned for perjury because 'he did not want to compromise a woman.'¹¹² This is all the more remarkable since he adds that 'a whole chapter' in Mehring's *Meine Rechtfertigung* discusses Leuß' case. There, however, Mehring quotes Fischer's Dresden critique in connection with his dealings with Leuß at some length, including the explicit reference to Leuß as a former antisemitic deputy. Surely, one can reasonably surmise that Karl Kautsky Jr. would not simply have passed this over in a post-1945 publication, had Mehring's dealings (and his dealings specifically) with Leuß ever been discussed in the Kautsky household as critique-worthy because they reflected an undue acceptance of Leuß' past as an antisemitic activist or his current stance on matters Jewish. Such an oversight is all the more unlikely, given that Karl Kautsky Jr. clearly subscribes to the negative assessment of Mehring that his father nurtured with increasing ferocity from the second decade of the twentieth century

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 128. The published version is based on a draft still among Kautsky's papers.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹¹¹ Ibid., x.

¹¹² Ibid., 124 *n.l.*

onwards. He claims that the 'persistent preparedness to feud that had characterized Mehring's entire literary career from the outset and veered from one extreme to the other' runs 'like a red thread' through the correspondence between Bebel and his father.¹¹³ Focusing on the major row between Bebel and Kautsky, on the one hand, and Mehring on the other, in the summer of 1913 that led to Mehring's already mentioned final removal from the editorial team of the *Neue Zeit*, he not only points out that Bebel's participation in it ended with his death but adds that the dispute 'perhaps contributed' to it.¹¹⁴ Mehring had been known throughout the party for his 'essentially paranoid touchiness,'¹¹⁵ his 'pathological touchiness, his excessive response to any injustice he had supposedly encountered, however minimal it was, his never-forgetting, unforgiving irreconcilability.'¹¹⁶ Hence, Mehring had always remained a loner in the party, 'whom no one dared know intimately, since everyone assumed that any utterance, even of the most private nature, might be used against him years later.'¹¹⁷ Surely, then, had Karl Kautsky Jr. had any recollections supporting the notion, or ever been privy to the suggestion, that Leuß was rejected by the bulk of the party because of his unreformed antisemitism, while Mehring had played an exceptional role in supporting him nonetheless, he would not have refrained from mentioning it; unless, of course, he chose to do so because he realized that Mehring and Kautsky had, as we saw, to all intents and purposes been in agreement on the extent to which Leuß should be allowed to contribute to the party press which would mean that the critique directed against Mehring in this context, should it have hinged on Leuß' antisemitism, would have applied no less to Kautsky. It remains inordinately more likely, though, that Karl Kautsky Jr. simply was not aware of this connection and that his annotation is in fact based on what was the generally accepted wisdom among the contemporaries he and others turned to when trying to find out what the Leuß case had been about.

¹¹³ Ibid., xxv.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., xxvii.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 108 *n1*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., xxvii.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., xxix. This is obviously an allusion to a remark in a letter Bebel wrote Engels on 20/21 March 1892. There he commented on Mehring's excellent work for the *NZ* and elsewhere but added that one could nevertheless enter into no intimate relationship with him. Not only might he have an ideological relapse, moreover, one could not but suspect that he noted everything down that he heard (*BWABE*, 527; cf. also Wistrich, 'Anti-Capitalism,' 43). It should be added, though, that those who portrayed Mehring's long memory as pathological when they were the butt of a critique formulated by him on the basis of past events had no qualms about tapping into that long memory on other occasions when it proved a valuable resource enabling them to confront others with their compromising past. Cf., for instance, Bebel's letter to Mehring of 27 November 1893 requesting material he could use against the Prussian finance minister and former member of the Communist League, Johannes von Miquel (1828–1901) in the *Reichstag* (SAPMO-BArch, NY 4043/6, Bl. 23–24) or Bebel's letter to Kautsky (11 December 1899), asking him to request information from Mehring that he could use against Schippel (*BWABK*, 128.) Similarly, when the controversy on the *Zukunft* erupted in the spring of 1903 Bebel apparently asked Mehring for relevant material (cf. Mehring's response on 1 April 1903, IISH Bebel 131: 7–8) and on 28 October 1905 Bebel asked Kautsky to persuade Mehring to let them keep material a little longer that they required should they become embroiled in a certain polemic (*BWABK*, 175.) Conversely, a long memory was not everything, of course. When Bebel and Kautsky finally began to contemplate Mehring's removal from the *NZ* in the spring of 1912, Kautsky's son Benedikt, on Bebel's suggestion, started gathering material from Mehring's past lest they should need it to strengthen their case against him (cf. Lambrecht, *Subjektivität*, 179.)

On a similar note, Matthias and Pikart, in their annotation of the minutes of the *Reichstagsfraktion*, simply explain that Hans Leuß was a contributor to the *Neue Zeit* on criminal law and the penal system and then refer the reader to page 86 of Friedrich Stampfer's memoirs for further information.¹¹⁸ There Stampfer discusses Leuß in connection with the fate of a number of former organized antisemitic activists. Wolfgang Heine, he explains in a formulation that immediately tells us all we need to know about the reliability of his contentions on the matter, 'not only became a Social Democrat but also a veritable philosemite – in contrast to some Jewish Social Democrats who acknowledged a certain relative justification of antisemitism.' Similarly Hans Leuß and Hellmut von Gerlach had initially been antisemites but had subsequently become 'editors of the radical *Welt am Montag*' and had then had 'almost exclusively Jewish friends. Heine, Gerlach and Leuß are in part responsible for the fact that I initially misjudged the National Socialists,' he concluded, 'They were such great guys and yet they had begun as reactionaries and antisemites. Should one take it to heart if there was always some new ferment that behaved absurdly?'¹¹⁹ Given the abundance of inaccuracies in Stampfer's memoirs, it is difficult to determine which period exactly Stampfer is referring to here. It would seem that Leuß in fact only became an editor of the *Welt am Montag* in 1909¹²⁰ but the fact that he had already written for the paper before 1903 must have been relatively well known, given that he was, as we saw, imprisoned for an article published in that paper. Whether Stampfer no longer recalled the conflict in which Leuß' initial attempt to gain a foothold in the party had become embroiled or simply decided not to mention it is impossible to decide. That Leuß was, to his mind, indubitably a wholly reformed character, however, is amply clear, and given the vehemence of his contention at this point, it is hard to see how Stampfer could have totally forgotten, or refrained from commenting on, the earlier misgivings about Leuß' aspirations within the party had these really hinged on the issue of his antisemitic past or doubts concerning his current stance on matters Jewish.

The colleagues who edited the relevant first volume of Rosa Luxemburg's collected letters under the auspices of Annelies Laschitzka and Günter Radczun,¹²¹ to add one further stone to our mosaic of apparently prevalent perceptions of the Leuß case, explain that 'the bourgeois author Hans Leuß had been imprisoned for perjury and had not been able to secure a livelihood on his release.' Hence he had turned to Mehring. Later he had written 'under very restrictive conditions' for Social Democratic papers. In this context 'dishonesties transpired, aided by opportunists, within one of the papers, presumably the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, which were resolved by Mehring.'¹²² Leuß' antisemitism past or present finds no mention

¹¹⁸ Matthias, Pikart, *Reichstagsfraktion*, 23 n1.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Stampfer, *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse. Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben* (Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957), 86. For Stampfer's recollections of his time at the LVZ and the 1903 Party Congress in Dresden which are replete with minor inaccuracies cf. *ibid.* 68–72 and 88–92.

¹²⁰ Weidner, 'Leuß'.

¹²¹ The colleagues in question were Georg Adler, Erna Herbig, Brigitte Hoeft, and Marianne Dingel.

¹²² *RLGB* I: 517 n23. I have not as yet been able to ascertain the exact nature of these 'dishonesties' that obviously provided the 'sound cause' Mehring alluded to in his response to Eisner and Gradnauer [cf. n81 above] Clearly responding to an inquiry from Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg wrote to him on 22 November 1901 that she had 'not mentioned the Leuß business to Gradnauer with a single word, on the contrary, he

here either, then, let alone does it feature as an issue relevant to the conflicts he became embroiled in at the time.

Does the renewed discussion of Leuß' situation in the *Fraktion* in 1900 offer any additional information about the motives for the resistance to his aspirations within the party, perhaps, or give any sort of explicit indication that his antisemitic past or current stance on matters Jewish might have featured, let alone played a substantial role, in the dispute about his possible role in the party? The section of the minutes for 12 December 1900 dealing with Leuß in fact gives by far the most detailed account of the *Fraktion's* deliberations on any issue since it had started keeping minutes and discloses that the matter had been discussed for no less than three hours. Even so the information provided remains cryptic. The *Fraktion* ultimately moved the following motion proposed by Stadthagen which we already saw mentioned (and in effect quoted) by Eisner and Gradnauer: 'The *Fraktion* expresses its opinion that it is not in the interest of the party that Leuß work under his name in a literary capacity for the party or that he hold some other responsible post or be employed as a regular contributor.'¹²³

himself mentioned the name to me, and I made no further comment. Having read the articles in question I did, however, gain the impression that it will probably remain unclear for the uninitiated, and don't forget that that means for the bulk of the reading public, why you deemed such absurd carping worthy of a response. I certainly agree entirely with you that you can be satisfied with a public apology from Morgenstern. That Wallfish too was involved in the cheating is interesting' (Fonds 201: 843, published in *RLGB* I: 541.) The articles in question which the *RLGB* editors did not manage to identify (*RLGB* I: 541 *n117*) were the four parts of an unsigned review of the *Nachlaßausgabe* published in the *SAZ* 12, 260–261 [8–9 November 1901] Beilage 1: 1–2 and 12, 264 [13 November 1901] Beilage: 1 and 12, 265 [14 November 1901] Beilage: 1–2. In connection with an indeed rather absurd issue Mehring protested against the first two instalments but the head of the paper's *Feuilleton*, Gustav Morgenstern (1867–1947), who had previously worked for the *LVZ* and returned there again in 1902, aggressively rejected the critique as ridiculous and accused Mehring of 'thoughtless insinuations' (for Mehring's and Morgenstern's statements cf. 'Nachschrift der Redaktion,' in *SAZ* 12, 265 [14 November 1901] Beilage: 1–2.) The *SAZ* 12, 268 [18 November 1901] Beilage: 2 now informed its readers that Mehring had referred the matter to the press commission. Morgenstern then published the 'public apology' mentioned by Luxemburg in her letter in the *SAZ* 12, 275 [27 November 1901]: 1. While maintaining that the articles in question had in no way subjected Mehring to inappropriate criticism, Morgenstern conceded there that, 'based on information I have received in the meantime and on Mehring's assurances that his statement was directed solely against the reviewer and not against the editorial staff, I now acknowledge that Mehring was, from his point of view, entitled to hold a different opinion, and therefore withdraw the accusation of "ridiculousness" and "thoughtless insinuations".' It is hard to tell whether this was the set of events involving Leuß that led Mehring to distance himself from him or whether this particular dispute was merely another illustration, as it were, of Morgenstern's unreliability which went well with his involvement in the 'cheating' in which, as we might infer from Luxemburg's formulation, he was involved just as the paper's manager Hermann Wallfisch (born 1862) was; assuming, that is, that that was the 'cheating' involving Leuß. In terms of the content it is possible that the reviews in question were written by Leuß, although they seem stylistically a little too polished to be by him. Perhaps they were written by Leuß but officially submitted by someone else and Mehring found this out when he inquired who the author of the contentious remarks might be. This would help explain why he then blew his top on so petty an issue. Morgenstern, in turn, either because he himself only now found out that Leuß was the author or, more likely in the light of Luxemburg's formulation that Morgenstern too had been 'involved in the cheating', simply because Leuß' cover had been blown, was then no longer in a position to back him and thus compelled to issue his conspicuously reluctant apology. This issue requires further investigation.

¹²³ Matthias, Pikart, *Reichstagsfraktion*, 52.

Bebel had previously tabled a milder motion stating merely that 'the *Fraktion* declares that it sees no reason to prohibit that party papers accept literary contributions by Leuß; it merely wishes that his articles are not published under his name.' Singer, however, had tabled an amendment to Bebel's motion, demanding that Leuß also be excluded from regular employment in the party press or as a party propagandist. Somewhat ironically, Singer's amendment had been carried but the thus amended version of Bebel's motion subsequently defeated.¹²⁴ As for the reasons we are once again left none the wiser.

Corrupt expressions of cultural depravity: A reference to Leuß' stance on matters Jewish at last?

The only explicit formulation of misgivings about Leuß I have identified so far that might possibly be understood as an allusion to his stance on matters Jewish is, somewhat ironically, contained in a polemic by Mehring. Mehring returned to the matter in May 1904 when the arbitration proceedings against those who had staged the attack on him in Dresden were finally completed. As we already know, he clearly felt that they had been let off too lightly. To underscore yet further the base and opportunistic nature of his assailants Mehring remarked that it was now perfectly obvious that Edmund Fischer had been playing games with the Party Congress in Dresden when he raised Leuß' case. This had been made evident by the fact that Gradnauer had used the session of the *Reichstag* on the previous Friday, 13 May 1904, to praise Leuß' *Aus dem Zuchthause*.¹²⁵ Anyone who had read it, Gradnauer had said, 'must be most profoundly unsettled by it. I believe I am not exaggerating if I contend that this book is a civilizing book [Kulturbuch] of high standing. The unusual case transpired that a man from the educated circles was thrown into prison by a hard fate.' Leuß' book reiterated the basic assumptions of modern criminology in a 'loud and clear' fashion and engaged in a 'noble and enthusiastic feud against societal prejudice.' Hence Gradnauer was sure he was 'not exaggerating when I say that this book will hold a special place in the history of the criminal justice and prison system.'¹²⁶ We might add in passing and with the benefit of hindsight, that this was, should it ever have been anything more than an expression of the opportunistic hyperbole regularly cultivated in the party for sheer effect, certainly an exceptionally crude misjudgement in every possible respect. Gradnauer's judgement, Mehring remarked, was

only partly right. To the extent that Leuß' book presents reflections by the author himself it contains corrupt expressions of a cultural depravity [korrupte Anschauungen einer Unkultur] that necessitate the most determined opposition from the party's point of view. What indeed makes the book valuable are the factual accounts of prison life which essentially just present in a slightly broader version what Leuß already published some years ago in the *Neue Zeit* [...] These publications in the scientific organ of the party were not fortunate enough to attract Gradnauer's attention, instead they had very different consequences. Pointing primarily to the "noble and enthusiastic feud" he intended to unleash against the conditions in the prisons, Leuß, who was being boycotted by the bourgeois world at the time, had turned to Mehring requesting a

¹²⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹²⁵ 'Das Parteischiedsgericht,' in *LVZ* 11, 112 [17 May 1904] Beilage 1: 1. Hereafter 'Parteischiedsgericht'.

¹²⁶ *Stenographische Berichte 4: Von der 81. Sitzung am 2. Mai bis zur 100. Sitzung am 16. Juni 1904* (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1904): 2894.

little human compassion. Mehring subsequently arranged for the essays to be accepted for publication

by the *Neue Zeit*, 'not, however, without requiring Leuß to erase the traces of cultural depravity which pervade his current book and already reared their heads at a couple of points in the earlier essays.' He then quoted the part of Fischer's speech in Dresden dealing with Leuß, beginning with the fact that Leuß had been an antisemitic deputy and ending with the statement that it had been Wolfgang Heine who most vehemently opposed Leuß' attempts to gain a foothold in the party. 'Thus,' Mehring then continued, 'the "revisionist" Edmund Fischer misled the Party Congress by hurling the rudest abuse at Mehring because he arranged for the publication of a few essays by the *Neue Zeit* which the "revisionist" speaker of the *Fraktion* Gradnauer uses the platform of the *Reichstag* to praise as a grand civilizing achievement now that they are published in a considerably impaired form as a book.'¹²⁷

We cannot know for sure, what exactly Mehring was referring to and it is worth pointing out that Leuß was an eclectic of the worst kind or, to put it less politely, that he utilized ideological or feuilletonistic (rather than genuinely philosophical) set pieces opportunistically and usually rather pompously without ever aspiring to a genuine comprehension of any of them. It is therefore not always easy to link up those set pieces in any systematic fashion or even to determine definitively just how seriously his usage of them can or need ultimately be taken. Even so, it is certainly not hard to guess what 'corrupt expressions of cultural depravity' Mehring had identified in Leuß' *Aus dem Zuchthause*. It contains a rambling and excruciatingly over-ambitious section detailing the influences that had supposedly facilitated his thorough political, intellectual, and spiritual reform while in prison, much of which is utterly garbled, in part barely comprehensible, and often borders on the scurrilous. There Leuß also mentioned the influence of one 'moral genius' in particular, 'a man of the utmost moral enthusiasm,' namely, Nietzsche. 'In prophetic language, rushing ahead, storming forwards, he sought to bestow upon humanity the ethics of the correspondence of "egoism", on the one hand, and love, on the other, of love as the productive, creative "egoism" of the strong [individual] who demands all for himself, but only to turn it into a gift to all others, [of the strong individual] whose life and enormous yearning is only to sacrifice himself.'¹²⁸

Does Leuß' account of his own reform or the book more generally, we might ask conversely, contain any utterances on matters Jewish that Mehring might have identified as 'corrupt expressions of cultural depravity'? As already mentioned, Leuß maintained that he had already begun to distance himself from organized political antisemitism at the time of his conviction. This version of events he upheld not only in his subsequent publications but also in private communications. Following the first decision of the *Fraktion* in December 1899, for instance, Leuß wrote to Kautsky on 9 December that Mehring had already informed him of the 'misgivings I still arouse among former opponents. Five years lie between my former political

¹²⁷ 'Parteischiedsgericht'.

¹²⁸ Leuß, *Aus dem Zuchthause*, 56.

activity and my current orientation, among them three and a half years of a self observation and self criticism so thorough,' that they more than amply 'explain the drastic change of my opinions [...] I have been cured of my ambition to have a political "career" [...] I had *already* informed my then friends of my decision to resign from parliamentary life *before* my conviction.'¹²⁹ In *Aus dem Zuchthause*, to return to our main line of argument, he similarly stated that 'my opinions and notions had reached a dead end,' by the time of the conviction. 'In the course of fifteen years I had moved from the extreme right further and further to the left,'¹³⁰ he explained. 'As an antisemite I had become one of those "national" antisemites who sympathizes with the "Zionists", thinks highly of the Jews and hates them not as individuals but only as a community precisely because of their *merits*.'¹³¹ He had already 'informed my friends of my weariness of politics and intended to emigrate. Hence the conviction came just at the right time and saw me breathe a sight of relief.'¹³²

Even assuming that Mehring might have picked up on the problematic nature of Leuß' reference to the 'national antisemitism' he says he inclined towards at the time of his conviction, the fact that this was part of Leuß' description of his orientation prior to his imprisonment makes it highly unlikely that Mehring should have had this passage in mind as a reflection of those 'corrupt expressions of cultural depravity' reflected in the book and representing Leuß' current mindset. There can, in any case, be little doubt, that Mehring nurtured no doubts that Leuß had indeed left his antisemitic past behind him and that he continued to think so even after his sympathies for Leuß had abated. When reviewing the book Leuß published in 1905 on the recently deceased Wilhelm von Hammerstein,¹³³ the disgraced former leader of the radical (and avowedly antisemitic) Conservative right and long-standing editor-in-chief (from 1881 to 1895) of its leading organ, the *Kreuzzeitung* (*Neue Preußische Zeitung*), Mehring explained that Leuß had formerly been among the supporters of Hammerstein and Stoecker. He had then, 'after initial more serious attempts moved on, rather than progressed, to an opposite, though not higher point of view.'¹³⁴ The 'initial more serious attempts' were surely a reference to Leuß' attempt to gain a foothold within Social Democracy. Hence we can conclude that Mehring assessed Leuß' subsequent political stance as one that was indeed opposed to his former antisemitic position but nevertheless inadequate since it failed to see the Socialist light. We might note in passing that there is, of course, another, somewhat more subtle and unsettling implication to Mehring's formulation. If Leuß' current non-antisemitic bourgeois position was not in fact superior to his earlier antisemitic orientation then that implied that the antisemitism he had previously adhered to was not inferior to the non-antisemitic bourgeois orientation he now subscribed to. Either, then, Leuß adhered to a particularly sinister form of non-antisemitic bourgeois ideology or antisemitism was

¹²⁹ IISH Karl Kautsky D XV: 451

¹³⁰ Leuß, *Aus dem Zuchthause*, 68.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³³ Hans Leuß, *Wilhelm Freiherr von Hammerstein* (Berlin: Hermann Walther, 1905). Hereafter Leuß, *Hammerstein*.

¹³⁴ Franz Mehring, 'Eine verfehlte Rettung,' in *NZ* 23-II, 33 [10 May 1905]: 201–204, here 202.

indeed a bourgeois ideology like any other. Assuming the latter interpretation is the correct one it is ironic that on that score Leuß, from all we know, would have been in full agreement with Mehring.

Now, it lies in the nature of arguments *ex silentio* that they cannot be proven and in an important sense the case I have tried to make throughout this discussion indeed presupposes the very assumption it is designed to underscore and illustrate, namely, that the label 'antisemitic' was frequently applied merely to denote party-political affiliation without any (or at least without a predominant) concern for an individual's stance on matters Jewish. Otherwise it could be argued that the mere reference to Leuß as a (former) antisemite implied a generally accepted critique of his attitude towards matters Jewish that simply went without saying and hence only that which did not go without saying needed to be spelt out. It is only within the context of other instances in which it seems plausible to assume the more limited usage of the term 'antisemitic' that the material presented here can function as circumstantial evidence for my contention (and vice versa, of course). Even granted the validity of my contention, though, another alternative remains. Perhaps the issue of Leuß' attitude towards matters Jewish features in none of the sources I have been able to identify, not because it was ignored, but because all those involved had convinced themselves of the fact that Leuß genuinely was a reformed character in this respect. The 'national antisemitism' that we already saw Leuß say he inclined towards by the time of his conviction hardly vouches for the sort of worldview we might be inclined to grant a clean bill of health, of course, but an attempt to reconstruct Leuß' stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish is nevertheless a worthwhile exercise. After all, even if we were to assume that Leuß' stance on matters Jewish did not feature explicitly in the conflict aroused by his forays into the party because the one thing both his supporters and detractors were convinced of was that he had shed his anti-Jewish notions, it would be important to know what criteria were applied to come to that conviction. Although I would maintain that Leuß' stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish was of concern neither to those Social Democrats who supported him nor to those who criticized him, the following reconstruction of that stance will demonstrate that the Social Democrats in question would hardly cut a better figure if we did assume they had critically engaged his relevant notions but not found them wanting.

A development similar to mine: The 'conversion' of Hellmut von Gerlach

Writing in the *Weltbühne* in 1924, Gerlach explained that

as far as his antisemitism is concerned, my late friend Hans Leuß, the former antisemitic deputy, went through a development similar to mine. When acquaintances questioned him, doubting whether someone who had once been an antisemite could ever rid himself of it entirely, he used to say: "On the contrary. It is precisely he who has come to know antisemitism from the inside and has personally experienced it, who is immune to any relapse once he has recognized his youthful foolishness." Indeed: immune to mumps are only those who have had them.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Erinnerungen eines "Junkers" V: Juden und Antisemiten,' in *Weltbühne* 20, 19 [8 May 1924]: 613–617, here 617. Hereafter Gerlach, 'Juden und Antisemiten'; subsequently reprinted in *Idem, Erinnerungen eines Junkers* (Berlin: Welt am Montag, [1925] n.d.): 107–118, here 118. Hereafter *Idem, Erinnerungen*.

Before turning to Leuß' own pronouncements, then, it is perhaps worth examining Gerlach's transformation to help us contextualize Leuß' 'similar' development. In so doing, we will need to keep in mind, though, that Gerlach's pertinent recollections date from the 1920s and 1930s. He published material on the matter on at least three occasions and the slight shifts in emphasis between them seem to indicate that the accounts he gave of his own 'conversion' were fitted to a changing political agenda dictated by the re-emergence in force of political antisemitism during the Weimar years and the looming (and then actual) ascendancy of the National Socialists.

Harking back, at Leuß' funeral, to the time when he had first met Leuß at Stoecker's *Volk*, Gerlach explained that

we were both antisemites back then. Out of – a misunderstood social inclination. We believed we had to see in Jewry the essence of the capitalist-egoistic system that we totally detested. We *meant*: against the exploitative and egoistic *capitalism*! We shouted: against the Jews! For we were both young and politically inexperienced, full of the prejudices of our milieu, without knowledge of the Jews with whom our antisemitic dogma precluded us from becoming involved. We have both used our life to widen our horizons. That has led us on the *path from the right to the left*. I walked along it *gradually* while Leuß has his day of Damascus *suddenly*. Our point of departure was the same. Our destination was the same. It was only half way along that we sometimes did not see eye to eye.

Not entirely in keeping with Leuß' insistence on the onset of his reform before his conviction, Gerlach referred to Leuß' time in prison by stating that 'he entered it an *antisemite* and left it a *Social Democrat*.'¹³⁶ Earlier that year (1920), Gerlach had in fact published an article on antisemitism in the *Weltbühne*. 'I was a passionate antisemite when I was young,' he begun there.

Why? I grew up in a conservative and orthodox home on a large Silesian estate. That sort of milieu predestines you to become an antisemite although I was not exactly brought up to hate Jews. But the disdain for the Jews was traditional. Strictly speaking, there were no Jews in our area, except for a few Jews dealing in animal skins [Felljuden]. Hence my opinion was impaired by no knowledge of the matter, allowing the prejudice to unfold all the more.

He then immediately moved on, declaring that 'the idea that gripped me most firmly by far was the social idea.'¹³⁷ Consequently,

I was an enthusiastic social reformer or, what to my mind amounted to the same thing back then, an anti-capitalist. And to my mind being an anti-capitalist and being an antisemite was the same thing. Stöcker's captivating oratory had cast a spell on the young student. And what was it he preached tirelessly? "The most distinct and dangerous representative of capitalism is the Jew." Otto Glagau's writings on the stock exchange and *Gründer* swindle that came equipped with endless amounts of material and hence seemed so evidential impressed me most profoundly. And he had coined the phrase: "The social question is the Jewish question." Jews themselves I did not know. I was precluded from getting to know them by the principal rule of the *Verein deutscher Studenten* and the other antisemitic organizations I had joined: The Germanic individual must steer clear of the corrupting involvement with the inferior Semites!¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Idem*, 'Leuß'.

¹³⁷ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' in *Weltbühne* 16, 1 [1 January 1920]: 7–11, here 7. Hereafter Gerlach, 'Antisemitismus'.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

Over time, Gerlach increasingly emphasized the importance of the milieu in which he had grown up for the development of his antisemitism and embellished his recollections accordingly. In his account published in 1924 he explained that 'I have no reason to conceal that I was an antisemite in my youth. I need not even be ashamed of it. I would have needed to be a political *Wunderkind* had I, without knowledge of the Jews and brought up to despise them, jumped from the Silesian *Junker* castle straight into the democratic camp.' Again he emphasized that he had not encountered Jews at the time.

At best, a so-called bundle Jew [Bündeljude] would occasionally come to our yard, peddling or in search of animal skins, with his *Gemauschel* and the obsequious behaviour typical of the "inferior race" which we had been taught to believe in from birth, as it were [...] the basic principle impressed on me for life was, after all: Avoid the Jew!

We observe here a trait of Gerlach's account that will become more pronounced as we move on. The emphasis he places on having been pre-disposed towards antisemitism by traditional prejudice, on the one hand, and the lack of encounters with Jews, on the other, is offset by the fact that he characterizes those Jews he actually did encounter as reinforcing the prejudices instilled in him by his upbringing. That he did not subsume those prejudices under antisemitism becomes evident when he subsequently asks, 'what made me susceptible to anti-Jewish hostility? The claim of the antisemitic leaders whom the youthful students regarded as authoritative, Treitschke, Stoecker, and others, that Jewishness epitomized materialism, egoism, parasitical tradesmanship [schmarotzenden Händlertums].' He then added that 'the phrase coined by the great liberal historian Mommsen and quoted tendentiously by the antisemites time and again, that Jewry was a "ferment of decomposition" made a profound impression on me,' and concluded by professing that 'I was a passionate ideologue, a state socialist in Adolf Wagner's sense, a foe of the Manchester-style *laissez faire*.'¹³⁹

In his final account, written in exile and published posthumously in 1937, Gerlach underscored his earlier shift in emphasis yet further. 'One could hardly expect someone who grew up in a staunchly conservative castle in a conservative constituency to display the mentality of the *Abwehrverein*,' he begun his discussion of the matter. 'As a child I only ever encountered Jews in the form of bundle Jews or Jews trading in animal skins [Fell- oder Bündel-Juden] who came to our yard to buy and sell.'¹⁴⁰ At this point one finally cannot help wondering just how authentic his account actually is. Had he actually seen these Jews on the estate when he was a child and personally observed the characteristics he now ascribed to them, and did he actually hear them referred to as *Felljuden* or *Bündeljuden* or both? It may well have been customary to use both designations, of course, but that does not yet explain why he recalled (or chose to recall) them as *Felljuden* in 1920, as *Bündeljuden* in 1924, and now under both designations. In any case,

these were poor devils who were excruciatingly obsequious, the sort who came back round the front when thrown out at the back. No one hated them but they were despised. Inferior race! That was really the notion I was brought up to believe in: the Jews are different, they are inferior

¹³⁹ *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten,' 614.

¹⁴⁰ *Idem*, *Von rechts nach links*, 108.

to us. What they want is not to work but just to huckster. To earn money at any price is their only morality. Hence one should beware of them. The best one can do is to steer clear of them.¹⁴¹

He still maintained, then, that the Jews were despised but not hated by those among whom he grew up. For his own subsequent development he had now developed a slightly different terminology, though. 'I only became an intellectual [verstandesmäßiger] antisemite, if this is an apt term, as a result of my education in the *Verein deutscher Studenten*.'¹⁴²

'How, then,' to move on to the issue immediately relevant to our main discussion here, 'was it that I not only got over the children's illness of antisemitism but also, precisely because I had gone through it, became totally immune to any stirring of antisemitism?' Gerlach asked in 1920. 'The conversion transpired,' he explained, 'gradually over a number of years.' What brought it about?

The more intimate my involvement with the antisemitic leaders became, the more they repulsed me. I got to know them as egoistic, pharisaic, and incredibly conceited. My anti-capitalism had made me an antisemite. Gradually I realized that the antisemitic gesture was just a welcome means of protecting "Christian" capital¹⁴³ [...] I realized how pertinent the dictum was that described antisemitism as the "Socialism of the foolish". Even with antisemites who there otherwise by all means decent people one could no longer reason when their own material interests were touched upon [...]

My idealism had made me an antisemite. That words and deeds should correspond I took for granted. Hence I encountered disappointment on disappointment. It transpired that nearly all the antisemitic leaders were entirely egoistic people who cared far more about their own precious personalities than the cause. None of them would let the others take on a leading role. They hated one another and sought to bring each other down. [...] In the public assemblies they feigned highest morality and Jewry was branded as the mortal enemy of German morality. Having been greeted with thundering applause as they thus confronted the immoral Jews with the "truth" the antisemitic champions of German purity

would regularly move on to venues of ill repute 'and soon each of them would have a waitress on his lap.'¹⁴⁴ That Gerlach found this issue particularly appalling is borne out by the fact that it subsequently resurfaced in an embellished form. In 1924, he mocks the 'upright heads of families [braven Familienväter]' who went to these venues and 'soon had one or two waitresses on their knees.'¹⁴⁵

'Of course,' Gerlach conceded in his initial account, 'there were also decent and honest people among the antisemitic leaders but they usually did not last long.' Moreover, 'the moral lowness was matched by an intellectual dearth.'¹⁴⁶ Liebermann v. Sonnenberg, for instance, though

lacking a thorough knowledge of anything, nevertheless talked about everything. When I, who was then being courted a great deal as the "dauphin of the antisemites", once said to him during an intimate encounter: "Herr v. Liebermann, I think it really is a matter of urgency that the

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 108–109.

¹⁴² Ibid., 109.

¹⁴³ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 8.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten,' 615.

¹⁴⁶ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 9.

antisemitic movement finally gain a scientific basis," he laughed and answered: "Young friend, first of all we want to make the antisemitic camp strong, then we can see to its scientific basis."

Gerlach was profoundly shocked. 'One of the illusions of my life had finally been destroyed.'¹⁴⁷ With the years he elaborated more and more on his misgivings about the antisemitic leaders and his resulting disillusionment. 'What gradually made me despair of Stoecker and later forced me into open opposition to him,' Gerlach explained in his final account was the fact that 'he was a demagogue,' who was 'prepared to grant greater importance to the propagandist effect than the cause.'¹⁴⁸ Gerlach subscribed to the more conventional and still popular, though clearly untenable, notion that we also saw Hasenclever formulate, that Stoecker had become an antisemite in spite of himself, not least because he was provoked by the 'Jewish' press. 'When he begun his social activities,' Gerlach wrote of Stoecker in 1924,

antisemitism was not at all on his mind. But it was the species of the liberal press in Berlin propounding [...] the most anti-social Manchesterism that rejected his social programme most spitefully. For the most part these papers were edited by Jews. It was on them that Stoecker turned, when he initially made a few quite incidental anti-Jewish remarks, [stating that] Jewry was pushing its way too far to the front.

These antisemitic remarks gained him thundering applause in the assemblies, far greater applause than his serious remarks on social policy. That seduced him into going further along the antisemitic path than was really borne out by his convictions.¹⁴⁹

None too surprisingly, therefore, 'antisemitism took over an ever larger part of his speeches,' Gerlach complained in his final account, 'without him ever having been in a position to say what it was he actually wanted done against the Jews.'¹⁵⁰

Wolf von Dallwitz, 'my friend at the time,' gave Gerlach further cause to doubt the integrity of his superiors. Dallwitz had, for instance, 'ascertained from the church records that it was only [Paul] Liman's father who had converted from Judaism to Christianity,' and when Dallwitz had confronted Liman on the matter, 'he tried to lie his way out: "His father had told him he was of Italian extraction and hence so black and hirsute."¹⁵¹ Animated by Ahlwardt's *Judenflinten*, Dallwitz, 'himself the most glowing antisemite,' had also visited Ahlwardt to take a look at the evidence that he had proclaimed was in his possession. When Dallwitz uttered his request, 'Ahlwardt pointed to a heap of files but could not find his way around in them. When Dallwitz became more insistent Ahlwardt terminated the conversation with the words: "Should I not be able to prove something I just posit it [Wenn ich etwas nicht beweisen kann, behaupte ich es eben.]"'

All in all, then, 'I only met very few genuinely decent people among the antisemitic leaders and those whose character was without blemish were scientifically so uneducated that the young chap I then was was outraged.'¹⁵² We might note in passing that Böckel seems to have belonged to those Gerlach counted

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁸ Idem, *Von rechts nach links*, 104.

¹⁴⁹ Idem, 'Erinnerungen eines "Junkers" VII: Adolf Stoecker,' in *Weltbühne* 20, 21 [22 May 1924]: 693–697, here 695–696; reprinted in Idem, *Erinnerungen*: 68–77.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, *Von rechts nach links*, 105.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁵² Ibid., 114.

among the decent, still conceding at the end of his life that Böckel 'was certainly a democratic antisemite.'¹⁵³ But then Scheidemann too had, of course, applauded Böckel's democratic credentials in his already cited lament of the moral degeneration antisemitism had succumbed to since its democratic and rebellious heyday. Moreover, the antisemitic leaders were persistently at each other's throats. 'Much stronger than the hatred of the Jews,' Gerlach complained in 1924,

was the hatred each antisemitic group nurtured for the other. Pasch, for example, only ever referred to Liebermann as Leibermann and to Hammerstein als Chammerstein und spoke of the two of them as 'the two horse Jews from the east'. Liebermann, on the other hand [...] explained that his rival Zimmerman [...] epitomized Jewish lecherousness [jüdische Geilheit].¹⁵⁴

This theme was taken up again in the final account but given an additional twist there. Hammerstein 'did not look much like a Germanic Siegfried,' Gerlach explained there, 'but far more like a muscular Jewish horse trader from the east, which is why the antisemite Pasch only ever referred to him as "Chammerstein".'¹⁵⁵

Aghast he had to admit to himself that 'these, then, were the men who wanted to liberate Germany from the Jewish yoke and govern it in a purely Germanic manner!'¹⁵⁶ Consequently, it 'was primarily the antisemites who changed my mind about antisemitism,'¹⁵⁷ or, as he later reiterated even more succinctly: 'It was not so much the Jews who changed my mind about antisemitism but the antisemites who dissuaded me.'¹⁵⁸ One shudders to think, then, what would have become of Gerlach had the antisemitic leaders all been sincere anti-capitalists and of pure Germanic stock, had they paid more attention to the scientific foundation of antisemitism and an appropriate filing system, cooperated harmoniously, and been less given to entertaining waitresses on their laps. That said, Gerlach does add that although 'it was only my practical encounters with the antisemites that induced me to examine antisemitism scientifically,' these encounters then also 'inspired the desire in me finally to get to know the Jews as well whom I had until then unquestioningly attacked as rascals.'¹⁵⁹

Now, Gerlach may well have remembered his development in this way and was perhaps sincerely convinced that his subsequent encounter with the Jews he then met was decisive for his change of attitude towards matters Jewish. Strictly speaking, however, that is not a plausible explanation. All personal observation of phenomena is only ever partial and judgements are never based on comprehensive and objective personal observation.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 170.

¹⁵⁴ *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten,' 615.

¹⁵⁵ *Idem*, *Von rechts nach links*, 132.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten,' 615.

¹⁵⁷ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 10.

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*, *Von rechts nach links*, 114.

¹⁵⁹ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 10.

If such comprehensive and objective personal observation were the precondition for pertinent and rational judgements then Gerlach's subsequently more positive attitude towards Jews would have been just as much an outgrowth of irrational and false generalizations as his earlier overt antisemitism had been. After all, personal encounters with Jews, be they positive or negative, in and of themselves have no immediate evidential value for judgements on matters Jewish at all. Such judgements depend on the way in which personal encounters with individual Jews are evaluated and generalized, not on those encounters themselves. This finds its reflection not least in the concept of the exception that confirms the rule, the suggestion, in other words, that a particular phenomenon or experience is in fact compatible with a notion that squarely contradicts what that phenomenon or experience by itself would seem to indicate or demonstrate. It is from this basic fact that the futility of the kernel of truth approach to antisemitism ultimately springs.

To the extent that Gerlach's account in effect subscribes to the kernel of truth notion, at least in part, it too invariably falls prey to this futility and ultimately becomes implausible. As we saw, Gerlach placed great emphasis on the notion that he had been pre-disposed towards antisemitism by traditional prejudice, on the one hand, and the lack of encounters with Jews, on the other. This he maintained persistently, still reiterating in his final account that 'I was an antisemite as a young person because I did not know the Jews.'¹⁶⁰ And yet, as we noted in connection with Gerlach's remarks on the *Felljuden* or *Bündeljuden*, he sought to combine that notion with a characterization of those Jews he actually did encounter as reinforcing the prejudices instilled in him by his upbringing. It is all the more remarkable that we should now find at this very juncture, as a preface to his account of the way in which the encounters he was now to have with Jews supposedly compelled him to reconsider his stance on matters Jewish, the following clarification:

I do not want to conceal that the low esteem in which I held the Jews as a young man had been reinforced by the few Jews with whom I had come into contact. They were baptized Jews who dabbled in antisemitism themselves and always struck me as the epitome of despicability. [...] It was precisely these Jewish antisemites who denied their belief, their name, and their people [Volk] and were ashamed of it, who flattered those in power and shunned no baseness to obtain superficial advantages that had in my eyes been the practical proof of the moral inferiority of the Jewish race. Now, however,

he then continued, 'that I had realized the truth about the quality of the antisemites, I met Jews who could really be regarded as representatives of Jewry.' This statement is highly intriguing. His disillusionment with the antisemitic leaders was obviously a prerequisite for his subsequent encounters with Jews in that he had previously sought to avoid all involvement with Jews, hence the nexus between his disillusionment and any new insights gained as a result of those subsequent encounters was obviously more than coincidental.

¹⁶⁰ *Idem, Von rechts nach links*, 261.

All the same, it is difficult not to assume that there is deeper truth to Gerlach's formulation which he himself never became aware of: his disillusionment was not so much the pre-condition for his meeting 'Jews who could really be regarded as representatives of Jewry' but rather for his ability to think of those Jews he subsequently met as representative of Jewry rather than as exceptions confirming the antisemitic rule. In any case, he quickly added that 'among them too I saw very different individuals. On average I found them no better but more diligent, more sober and intellectually more alert than the Aryans. Many of them had unpleasant traits. I came to the conviction that the domination of neither race was desirable but that both complemented one another most expediently if they lived together.'¹⁶¹ As he later reiterated, 'I have met extremely nasty specimens of the human race among them, especially among the baptized ones (who then frequently styled themselves as antisemites!). But I have never found that the percentage of bad chaps among them was larger than among the racially pure Germanic people.'¹⁶²

Among the representative Jews who subsequently came to command Gerlach's respect the Frankfurt banker and philanthropist, Charles Hallgarten (1838–1908), who incidentally played a major role in bankrolling the *Abwehrverein*,¹⁶³ held pride of place. 'Such a Jew was supposed to be a pest?' Gerlach portrays himself as reasoning. 'Or Karl Marx who had arguably done more to spread the fame of German science over the planet and was more firmly "rooted" in it than any one of our pure-blooded [reinblütigen] Germanic individuals [Germanen]?'¹⁶⁴ As for Hallgarten, 'this Jew, who never denied his Jewishness, struck me as the perfect example of the good European: synthesizing capitalism and idealism.'¹⁶⁵ We might note in passing that Gerlach's anti-capitalism would seem to have evaporated or at least mellowed substantially by this time, then. Now, if it had been his anti-capitalism that had made him an antisemite in the first place, then would not the abandonment or modification of that anti-capitalism be a rather more striking argument for the abandonment of the antisemitic movement too, quite regardless of the integrity or competence of its leaders? Moreover, while his complaint about the insincerity of the anti-capitalist gesture cultivated by the antisemitic leaders would remain valid as a critique of their insincerity, would not the fact that the antisemitic movement was not in fact anti-capitalist then be a redeeming rather than a critique-worthy feature? None of these considerations feature in his discussion, however.

In any case, on balance, then, his attitude towards matters Jewish remained rather more ambiguous than his rejection of organized political antisemitism which he formulated with great clarity:

One thing I in any case recognized with the utmost clarity: it amounted to boundless ignorance, if not conscious deceit, if the antisemites claimed that the Jewish race was inferior and a pest that had to be eradicated from the body of the people [Volkskörper] [...]

¹⁶¹ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 10.

¹⁶² *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten' 617.

¹⁶³ Cf. Peter Pulzer, 'Die Reaktion auf den Antisemitismus,' in Meyer (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte* 3: 249–277, here 250–251.

¹⁶⁴ Gerlach, 'Antisemitismus,' 11.

¹⁶⁵ *Idem*, 'Juden und Antisemiten,' 617.

Antisemitism is not a school of thought, it is an outgrowth of intellectual confusion [...] As a political movement it is nothing but ignorance or speculation on ignorance.¹⁶⁶

As Gerlach saw it, 'the step from Stoecker's *Volk* to Naumann's *Zeit* was the decisive step for me from the right to the left.' There is a certain irony to the fact that this shift from the right to the left should at the same time have turned the self-avowed radical anti-capitalist into a radical reformist. Gerlach looked upon his transformation in a somewhat different light. At that point 'I had buried all my hopes that the Conservatives might be reformed. Now the open struggle to bring down the conservative power was to be my life's work. The watershed between right and left had been crossed,'¹⁶⁷ and in his own mind he had put his antisemitism behind him with that momentous step as well.

As his biographer points out, as far as his antisemitism is concerned, 'the opposite is nearer the truth. [...] Ultimately, the National Social orientation and along with it his work at the *Zeit* in support of fundamental social reform [...] were more important to Gerlach than his antisemitism.' Hence he had 'subordinated' his antisemitism 'to his propaganda in the field of social policy'. In other words, 'it was the political and professional parameters that then created the decisive pre-conditions for his abandonment of antisemitism.'¹⁶⁸ This is a pertinent observation. In part, though, it is based on an obvious misunderstanding. What Gerlach clearly had abandoned when moving on to Naumann's National Social movement was his affiliation with party-political antisemitism. His stance on matters Jewish, however, only changed gradually and it did so primarily because, and to the extent that, it was deemed unacceptable among his new political associates.

The sensible ones oppose such an overestimation of Jewry. Leuß on antisemitism and matters Jewish

Leuß would seem to have been altogether more reticent when it came to accounts of his 'conversion' and his notions on antisemitism and matters Jewish. That said, we already noted that Gerlach's relevant pronouncements and recollections date from the 1920s and 1930s and we cannot, of course, know whether Leuß too, had he not died in 1920, might not have decided to discuss the matter in more detail. As suggested before, Gerlach's accounts of his own antisemitic past and subsequent 'conversion' were meant, at least in part, as a commentary on the rise of political antisemitism in the Weimar period and the looming (and then actual) National Socialist ascendancy. It is entirely possible that Leuß too, had he lived to witness this development, would have felt a need to add his voice to the small choir of those who were convinced that their own past made them singularly apt to vouch for the erroneous and futile nature of political antisemitism.

¹⁶⁶ *Idem*, 'Antisemitismus,' 11.

¹⁶⁷ *Idem*, *Von rechts nach links*, 150.

¹⁶⁸ Schulte, *Gerlach*, 50.

I have, as yet, not been able to identify any relevant pronouncements by Leuß from the time of his initial attempt to gain a foothold in the party around the turn of the century.¹⁶⁹ Following the publication of *Aus dem Zuchthause* which we have already discussed, Leuß left Berlin and took on the management of an estate but continued to write, producing his book on Hammerstein (1905) and one on 'sanguine monarchs'¹⁷⁰ (1906), before returning to a journalistic career in 1909 and becoming Gerlach's colleague at the helm of the *Welt am Montag*.¹⁷¹

His *Gekrönte Sanguiniker* gives another clear indication of Leuß' intellectual superficiality. The book purports to characterize four monarchs, the last sovereign Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold (1433–1477, reigned from 1467), the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519, reigned from 1493), the Swedish king Gustav III (1746–1792, reigned from 1771) and the Prussian monarch Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861, reigned from 1840 but incapacitated after 1857) as characteristically sanguine figures in terms of the ancient typology of the four humours. His own affinity to these figures, he explained, resulted from the fact that he himself was a sanguine character. When and how had this become clear to him? He owed this insight to one of the character witnesses at his trial. All of them had testified in his favour, he explained, but one of them had qualified his otherwise positive judgement by saying that 'to his mind, my character was *impaired by my inability to stick to any one given task*.' Coming from a man 'of the most incisive judgement', this criticism had given him considerable food for thought¹⁷² and he had subsequently not only found it to be pertinent but had also worked out that this characteristic of his resulted from the fact that he was a sanguine character. Hence he had also concluded that he lacked the constancy to embark on a political career and had decided to focus on literary activities.¹⁷³

Who had this man 'of the most incisive judgement' been? It was 'Dr. König-Witten, then a member of the Reichstag'.¹⁷⁴ Leuß had already introduced his readers to him a year earlier in his book on Hammerstein as 'the most capable political leader of the antisemites' and a man with whom the *Kreuzzeitung* had done well to remain in constant close contact.¹⁷⁵ Not only, then, did the 'conversion' that had already been well under way at the time of his conviction not preclude his calling an antisemitic deputy as a character witness at the time, but even a decade and more later he clearly still held this man in high esteem and obviously thought nothing of it.

¹⁶⁹ An obvious location to check would be the *Welt am Montag* for the years around the turn of the century, but as yet I have simply not found the time to do so.

¹⁷⁰ Hans Leuß, *Gekrönte Sanguiniker. Historische Parallelen* (Berlin: Hermann Walther, 1906). Hereafter Leuß, *Sanguiniker*.

¹⁷¹ Weidner, 'Leuß'.

¹⁷² Leuß, *Sanguiniker*, 7.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Idem*, *Hammerstein*, 93.

The book on Hammerstein clearly demonstrates that Leuß continued to maintain a predominantly positive and uncritical attitude towards Hammerstein too. It also contains the one slightly more detailed utterance on matters Jewish I have so far been able to identify in Leuß' pre-war writings. We find there a rather interesting passage dealing with Hammerstein's antisemitism. 'I feel I should not suppress a rather different aspect of Hammerstein's life I happen to know about,' Leuß began. In connection with the dealings of his estate in Schwartow, Hammerstein had been commercially involved with a Jewish entrepreneur called (rather deliciously) Priester. The latter had then

established a matchstick factory and wrote to Hammerstein years ago asking for help: he was on the verge of bankruptcy. Hammerstein and his wife agreed to lend Herr Priester a large sum – twenty or thirty thousand Mark – and Frau von Hammerstein personally brought him the money. Herr Priester was sick and soon died. Hammerstein's assistance notwithstanding, the estate was declared bankrupt soon after and the capital was lost.

Under the auspices of Priester's sons the factory had later flourished again, however, and was transformed into a joint-stock company. Following Hammerstein's conviction in 1896 for the fraudulent dealings he had indulged in to use his position with the *Kreuzzeitung* for the generation of personal income, the Priester family had begun to pay regular monthly instalments of 100 Mark to settle their late father's debt to the Hammerstein family. 'It would seem, then, that Hammerstein's antisemitism was of a purely political nature,' Leuß concluded, 'and only influenced his personal attitude towards Jews when political considerations were at stake.'¹⁷⁶ Leuß then offers no further comment or judgement on the matter.

We might note in passing that this anecdote strictly speaking has two parts, of course. That a local Jewish entrepreneur should turn to Hammerstein for support and receive it indeed throws an interesting light on Hammerstein's antisemitism. That the descendants of that Jewish entrepreneur should have felt compelled to make payments to the imprisoned Hammerstein to settle their father's debt although legally not bound to do so, apparently not least out of humanitarian considerations, by contrast, might initially be taken to have rather more to say about the Jewish family in question than about Hammerstein's antisemitism. This aspect does not even seem to have entered Leuß' mind but then he was, of course, writing a book on Hammerstein which might explain this lopsided perspective. Unless Leuß was trying to suggest that Hammerstein's preparedness to accept these payments vouched for his tolerance *vis-à-vis* Jews, we can only assume that Leuß was trying to imply that the Priester family's preparedness to settle the debt reflected a certain respect for Hammerstein which in turn demonstrated that he could not have been all that outrageous an antisemite. More importantly, however, although Leuß does not tell us definitively how or what exactly he thought of Hammerstein's 'purely political' antisemitism, the introduction of that very category and the differentiation it implies is rather telling. To the bulk of radical antisemites and anti-antisemites alike that differentiation would most likely have signalled hypocrisy; from the antisemitic perspective because Hammerstein had not taken his antisemitism seriously enough, from the anti-antisemitic point of view because his antisemitism had apparently been purely opportunistic and hence helped underscore that even the antisemites themselves

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 121.

did not take their own nonsensical prescriptions seriously. But for Leuß, Hammerstein's 'purely political' antisemitism was a redeeming feature. As opposed to those driven by mere mindless resentment or inclined to be petty in their dealings with individual Jews, this the most likely implication, Hammerstein had belonged to those who saw the bigger picture and aspired to comprehensive solutions without arbitrarily harassing random individuals. We will see further on that this interpretation is based on more than mere conjecture. Leuß presumably thought of his ability to differentiate in this way and recognize the ostensible superiority of Hammerstein's 'purely political' antisemitism as an expression of his own post-antisemitic credentials. Somewhat ironically, an explicit reference to the noble attitude of the Priester family would have been inordinately more effective in underscoring those credentials, of course, but, as suggested before, it would seem that this aspect and its implications passed him by entirely. As far as the differentiation introduced by Leuß at this point is concerned, we need to keep in mind that the gesture with which Treitschke, for instance, seemingly distanced himself from the *Radauantisemitismus* unleashed by Stoecker's propaganda activities precluded him neither from insisting on the basic legitimacy of that *Radauantisemitismus* as a response to alleged Jewish abuse nor from developing an ostensibly more respectable antisemitic argument that ultimately hinged on the same basic logical structure, substance, and implications underlying Stoecker's propaganda.¹⁷⁷ Far from questioning it, this sort of differentiation is frequently a device allowing for the flexible adaptation and reproduction of antisemitic ideology. The actual thrust of such a differentiation can only ever be determined on a case-to-case basis from the more general argument in which it is embedded. Unfortunately, Leuß' book on Hammerstein simply offers us too little additional material pertaining to matters Jewish for us to be able to determine definitively whether this particular passage was part and parcel of a more comprehensive reconstruction of a directly antisemitic line of reasoning or simply a straightforward gaffe well in keeping with the notions prevalent even among the most well-meaning non-antisemites.

On 12 January 1914, Leuß published what was essentially a review of Paul Liman's book on the Crown Prince¹⁷⁸ in the *Welt am Montag*, a text subsequently also published in an extended version as a pamphlet.¹⁷⁹ Surely the Crown Prince was not inclined to indulge in the sort of potentially war-mongering recklessness in the field of foreign policy ascribed to, and expected of, him by the likes of Liman, Leuß reasoned. After all, were he to do so, the effects would be potentially so destabilizing that the very existence of the monarchy might be endangered in the process. Yet how little would it take for the crown to avert such a development by subjecting its exclusive grip on foreign policy to limited constitutional control, creating a constellation which would ultimately prove all the more conducive to its very own interests anyway. The pamphlet was largely written in the time-honoured style of subservient advice offered by an

¹⁷⁷ Holz, *Antisemitismus*, 173.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Liman, *Der Kronprinz. Gedanken über Deutschlands Zukunft* (Minden: Köhler, 1914).

¹⁷⁹ Hans Leuß, *Wilhelm der Letzte? Die Zukunft unserer Monarchie* (Berlin: Verlag der "Welt am Montag", [1914] n.d.).

ostensibly humble subject to an absolutist sovereign and it is hard to determine with how much tongue in cheek Leuß wanted it to be read. Presumably this style was primarily an accurate reflection of the anachronistic state of the German polity at the time, rather than just an outflow of quirkiness on Leuß' part. If not, then the fact that he was subsequently sentenced to six months' imprisonment for libelling the Crown Prince in his initial article surely was. That said, Leuß always maintained that the Crown Prince himself had been embarrassed by the sentence and had signalled that Leuß would not in fact have to serve it. In the event, the sentence was rendered obsolete by the onset of war and the amnesty granted on this occasion.¹⁸⁰

While Gerlach, who was increasingly inclining towards a pacifist position, apparently opposed the war from the outset, Leuß was totally carried away by patriotic fervour.¹⁸¹ In the course of the war his stance then began to vacillate. On the one hand, he protested, for instance, against the award of the Iron Cross to Houston Stewart Chamberlain and even managed to get the *Welt am Montag* banned in June 1917 for a week due to comments he had made on the assassination, in October 1916, of the Austrian prime minister Karl Stürgkh (born 1859) by Victor Adler's son, Friedrich Adler (1879–1960).¹⁸² On the other hand, Leuß had written an article welcoming the initial successes of the final German offensive on the western front in the spring of 1918 as a major turning point rendering victory a realistic prospect. 'Smiling, I said to him: "Dear Leuß, you will regret this article",' Gerlach recalled in his eulogy. As he rightly added, though, Leuß had also had the stature, as opposed to many others, subsequently to declare squarely that his support of the German war effort had been misguided.¹⁸³ 'As long as I – like *many* others – judged the issue of Germany's war guilt and the peaceful aspirations of German statesmen differently than v. Gerlach did, I also propounded a different political approach to the war,' Leuß wrote in the *Welt am Montag* of 31 March 1919, for instance, and continued, 'I was wrong. [...] If I got it wrong at the beginning of the war,' he later added, 'then I do not now want to get it wrong again with the revolution.'¹⁸⁴

What exactly Leuß made of the strife within Social Democracy throughout this period is not always easy to tell, nor for that matter is it entirely clear what exactly his connections to Social Democracy throughout this entire period actually were. The obituaries by his friends and associates suggest that to their mind Leuß had indeed entered prison as an antisemite and left it as a Social Democrat. In fact, however, it seems more than obvious that following the conflict unleashed by his initial foray into the party which we have examined in some detail he remained a moderately sympathetic observer but had no formal ties to the party. What political achievements he did credit himself with clearly locate him on the left fringe of political liberalism. Never given to undue modesty, he claimed, for instance, that he had played a crucial role in engineering the

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Idem, Wilhelm der Letzte. Eine Vorhersage aus 1914* (Berlin: Verlag für Volksaufklärung, [1918] n.d.), 2 and Weidner, 'Leuß'.

¹⁸¹ Schulte, *Gerlach*, 140.

¹⁸² Cf. Albert Weidner, '25 Jahre "Welt am Montag",' in *WaM* 26, 50 [13 December 1920] Beilage: 2. Cf. also Schulte, *Gerlach*, 144 and 314 n33.

¹⁸³ Gerlach, 'Leuß'.

¹⁸⁴ Hans Leuß, 'Halbheit und Winkelzüge,' in *WaM* 25, 13 [31 March 1919]: 2.

electoral alliance between Social Democrats and Liberals, the infamous *Stichwahlabkommen*, of February 1912.¹⁸⁵

In his journalistic work, he regularly admonished the ruling elites, on the one hand, that it was in their own best interest to avoid measures that would unduly increase popular discontent and hence destabilize the country and endanger their own future. On the other hand, he persistently warned those in opposition, foremost among them the Social Democrats, against provoking the elites lest they be deterred from participating in reform measures. Inclined as he was to present himself as a detached observer, it is often difficult to determine just how seriously he meant these admonishments. When Rosa Luxemburg was tried in Frankfurt (Main), for instance, in the early summer of 1914, accused of inciting workers to disobey orders should they be called up to serve in a war, Leuß called for the authorities to ‘swallow the bitter pill’ and withdraw the indictment because the trial would only maximize Luxemburg’s popularity.¹⁸⁶

The possible implications are manifold. Perhaps he genuinely held Luxemburg to be guilty of a crime that required punishment in principle, but felt the public interest was, for the reason given, nevertheless better served if she were not held to account. Perhaps he had his doubts about the case anyway but felt it was more promising to suggest a strategy to the authorities that hinged on their own (ostensible) best interest rather than enter into a debate that questioned the legitimacy of their right to prosecute in the first place. Perhaps Leuß had never really grasped the difference between dressing up causes so that they could be presented to those in power as a reflection of what was supposedly in their own best interest, on the one hand, and simply confronting them with a clear-cut and unambiguous demand because it was right and justified, on the other; if he ever had, then it would seem that the many years of being too clever by half when dressing up even very timid democratic demands as the secret wishes of those whose power and influence in fact rested on the refusal of those demands, had clearly worn his grasp of that difference down. His attitude towards Social Democracy can perhaps best be described as ultra-centrist to the point of utter indifference towards any specific political or ideological content. As Fritz Heckert (1884–1936), the leading radical in Chemnitz subsequently involved both in the *Spartakusbund* and the establishment of the KPD, noted in his diary on 3 May 1915, ‘Leuß belongs to those who want to see Social Democracy maintained as a means to an end. Social Democracy should continue to exist and maintain its strength as the conscience of German party life. But,’ Heckert added, surely ‘those who want that must also want the old principles of the party to be upheld.’¹⁸⁷

Leuß clearly saw that rather differently. As he later wrote in a hagiographical pamphlet on Scheidemann (‘a leader to whom no one could hold a candle’),¹⁸⁸ the latter’s singular achievement had been to keep a cool head despite all the difficulties and to use it to maintain the party’s force and keep it operational, thus ensuring that it could be utilized expediently in the higher spheres of the body politic when the time was

¹⁸⁵ *Idem, Philipp Scheidemann* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1919), 6. Hereafter Leuß, *Scheidemann*.

¹⁸⁶ Hans Leuß, ‘Das Pech des Kriegsministers,’ in *WaM* 20, 27 [6 July 1914].

¹⁸⁷ SAPMO-BArch, 4007/7, Bl. 264 [1321]

¹⁸⁸ Leuß, *Scheidemann*, 16.

right to determine the crucial developments [‘die Schlußereignisse in den *oberen* Regionen zu bestimmen’]¹⁸⁹ – and not, the obvious implication would be, from below or from the margins to which a less ‘cool-headed’ and more principled course would have banished it. ‘Worst of all,’ he commented, for instance, in late 1915, ‘a victory of the radicals within the party would cripple the German labour movement in so far as the trade unions would subsequently be compelled to, and would, go their own political way. The rift would be incurable.’¹⁹⁰

The value of the party’s unity at almost any price and the fear that radicals and reactionaries might bring out the worst in one another, then, were his main themes throughout the war and the subsequent revolutionary events. ‘Liebknecht means well,’ Leuß wrote in later November 1918, ‘but he does not realize that all the reactionaries have no stronger helper than him – he is their darling [Liebling] and their hope!’¹⁹¹ ‘If a desperado on the right wanted to initiate a counterrevolution now,’ Leuß wrote at the end of the year, ‘there would be only *one single* way in which he could do so: namely by joining forces with our Jacobins and assuming the mask of an ultra-revolutionary. Thus he could at least hope to discredit the revolution.’¹⁹² ‘Even if the reactionaries were the slyest intriguers of all times they could not have come up with a smarter plan to pave the way for a future counterrevolution than the one the *Spartakusbund* handed them on a silver platter with its attempt to establish a tyranny,’ he wrote in the immediate aftermath of the January insurrection and its suppression in Berlin. ‘But,’ he now added, signalling a certain shift in emphasis, ‘what is worst about the *Spartakus* weeks,’ what was ‘most terrible’ about the development, was the ‘dreadful fact, destined to beget further harm, that the attempt to establish a tyranny against the will of the people [...] *has driven the revolutionary government to resort to violence!*’ He then promptly added, though, that the government had ultimately had no other choice, *Spartakus* had forced its hand.¹⁹³ In his pamphlet on Scheidemann too he explained that the government had been provoked. All the same, he added, the use of military force had severely shaken the trust of many worthy workers in the revolution.¹⁹⁴ To restore the trust of these workers in the revolution by protecting its achievements and helping as best he knew how to limit the harm the government’s resorting to violence seemed set to beget and thus ‘not to get it wrong again’ now became his chief goal.

‘The revolution has become bogged down [versumpft],’ he wrote at the end of 1919.

It emerged from the marshes of the past and to drain those marshes with work and the sunlight of the truth was its historical task. It has not managed to fulfil that task but has itself sunk into the marshy ground.

The most radical and the most gentle outdid each other in ruining the revolution. The two antitheses mutually provided one another with “reasons” and material to agitate against one another. Noske worked for the extremists on the radical left and they in turn provided the Noske guards with “opportunities” and “occasions”. When the time has come for the unprejudiced

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹⁰ *Idem*, ‘Parlamentarische Palastrevolte,’ in *WaM* 21, 52 [27 December 1915]: 2.

¹⁹¹ *Idem*, ‘Geburt des Zukunftsstaates?’ in *WaM* 24, 47 [25 November 1918].

¹⁹² *Idem*, ‘Straßenkampf und Wahlkampf,’ in *WaM* 24, 52 [30 December 1918].

¹⁹³ *Idem*, ‘Gewaltherrschaft oder Volksregierung,’ in *WaM* 25, 3 [20 January 1919].

¹⁹⁴ *Idem*, *Scheidemann*, 16.

historian of this year, he will tell posterity how clumsily one side, how treacherously the other contaminated the revolution [wie tapsig die einen, wie tückisch die anderen die Revolution verseucht haben]. [...] What force, what truly elemental vigour had been accumulated within the great workers' party and was newly acquired – a wealth of moral energies! – the dreamers and realists squandered it *struggling with one another!*¹⁹⁵

Although the syntax is not entirely unambiguous, it does seem rather clear that it was the Spartakists Leuß had in mind when he spoke of the clumsiness of the one side, and those on whose behest Noske had suppressed the insurrection when he referred to the treacherousness of the other. 'Now is the time for us irksome individuals who belong to none of the coteries and do not stand to gain either way,' Leuß wrote days before his unexpected death, 'to remind the Majority party of the task it faces as a result of the crisis within the Independent party.' Both sides were in part right and mediation was urgently required. There could, however, be no doubt, that the Majority Socialists 'are not currently capable of developing a good programme. To do so it requires the participation of those who are as yet still tied down in the Independent party.'¹⁹⁶

This, then, is Leuß at his most progressive, radical and left-leaning and this orientation emerged, as we saw, in the immediate aftermath of the January insurrection and its suppression. Rather remarkably, it was at this very juncture, exactly a week after the editorial in which he had first described as the worst aspect of the January events the fact that the government had let itself be provoked into resorting to violence, that Leuß published a long editorial on 'War Antisemitism',¹⁹⁷ offering us the most detailed pronouncement on antisemitism and matters Jewish made by Leuß after his break with organized political antisemitism that I have so far been able to identify. Given the juncture in his life and political development at which this editorial was written, it seems plausible to reason that any earlier pronouncement, should it had differed from the basic stance articulated here, would almost certainly have been, if anything, less critical of the antisemites and more critical of Jewry. Hence this editorial provides us with relatively firm parameters for the delineation of his likely stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish during the conflict at the centre of this chapter even though it was written the best part of two decades after his initial attempt to gain a foothold in the party. It was written in response to the relative success of the Conservatives who had incorporated antisemitic propaganda into their election campaign for the *Nationalversammlung*. Once again, Leuß exclaimed, antisemitism had reared its head as

the last anchor of the hopeless and the toppled! The third antisemitic wave to stir the people since the beginning of the last century. Only a wave, not a surge. It is not stirring sufficient masses to be a surge. Greater issues, more crucial questions, more powerful impulses than are at the command of the anti-Jewish movement determine the pulse of current affairs and the political will of the people.

¹⁹⁵ *Idem*, 'Eiter,' in *WaM* 25, 52 [29 December 1919]: 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Idem*, 'Die Sozialdemokratie am Kreuzwege,' in *WaM* 26, 39 [27 September 1920]: 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Idem*. 'Kriegs-Antisemitismus,' in *WaM* 25, 4 [27 January 1919]: 2–3.

Nevertheless, 'a new antisemitic wave there is,' and much as it was 'just an episode and a secondary phenomenon, just as it was in the past,' it was 'not restricted to those who voted for the forty Conservative member of the Constituent Assembly. Democrats, too, even voters of the German Democratic Party pronounce harsh judgments on the behaviour of Jews during the war. But,' Leuß contended, unfolding a classic set piece of anti-antisemitism in its crudest guise and in a manner that presumably offers us a telling insight into the way in which he had put his own antisemitism behind him, 'they are not so stupid immediately to make the Jewish Question the pivot of world history, as the antisemitic mystics do. They are too intelligent to believe the fools who would turn the Jewish Question into a political Procrustean bed and try to force the whole universe into it. The sensible ones,' he summed up this point, 'oppose such an overestimation of Jewry.' Moreover, he added, clarifying what was apparently his main concern at this point, 'they know from experience that the *Junker* always rage most vehemently against the Jews when they are in a fix.'

The 'new antisemitism,' he explained, had

begun when the war began. Initially it was mere mindless hatred not even curtailed by the obvious, purely national interest. When the papers were full of Jewish obituaries with the war cross, antisemitic papers published rabble-rousing articles and denunciatory stories of the worst sort. When Ludwig Frank – one of the first victims of the fighting in France, had fallen, when many, very many Jews went to the front voluntarily, the hatred of the fanatics nevertheless failed to fall silent. But this hatred would have remained a miserable plant in the corner,

Leuß continued, 'had not a good many things transpired and developed during the course of the four years that prompted the critique of *serious* people.' What then follows is an account that displays all the enduring (and necessarily insurmountable) problems inherent in the kernel of truth approach to antisemitism. If, after all, the perceptions that, to his mind, 'naturally' generated the 'new antisemitism', or at least the antisemitic generalizations based on those perceptions, were, as he is by and large inclined to concede, erroneous then his account would fail to explain why '*serious* people' too should have based their critique on these apparently erroneous perceptions. If, conversely, the differentiation between the 'mindless hatred' of those who, as Leuß implies, even subordinated the national interest to their antisemitism, on the one hand, and the critique aroused 'naturally' by certain phenomena in '*serious* people', on the other, is to make any sense, then the perceptions and generalizations on which that critique of the '*serious* people' drew cannot have been altogether erroneous after all. It is hardly unduly speculative to suggest that we can identify a rather obvious subtext in all this: as a former antisemitic activist Leuß himself had once subscribed to those same perceptions and generalizations and it is evident that he thought of himself as having done so not because he had felt some 'mindless hatred' but because he had drawn some partially erroneous inferences from phenomena which were indeed prone to inspire such inferences quite 'naturally' in '*serious* people' like himself.

'The war economy,' Leuß explained, 'was dependent on the participation of businessmen, the grain trade, the stock exchanges and banks, and many other branches in which the Jews are very numerous or even in the majority. Naturally the Jews came to the fore.' As a result, 'the animosity towards State control

naturally turned against the large number of Jews among its directors and agents. Jews were among the beneficiaries of the war,' he continued, and thus

became welcome and easily "identifiable" targets for the general aversion to war profits. Quite without justification, for the war profits accrued on a very equal and inter-denominational basis and the Aryans accepted them just as the Jews did.

Towards the end of the war the entrepreneurial corruption had become universal. Bribes and shady deals contaminated the country and the army. But everyone knows that all races are equally guilty of participation in that scandalous profiteering frenzy. In fact, were the history of the shady deals, bribes, and mean profiteering to be determined with exactitude one would ultimately ascertain a predominance of

– and now follows a most remarkable switch of perspective – '*those* classes that exploit the anti-Jewish hatred now that they face their political demise.' None too surprisingly, Leuß' main focus was obviously on the organized utilization of antisemitism for party-political ends, in this case in support of the Conservative election campaign. That non-Jews, by the sheer force of their numbers, had been the 'predominant' beneficiaries of the profiteering during the war went without saying. Yet it was obviously not the absurdity of any contention to the contrary that Leuß was concerned with. For him the crucial point was apparently that those social groups in whose interest the Conservative camp acted politically (and had enlisted the anti-Jewish sentiments) were even more involved in the profiteering than the Jews had been. At this juncture, then, presumably for lack of a succinct alternative, Leuß, a man who surely never undertook a serious class analysis along Marxist (or more generally Socialist) lines in his life and was anything but a proponent of class struggle, chose to introduce the category 'class' as a short hand allowing him to construe the juxtaposition he was after while evading the one that his line of argument logically required.

What held true of the profiteering also held true of the scheming to evade military service at the front, Leuß conceded. 'From the second year of the war onwards *shirking* had developed into a *system*.' Admittedly, 'one also saw many Jews in safe locations,' he conceded in another of those classic formulations that beggar the more general question how exactly one supposedly 'sees' Jews functioning in ways that could possibly generate tenable generalizations of the sort '*serious people*' might fall for. 'But if the statistics for requisitioned personnel should one day be differentiated by denomination, social status, and profession then one will receive proof,' – and again he switches the plane of argument – 'that members of the nobility, antisemitic and even Pan-German war mongers were just as eager shirkers as the Jews.' Hence, 'if all these things are honestly examined and made public, the new antisemitism stands to gain little gratification and will especially be in no position to pay the way for the Conservative propaganda any more. The *nobility* and its supporters' – again his focus is not on the non-Jews more generally but on the particular political opponent at hand –

would then be *exactly in the position of the German Jews* who are forced to point to their dead, their selfless patriotism, the enormous achievements of the many, to offset their share of responsibility for the war rot – the nobility would have to do exactly the same.

A slightly different form of antisemitism, Leuß added, 'inclines towards more idealistic motives,' namely 'that form of antisemitism that refers to the paramount influence of Jews in public life, in the revolutionary

governments and institutions.' At this juncture he was obviously trying to give his line of argument an ironic turn. 'This share is very large,' he conceded, and then added that,

since ruling is today a *very* dubious, stressful and even dangerous pleasure, the considerable share of Jews involved in it cannot quite count as a sufficient reason for envy; but it can nevertheless be "exploited" as material for antisemitic propaganda.

For that matter: all sorts of things can be exploited against the Jews. Political demagoguery has never concerned itself with right or justice, it has only ever asked: "what can we make of that?"

The recollections of the war offer much material that can be adapted for antisemitic purposes,

he reiterated, then adding a remark that once again illustrates the ambiguity of his understanding of this nexus. Ultimately, 'the forty members of the National Assembly that our reactionary camp has managed to secure with the help of proportional representation and electoral alliances hardly amount to an overwhelming harvest, given the amply and forcefully scattered antisemitic seed.'

However, he then continued, giving matters a truly remarkable turn eerily reminiscent of the stance he had formulated as an antisemitic deputy in the *Zukunft* in 1894, while all this was obviously regrettable,

worse than all this is another effect of the antisemitic agitation: the German Jews had learnt a lot from the last antisemitic movement. They had become more *level-headed* and gradually came to take it for granted that just like other estates, classes, groups, associations, and denominations, Jews too were subject to critique. Some had even progressed far enough to acknowledge *legitimate* criticism of individual persons or occurrences as a form of hostile attention that deserves gratitude. Jewry in its entirety certainly grew morally, gained strength, and improved itself through its confrontation with antisemitism. The nervous touchiness receded, while self-criticism increased. Just as the Catholic church and Social Democracy owe a great deal to their opponent Bismarck, the Jews owe a great deal to antisemitism.

One must urgently advise the German Jews to stay on this path, and all the more so, since many indicators prove that the acute antisemitic electoral agitation is making some Jews nervous again. There is no reason, no need for that.

The best means of countering the antisemitic propaganda 'is for the Jews to maintain the most complete calm [...] What must definitely be avoided, however, is the sort of moralizing and defamatory *Abwehr* so popular forty years ago. Back then it served the antisemites *enormously*. Morally, antisemitism, *in an of itself*, should be judged no differently from other political principles,' he continued, underscoring yet further our earlier suggestion that his contention that certain forms of antisemitism sprung from ultimately legitimate (though at least partially erroneous) perceptions and generalizations that came 'naturally' to 'serious people' is also designed to bear out an apologetic subtext to his main line of argument (little as he himself obviously seems to have felt in need of any apologetics). "Class hatred", the struggle against "the *Junker*" and other issues are morally no different from antisemitism. They are merely "felt" to be morally different, depending on the point of view of the observer. My colleague v. Gerlach,' he then added,

coined the phrase: "Only he who has had the disease is immune to antisemitism." I certainly am, then. I also know about the expedient and inexpedient means of "*Abwehr*" and against this background I declare again what I have said a number of times before: if Jewish authors cannot read antisemitic pamphlets without becoming emotionally anguished they must keep this weakness to themselves. Most of all, they must not think that one could harm antisemitism with a load of moral outrage. On the contrary,

he concluded. This, then, to the best of our knowledge, is Leuß at his most anti-antisemitic. Now, while we can only reconstruct Leuß' likely stance on the matter around the turn of the century from the material presented here, and can neither know nor rule out for sure whether it had any part in arousing the misgivings that ultimately rendered his first attempt to gain a foothold in the party abortive, we do know for sure that the stance he articulated now in no way impeded his career in the party. For much as we saw him style himself right up to his sudden death as one of those 'who belong to none of the coteries and do not stand to gain either way,' this purported independence was now in fact one maintained within party. The revolutionary events of 1918/1919 finally made a Social Democrat proper of Hans Leuß, and no mere ordinary member at that.

Leuß had moved to Mecklenburg in the summer of 1918, apparently to prepare a number of publications, his (ultimately never written) memoirs among them. Following the demise of the old Imperial regime, he was approached by the party organization for Mecklenburg-Strelitz. According to Weidner, he played a substantial role in determining the state's constitution and subsequently became a major player in the legislature. He was elected to the *Landtag* and became the chairman of its Social Democratic *Fraktion* but refused to become prime minister, opting instead to chair the bulk of the crucial select committees including the *Landesausschuss*, a committee of seven deputies authorized to act in lieu of the *Landtag* when it was not in session. In the year of his death he was elected *Landdrost* (resident magistrate) of Stargard,¹⁹⁸ making Stargard's historical castle his final domicile. In its grounds he was subsequently buried¹⁹⁹ and a monument erected, as the *Welt am Montag* would have it, to the 'the first socialist and democratic Drost of Stargard – Hans Leuß!'²⁰⁰ The inscription in fact commemorates the 'friend of the oppressed [Bedrängten].'²⁰¹

Leuß remained a controversial figure, to be sure, and it is hard to imagine he would have wanted it otherwise. It was certainly not his stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish or his antisemitic past that made him controversial, though, although he continued to make occasional comments on the matter. In

¹⁹⁸ Weidner, 'Leuß'.

¹⁹⁹ 'Die Beisetzung von Hans Leuß,' in *WaM* 26, 40 [4 October 1920]: 1.

²⁰⁰ 'Das Denkmal für Hans Leuß,' in *WaM* 27, 21 [23 May 1921]: 3. Cf. also the appeal for funds for the monument 'Ein Grabmal für Hans Leuß!' in *WaM* 27, 13 [29 March 1921]: 2 and 27, 17 [25 April 1921]: 3.

²⁰¹ I am indebted to Frau Köhn of the *Kulturamt* Stadt Burg Stargard for sending me two photographs of the monument. We might note in passing that Christiane Witzke of the *Stadtarchiv* in Neustrelitz published a short article on Leuß, 'Erinnerungen an den Landdrost Hans Leuß,' in *Mecklenburg-Strelitzer Kalender* (2000): 32 which makes no mention of Leuß' career as an antisemitic activist. While this may be understandable, given that the very short article deals specifically with Leuß' post-war career in Mecklenburg-Strelitz, an entry on Leuß in a publication edited by Klaus Schwabe for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Landesbüro Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), *Wurzeln, Traditionen und Identität der Sozialdemokratie in Mecklenburg und Pommern* (Schwerin, 1999), 86–87, which Dr Schwabe was kind enough to send me, is rather more remarkable in that it mentions both Leuß' membership of the *Reichstag* in 1893–1894 and his journalistic career between 1882 and 1894, but makes no mention of the fact that he represented an antisemitic party in the *Reichstag* and classifies the papers for which he wrote simply as 'bürgerlich'.

May 1919, for instance, Leuß savaged Wolfgang Heine,²⁰² now the Prussian minister of the interior, as a figure one only stood a chance of understanding 'if one took him for a man whose late romantic stirrings had rekindled the love of his youth. [...] Quite a few of us,' Leuß added, had 'found their way from the conservative camp to Social Democracy' as he had. Heine, however, had, while still young, 'moved from the antisemitic *Verein Deutscher Studenten* to Social Democracy without any recognizable period of development.' Others had made that step later in life with greater maturity and self-assurance. Perhaps a little surprisingly, he then continued: 'When I became a Social Democrat twenty years ago and contributed to the major papers of the party, Stöcker wrote to me, I should at least work for the national cause within Social Democracy; what I answered was approximately: I am afraid that the term "national" no longer means the same thing to the two of us.' Only subsequently does it become quite clear that it is indeed the 'national' that he is mainly concerned with. For many years Heine had stood on the extreme right of the party and the fact that he had insisted on his opposition to the radicals even when it threatened his career bore testimony to his personal courage.

The war, however, had turned him into a fanatical nationalist and now he had finally lost the plot completely. He was 'a fanatical reactionary, a political brute, a nationalist. Unlike other Social Democrats on the right wing of the party, he is not an opportunist. He goes far beyond them with his *deep-rooted Old Prussian fanaticism*.' His predilections and inclinations were, of course, his business, 'but it is perverse of Social Democracy to expect us to stomach him as a minister in a revolutionary government.' Adolph Hoffmann (1858–1930), the former Prussian minister for science and education who had resigned with the other Independent ministers in early 1919, had even remarked recently, Leuß pointed out, that Heine 'was still the same brash antisemite he used to be. That,' however, Leuß countered 'is perhaps a little harsh.' Why? Because 'Franz Mehring too' had, after all, occasionally made remarks that would have merited the same criticism now elicited by Heine's 'cheap joke about Herr "von" Rosenfeld'.²⁰³

Heine's antisemitic past, we might note in passing, also featured in the dispute unleashed at the Congress in Dresden. In the second part of 'Bebel und Genossen', his philippic written after the Congress, Harden claimed that Heine feared his antisemitic past might be raked up by Mehring if he became all too exposed in the party. Hence it was not least Mehring who was to blame for the fact that Heine had not as yet been able to gain a role in the party that, to Harden's mind, really suited his potential; hence also Heine's enmity

²⁰² Hans Leuß, 'Was ist Wolfgang Heine?' in *WaM* 25, 21 [26 May 1919]: 2.

²⁰³ Presumably the former Prussian justice minister, Kurt Rosenfeld (1877–1943), who had also belonged to Rosa Luxemburg's defence team in 1914. I have not, as yet, been able to identify the incident in question. On Heine at this juncture cf. also Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers* [1982] *Updated with a New Introduction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 239 and Bering, *Stigma*, 186–188. Bering, incidentally, cites the remarkable case of a baptized lawyer of Jewish extraction called Paul Rosenfeld who in 1914 applied for permission to change his name so as not to be confused with Kurt Rosenfeld (*ibid.*, 458–459 n39.)

towards Mehring and his preparedness to condone the assault on him at the Congress.²⁰⁴ And Mehring indeed did just that. Heine had demonstrated, he wrote in *Meine Rechtfertigung*, 'that his whole affected statesman act notwithstanding he is still the same miserable old antisemitic philistine.' That matters Jewish were not, however, at stake here becomes clear from the explanation that follows. 'When I edited the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*,' he added, 'I lived in the house of such a philistine who during all those years "just could not believe it" that a "grim wolf" of a politician like me could play for hours on end with his children.'²⁰⁵

Yet another great Misunderstanding. Antisemitism and matters Jewish in Dresden

It would be easier for us to assess the significance of Fischer's reference to the fact that Leuß was a former antisemitic deputy and the likelihood that his critique of Mehring's dealings with Leuß drew specifically on the latter's antisemitism, of course, if the debate in Dresden had touched on other issues pertaining to antisemitism and matters Jewish. Then we could compare the way in which those issues were dealt with to the way in which Mehring's dealings with Leuß were handled. At least four such issues did in fact arise. In two cases they involved a direct reference to antisemitism and matters Jewish. These we will discuss at the end of this chapter. The other two touched upon antisemitism and matters Jewish only implicitly and in passing without this particular aspect actually being discussed. They concerned, firstly, Harden's Jewish extraction and, secondly, the example provided by Braun for an instance in which a Socialist author had indeed contributed to a non-Socialist periodical that did subject the party to 'malicious and spiteful criticism'.

Throughout his speech, Bebel, to begin with the former, persistently called Harden (according to the minutes) Wittkowski-Harden (sic!), a reference to his birth name Felix Ernst Witkowski, or rather, to the fact that the name under which Harden now lived was not his birth name. *Prima facie* this reference seems innocent enough. While he had only been aware of Harden's person and work for a comparatively short time, Bebel explained, he had had 'the honour of knowing Wittkowski-Harden's father. To be introduced to the son I would not count as an honour. (From the floor: Bravo!) Old Wittkowski was a good democrat who revered Johann Jacoby,²⁰⁶ and in the sixties of the last century [...] we, my friend Singer and a number of highly respected men such as William Spindler, Guido Weiß,²⁰⁷ Dr. Stephany²⁰⁸ [...] not only spent

²⁰⁴ Harden, 'Bebel und Genossen,' II: 14.

²⁰⁵ Mehring, *Rechtfertigung*, 29.

²⁰⁶ Jacoby (1805–1877) was the grand old man of political liberalism in Germany who eventually became a Social Democrat in 1872.

²⁰⁷ Weiß (1822–1899) was a prominent democratic journalist associated with Johann Jacoby who had edited the *Berliner Reform*, an earlier democratic periodical called the *Zukunft*, and the *Wage* and later worked for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. He had been Mehring's mentor at the beginning of his journalistic career and Mehring greatly revered him.

²⁰⁸ Initially a democratic journalist, Stephany later became editor-in-chief of the *Vossische Zeitung*.

many a pleasant evening with this honourable man but also many a serious night discussing problems until dawn. To this day I recall the conversations with Wittkowski-Harden's father with pleasure.²⁰⁹ The name change, then, one might infer, was critique-worthy because it signalled a denial of the democratic traditions to which Harden's father had contributed.

Not least in the light of Dietz Bering's remarkable research on Imperial German society's obsession with 'Jewish' names²¹⁰ it is obvious, though, that this issue was far too charged for Bebel to have been able to raise it with only this particular aspect in mind, even if we were to assume that it really was only this aspect that concerned him. Whether and under what circumstances Jews or individuals of Jewish extraction should be allowed to change their names to avoid stigmatisation had been part and parcel of the entire emancipation debate. The antisemitic obsession with the invisibility of the emancipated Jew lent it additional emotive force, making it the object of a protracted debate that spanned the entire period from the pre- to the post-emancipatory era. It would have been impossible for anyone in Imperial Germany to be oblivious to this debate. Hence one could not possibly refer, critically or otherwise, to the name change of an individual of Jewish extraction without invariably evoking the dynamics of that entire debate, either explicitly or by default.

It was widely accepted in Imperial Germany that the stigmatising function of names identified as Jewish was in fact a healthy and legitimate one. Non-Jewish society was entitled to utilize it as a sort of tracking device that allowed it to chart the extent of Jewish integration by ensuring that individuals of Jewish extraction remained identifiably Jewish, no matter how comprehensively they assimilated. Only thus would society be able to control the process of Jewish integration and, if and where necessary, to curtail or reverse it. This notion was in part rationalized by turning it into a moralizing indictment against the individuals of Jewish extraction who sought to change their names: they were prepared to forego their identity and traditions for 'mere' social advantage. As the belief in the immutability of ethnic and racial distinctions became ever more pervasive this Jewish 'opportunism' too came to appear more and more futile and more and more despicable, even though the identity the 'opportunist' Jews were trying to shed was of course seen as an inferior one.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ *Parteitag 1903*, 213–214.

²¹⁰ Dietz Bering, *Der Name als Stigma* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987). Hereafter Bering, *Stigma*.

²¹¹ The economist and sociologist Werner Sombart (1863–1941), for instance, who himself went through the entire spectrum from Socialist inclinations to Nazism in his lifetime, greatly enjoyed belabouring this point. 'To stay an upright character and achieve something sturdy is ultimately more important than to have a career, especially if the latter would necessitate a denial of one's national traditions [Volkstum],' he argued. The Jew who hid his identity would 'never earn the sympathy of an honest non-Jew. In that respect an upright nationalist Jew [Nationaljude] is surely – in purely characterological terms [rein charaktereologisch angesehen] – a character of distinct manliness whom one may hate but has to respect' (Werner Sombart, 'Judentaufen,' in A. Landsberger (ed.), *Judentaufen* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1912): 7–20, here 17–18.) For an extremely interesting discussion of Sombart and especially the controversy aroused by his emphasis on the Jewish contribution to the development of capitalism cf. Penslar, *Shylock's Children*, 163–173.

The rights of individuals of Jewish extraction to change their names were in fact to be curtailed yet further within less than a fortnight of the Congress in Dresden. On 25 September 1903 the Prussian minister of the interior issued a decree limiting the rights of baptized Jews to change their family names.²¹² This may be an uncanny coincidence. Conversely, it may well be that this decree responded to a concentrated spell of renewed public debate on the matter and that Bebel was in fact playing to that very debate.

To evoke the dynamics of this entire discourse, as Bebel did in Dresden, without explicitly distancing oneself from its widely accepted premises and implications ultimately amounted to an affirmation of those premises and implications. Harden was therefore perfectly justified in criticizing Bebel accordingly. 'Someone who changes his name,' he paraphrased the thrust he ascribed to Bebel's argument, 'especially if it is his goal to influence public affairs, is indeed suspicious; all the more so, if the new name sounds German while the discarded one had a Semitic ring. Surely, the reader will then think, this pushy individual has changed his name to cover up his Jewish origin and avoid spoiling his career.' Not that Harden himself questioned this premise in principle. 'The prejudice,' he continued, 'is understandable.' That it had in the past been applied to his case too, although he could so easily have put matters right, had caused him considerable suffering, but concern for his late mother had previously precluded him from discussing the matter in public. Now that she had died, however, he could clarify the issue. Bebel might well remember Witkowski's company as pleasant, Harden pointed out.²¹³ His father had, however, been psychotic in his later years, and he, Harden, had never really known him as a healthy man. As a result of his ill health he had terrorized his family and Harden's parents were eventually divorced. Harden had remained with his father, an experience he described as highly traumatizing.²¹⁴ Having fled his paternal home at the age of fourteen, his legal status was in limbo. He embarked on an acting career where pseudonyms were in any case common-place, and a name change seemed highly opportune to avoid detection. It was then that he had taken on the name Harden.

Since the health problems of Harden's father, the subsequent break down of the family and the messy divorce proceedings had in part become public knowledge, the family successfully petitioned the authorities, following the death of Harden's father (1878), that they officially be allowed to change their name. The bulk of his family had since used the name Witting while he had decided to legalize his earlier pseudonym.²¹⁵ He had indeed converted, he added, but he had done so 'as a sixteen year old adolescent who never had any connection to the faith of Israel, neither inward nor outward,' and who had already been

²¹² Bering, *Stigma*, 154–157.

²¹³ Harden, 'Bebel und Genossen,' III: 56.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 57.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 58. Harden's brother Ludwig Witkowski had apparently already established himself as a neurologist under that name and hence kept it (cf. Sabine Armbrecht, *Verkannte Liebe. Maximilian Hardens Haltung zur Deutschum und Judentum* (Oldenburg: bis, 1999), 49 n22). Presumably the most prominent of the siblings apart from Harden himself was Richard Witting (1856–1923), who became the *Oberbürgermeister* of Posen (Poznan) in 1891. On a later instance where the issue of the various names adopted by members of Harden's family was raised with polemical intent cf. also the interesting passage in Bering, *Stigma*, 192.

instructed in Christian doctrine as a school boy. 'All this is sad, much sadder than it sounds; but it is no disgrace,' he concluded. Interestingly enough, Lassalle's decision to change the spelling of his name to give it a French guise, 'apparently does not outrage Bebel,' while he, Harden, was taken to task in this way, although 'I did not change my name as an ambitious author but as a child.'²¹⁶

Mehring had, as usual, been rather more outspoken on this front. 'Still a Polish Jew only a moment ago, Herr Harden fights for throne and altar with the Christian baptismal certificate and the Germanic defiance of Arminius the Cheruscan one moment, only to play the sole freedom fighter and libertarian who still dares speak his mind in Germany the next,' he remarked, and he did so in the very article against Bernhard that had initiated the whole dispute,²¹⁷ an article that is consequently highly likely to have been widely read throughout the party and was certainly well known to all those immediately involved in the conflict. It was against the backdrop of both the general obsession with 'Jewish' names and name changes and these explicit remarks by Mehring that Bebel chose to place such persistent emphasis on the Harden's name change. There can hence be little doubt that Bebel was indeed intentionally tapping into the sentiments that governed the general discourse on 'Jewish' names and name changes, even if he refrained from making an explicit reference to it. Conversely, we might add that no mention was made of Mehring's reference to the 'Polish Jew' during the proceedings as one would surely expect had his stance on matters Jewish been at odds with that of his detractors and of genuine concern to them.

Braun, as we saw, to turn to the second indirect reference to matters Jewish at the Congress, argued that Socialists had not only at all times contributed to non-Socialist periodicals but that on occasion they had even collaborated with ones that clearly did subject the party to 'malicious and spiteful criticism'. For the latter Braun even provided an example, namely, Wilhelm Liebknecht's contributions to the *Fackel*. His brother-in-law, 'comrade Dr Viktor Adler from Vienna has personally experienced that the *Fackel* is more or less the most despicable and impertinent paper there is when it comes to attacks on our party and on my friend Dr Adler in particular. Nevertheless, Liebknecht contributed to the *Fackel*, and not only with a harmless literary essay but with a very important political article although he had to realize that he could bring a brother party into an extremely difficult situation with it.' He had published 'an article on the Dreyfus Affair,' and its thrust 'had resulted in quite extraordinary difficulties for the French party back then and for years to come.'²¹⁸

Now, the pronouncements on the Dreyfus Affair that Liebknecht had published in the *Fackel* following the retrial,²¹⁹ the first three of which were also issued separately as a pamphlet,²²⁰ were indeed, to say the very

²¹⁶ Harden, 'Bebel und Genossen,' III: 59.

²¹⁷ Mehring, 'Konzessionsschulzes,' 481–482.

²¹⁸ *Parteitag 1903*, 163–164.

²¹⁹ Wilhelm Liebknecht, 'Nachträgliches zur "Affaire"' and 'Schlusswort,' in *Fackel* 1, 18 [25 September 1899]: 1–10 and 1, 19 [4 October 1899]: 1–12 and 1, 21 [26 October 1899]: 1–12; 'Das Ende einer Komödie,' *Fackel* 2, 42 (1900): 2–10; 'Zweierlei Nachträgliches,' in *Fackel* 2, 44 (1900): 5–15.

²²⁰ *Idem*, *Nachträgliches zur "Affaire"*. Sonder-Abdruck aus der "*Fackel*" (Vienna: Moriz Frisch, 1899).

least, remarkable and certainly had considerable repercussions for the French Socialists. 'I do not believe in the innocence of the French Captain Dreyfus,'²²¹ Liebknecht had declared squarely, adding that 'one will now understand why I was so reticent prior to the end of the trial in Rennes.' He had not wanted 'to vindicate the riff-raff that yearned for the condemnation of "the Jew"'. Which is not to say that there were only pure and honest people on the other side. In part there was a strong whiff of Panama,' he added, setting the tone for much of what was to follow. 'From the outset it was a great injustice that the espionage department of the French General Staff was lumped together with the entire General Staff, indeed with the entire army apparatus,'²²² he then continued.

That this mad injustice was not entirely unintentional is demonstrated by the fact that the leaders of the "Campagne", as they stated thousands of times and hinted at hundreds of thousands of times, assumed that the French General Staff had *knowingly* sentenced an *innocent* man. But surely the only interest of the General Staff could be to identify and seize the *guilty* party. And that the Jew Dreyfus should have been sent to Devil's Island merely due to anti-Jewish hatred is an assumption that flies in the face of all psychology and common sense. The antisemitic movement was very weak in France in 1894 – its proponents were ridiculed. It has grown somewhat stronger since, but mainly *as a result of the "Campagne"* [...] No one will suspect me of any sympathy for the antisemites, but whatever my opinion about the hatred of men like Liebermann v. Sonnenberg, Böckel, Ahlwardt, and their comrades may be, I would never think them capable, should they find themselves as judges, of declaring a Jew guilty of a crime that justifies the death penalty merely because he is a Jew and of sending him to the "dry guillotine".²²³

If even the avowed antisemites were hardly likely to sink so low, how much less likely were the authorities to do so. Hence, 'should someone say to me: "Urged by War minister v. Goßler a Prussian court martial has found a *German* officer of *Jewish nationality* guilty of espionage for France, knowing that he is innocent, simply because he is a Jew" – I would consider him mad.'²²⁴

We might note in passing the remarkable way in which Liebknecht speaks of a German officer of Jewish *nationality*. Coming from a man of whom we have no reason to assume he did not share his peers' disdain for Jewish nationalism and whose very collaboration with Kraus in connection with the Dreyfus Affair has recently even been interpreted as resulting from a particular sensitivity to the vagaries of nationalism and identity politics more generally,²²⁵ this formulation is at the very least an interesting indication of the fundamental conceptual confusion pervading Socialist attempts to grapple with matters Jewish.

²²¹ *Idem*, 'Nachträgliches zur "Affaire",' in *Fackel* 1, 18 [25 September 1899]: 1–10, here 1. Hereafter Liebknecht, 'Nachträgliches' I.

²²² *Ibid.*, 2.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

²²⁵ Cf. Johann Dvůrák's highly problematic discussion, 'Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kraus und die "Fackel",' in Beutin et al. (eds.), *"Gesellschaft der Freiheit"*, 129–149, esp. 129, 133–134. That certain scholars of whom one cannot help suspecting they would presumably give neither Kraus nor Harden the time of day, let alone credit them with serious left-wing positions, become enamoured with them as credible witnesses for the legitimacy of anti-Dreyfusard positions is hardly rendered more convincing when this discovery is combined with an otherwise relatively muted attitude towards nationalism and identity

As for those ‘initiators of the “Campagne” who keep insisting that the *rich* man Dreyfus had no “motive” – as if *money* were the only “motive” for such a crime! –’ Liebknecht added, ‘I would like to remind’ them ‘that the assumption that seven French officers under the guidance of the War Minister had perpetrated a *ritual murder* is inordinately more nonsensical and unnatural than the assumption that a *rich* man could have perpetrated the crime of espionage for a foreign power.’ In conclusion then, ‘I do *not* believe in Dreyfus’s innocence,’²²⁶ he reiterated. That said,

I did ask myself, though: is it likely that a French officer with an influential family and circle of relatives can be found guilty and imprisoned for five years for an act of treason *that he did not commit*? Is it likely, would it be possible that the government for whom he allegedly or presumably committed that act of treason could tolerate it that an innocent man is imprisoned for five years because of this act of treason and treated as Dreyfus has been treated? This question I had to answer with *No!*²²⁷

He then explained the source of his certainty on the matter. ‘I know,’ he stated apodictically, ‘that *a sort of unwritten international law* concerning governmental *military espionage* exists.’ One of ‘the stipulations of this unwritten international law’ was ‘that an *innocent* person indicted for espionage is released *immediately* if the government for whom the act of treason has been committed *informally* declares that the person in question [...] is innocent.’ Since this had obviously not happened in Dreyfus’s case, ‘I was compelled to conclude that Dreyfus was *not* innocent.’²²⁸ His doubts ‘were hardly alleviated’ when ‘the statements of the *German envoy* in *Paris* in 1894 and the more recent one by Secretary of State *Bülow*’²²⁹ became public. Clearly ‘these were the *conventional formulae* that simply expressed the conventional lie that a government is “neither directly nor indirectly” involved with spies.’²³⁰

Given that Dreyfus’s guilt was so indubitably clear, one had to question the motives of the Dreyfusards. They were profoundly misguided in their efforts and their campaign could only backfire. As Liebknecht confessed, he had at the time ‘said privately in a conversation with a supporter of the Dreyfusard cause that the leaders of the “Campagne” deserved to be beaten up for the way in which they harmed their own cause and assisted the antisemites and reactionaries.’ In any case, ‘the retrial was achieved – an achievement that was not down to the “Campagne” but to the exposure of the forger Henry by the *bête noir* of the revisionists, War Minister Cavaignac. [...] The new trial came and – Dreyfus has been found guilty for the second time.’²³¹ It was worth pointing out,

though, that Dreyfus’s guilt has *not* been proven – but neither has his *innocence*; and one should keep in mind that direct, definite evidence seldom exists in espionage trials [...] A single word

politics that instantaneously becomes extraordinarily alert and critical when confronted with Jewish nationalism and other attempts to articulate a Jewish sense of identity.

²²⁶ Liebknecht, ‘Nachträgliches’ I, 4.

²²⁷ Ibid., 4–5.

²²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²²⁹ Ibid., 6–7.

²³⁰ Ibid., 7. Cf. also Hyndman’s account of Liebknecht’s stance in Henry M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 436–438. That Hyndman cannot actually have been quoting Liebknecht verbatim is borne out not least by the fact that he has Liebknecht count Kautsky among his Jewish colleagues.

²³¹ Liebknecht, ‘Nachträgliches,’ I, 7–8.

from the German government would have rescued him, had it known him to be innocent, and *this* word was not spoken. The conventional formula covered the government but not Dreyfus.²³²

The French government had now 'pardoned Dreyfus,' Liebknecht concluded his first article in the *Fackel*. 'That was not logical but sensible.'²³³

Any attempt to interpret the outcome of the retrial, 'the "guilty" with "mitigating circumstances" as proof for doubts concerning the guilt of the convicted man,' Liebknecht then explained in his second article, would be based on 'a totally arbitrary assumption. "Mitigating circumstances" are indeed often acknowledged where doubts concerning a person's guilt need to be overcome. Even more often, however, they are granted due to humanitarian considerations.'²³⁴ There could be 'no doubt whatsoever, though,' he continued, 'that his immediate acceptance of the pardon does not vouch for an awareness of innocence on Dreyfus's part. The Dreyfus press hastily disregarded this point – it knows why.' Dreyfus's acceptance of the pardon

is not heroic, just human. But why retract the appeal? The Dreyfus press simply states: "Because otherwise the pardon could not proceed." That is true, but only in the most literal sense, and it throws dust in people's eyes [...] What prevents Dreyfus from waiting for the *outcome of the appeal*? After all that he has been through, a few weeks more or less surely do not matter and his prison in France was quite bearable. Had his awareness of his innocence and his wish to see it publicly proven been as strong as is purported, then he could, to my mind, never have acted as he has. His desire to get out of prison was certainly greater than his desire to prove his innocence; he has voluntarily relinquished the best and most immediate chance of ascertaining the truth. That most certainly does *not* speak for Dreyfus's innocence.²³⁵

Liebknecht then turned his attention to the Dreyfusard campaign. '*Pretence and publicity. Publicity and pretence* [Mache und Reclame. Reclame und Mache],' he begun,

never has there been as pretentious a publicity campaign on such a gigantic scale. It only had *one* fault. Never has pretension been *more visible and palpable and blatant* – and never more clichéd and crude [niemals schablonenmäßig plumper]. In part it was a stringently performed concert, in part a well-rehearsed racket – both with a single conductor whose every sign all the participants followed. One motion of the baton and in Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, New York, and everywhere else the same singing, blowing, whistling, hissing, squeaking, yelling. And then the people act surprised when the notion of a "syndicate" arises! When 500 papers of all sorts in all sorts of countries simultaneously strike up the same melody once or twice or more often still each day then that can surely hardly be "pure coincidence".²³⁶

It had been 'a monumental mistake,' he continued, 'to identify Jewry's cause with that of Dreyfus.' After all, 'is Jewry guilty, then, when one Jew has perpetrated a crime? No sensible person in France or elsewhere had any intention of holding the Jews accountable for Dreyfus,' he claimed. By contrast,

the involvement of Jews in the Panama swindle provided far more grist to the antisemitic mill. And lo and behold: heroes and victims of the Panama swindle stood at the helm of the

²³² Ibid., 8–9.

²³³ Ibid., 10.

²³⁴ *Idem*, 'Nachträgliches zur "Affaire",' in *Fackel* 1, 19 [4 October 1899]: 1–12, here 1. Hereafter Liebknecht, 'Nachträgliches' II.

²³⁵ Ibid., 2–3.

²³⁶ Ibid., 3.

movement for Dreyfus; thus the stupidity of identifying Dreyfus's cause with that of Jewry in its entirety was supplemented by the probably even greater stupidity of dragging the nasty odour of the Panama Affair into the Dreyfus Affair. [...] The consequence of the identification of Jewry with Dreyfus could only be that Dreyfus's second conviction turned into a defeat inflicted on Jewry.²³⁷

All that, however, 'is comparatively insignificant. The political education and sense of equality are too strong in France for the antisemitic movement to become dangerous and permanent. Far more dangerous is the effect the "Campagne" has had on *militarism* in France.'²³⁸ The Dreyfusard campaign had 'insulted national feelings and aroused wild protest – *and it has made the army popular and provided militarism with a triumph*. It will take a long time,' Liebknecht concluded his second article, 'before the movement against militarism in France reaches the strength again that it had acquired before the "Affair".'²³⁹

'The Moltkes of the revisionist movement, the Südfeld & Co.'²⁴⁰ claimed that had the "Campagne" not acted with such vehemence the appeal would never have been heard,' he explained in a subsequent response to some of the objections raised against his line of argument. 'That is wrong. I am in fact convinced that had the "Campagne" never taken place the appeal would have been *heard far sooner*.'²⁴¹ The campaign had been based on "'tactics" of *hysterical madness*,' and

the only thing that continues to mystify me is how there could ever have been people outside of psychiatric institutions who engaged in such stupidity, approved of it, and even admired it. The *ugliest, most repulsive* feature of the "Affair" and its *pretensions*, however, is the *inner insincerity*, the *mendacious hypocrisy of this comedy of outrage*, this *most hypocritical comedy of outrage*.²⁴²

'Who is still talking about the "Affair"?'²⁴³ he then asked towards the end of the third article. 'Only a few more weeks and the word Dreyfus will have been forgotten. As far as *cultural history* goes, that would be a shame,' he added. After all, he concluded, posterity could grant 'the "Campagne" pride of place next to the Pied Piper crusades of the children, the pilgrimages of the St Vitus's brethren and the mass processions of the dancing dervishes.'²⁴⁴

As Kraus reported some weeks later, 'a nationalist fortnightly journal, *L'action Française*, edited by Maurice Barrès, has translated Liebknecht's articles *in extenso* and distributed them throughout France in more than a hundred thousand copies,' and numerous smaller papers, including the antisemitic flagship, *La*

²³⁷ Ibid., 6–7.

²³⁸ Ibid., 7

²³⁹ Ibid., 10

²⁴⁰ It is hard to imagine that Liebknecht should have come up with this without a little help from Kraus. Kraus's readers hardly needed the matter explained to them, but Kraus nevertheless added a footnote stating that 'this is a reference to Herr Nordau who, as a Zionist party leader condemning any form of assimilation whatsoever denies his ancestral name.' This 'brave [wackerer]' man had reported from Rennes for the *Vossische Zeitung* (Wilhelm Liebknecht, 'Schlusswort,' in *Fackel* 1, 21 [26 October 1899]: 1–12, here 5 *n1*. Hereafter Liebknecht, 'Schlusswort').

²⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

²⁴² Ibid., 6.

²⁴³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 12.

Libre Parole, had quoted extensively from them. ‘Men who swim in a tributary where the current flows backwards boast that they swim in parallel with Liebknecht who is struggling against the tide in the main river,’ Kraus commented.²⁴⁵ In the independent Socialists’ *La Petite République*, its editor-in-chief, Alfred Lèon Gérault-Richard (born 1860), had subsequently ‘seen no other way out’ but to claim that Liebknecht’s articles had been translated inappropriately. Gérault-Richard had stated, Kraus reported, that Liebknecht’s articles

had provided the opponents of the Socialists (to the extent, that is, that they support Jaurès) with weapons that are all the more murderous because they were welded by the hands of a friend. That said, once Liebknecht saw who the people were who now exploited these articles it could not but upset him considerably and he would be compelled to regret having laid himself open to the risk of being translated and utilized in this way.

Kraus then added: ‘I know that he regrets nothing.’²⁴⁶ At the Socialist Congress in Paris Liebknecht’s stance had even ‘led to an incident,’ Kraus continued. ‘Herr Joindy, editor of the “Petite République” and of the *Aurore*, exclaimed: “Down with Liebknecht!” when the Dreyfus Affair came up. The man was punished accordingly.’²⁴⁷ In the following edition of the *Fackel*, Kraus published a letter Liebknecht had written to the *Petite République*. In it Liebknecht retorted that ‘you reprimand me for my new friends. I could reprimand you for yours,’ (i.e. the Socialists’ Dreyfusard associates). Kraus himself expressed his confidence that ‘the attempts of the French nationalists to exploit Liebknecht’s articles against French Social Democracy will surely be shattered by this letter,’²⁴⁸ before launching into new broadsides against ‘the dying fencer Südfeld’.²⁴⁹

When it was reported the following summer that Dreyfus had told the correspondent of the *Secolo* (Milan), the Italian Republican Giuseppe de Felice (1859–1920), that he hoped the propaganda associated with his name would abate soon for only then could he hope for the due legal process that could ascertain the truth, Liebknecht submitted yet another article on the matter to the *Fackel*, triumphant at his apparent vindication. He did not know whether Dreyfus had read his articles in the *Fackel*, he wrote, ‘but if he has, then he has vindicated everything I said. If not, we would be looking at a correspondence almost as miraculous as that between the 70 Alexandrian translators of the Old Testament.’²⁵⁰ Dreyfus had clearly identified what had indeed characterized the whole Affair, namely, ‘that its concern was *not* to ascertain the truth about the guilt or innocence of Captain Dreyfus but to use Dreyfus’s case for a “Campagne” that could not but result

²⁴⁵ Karl Kraus, ‘Nachträgliches zur “Affaire”,’ in *Fackel* 1, 26 (1899): 8–13, here 9–10.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 13. Cf. also Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 211.

²⁴⁸ Karl Kraus, ‘Nachträgliches zum “Nachträgliches”,’ in *Fackel* 1, 27 (1899): 22–27, here 22.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁵⁰ Wilhelm Liebknecht, ‘Zweierlei Nachträgliches,’ in *Fackel* 2, 44 (1900): 5–15, here 6. Hereafter Liebknecht, ‘Zweierlei’. The article is dated 17 June 1900. Liebknecht had previously also made some additional remarks on the Dreyfus Affair in *Idem*, ‘Das Ende einer Komödie,’ in *Fackel* 2, 42 (1900): 2–10.

in a backlash of French national feeling benefiting militarism and antisemitism.²⁵¹ The alleged hatred of the French towards Jewry 'exists only in the imagination of those who claim that it exists. Until the Affair was conjured up, no antisemitic movement existed in France. The Jews who are, incidentally, physically hardly distinct from the national population in France – as in Italy – had completely merged with the French nature [Franzosenenthum] since the "Great Revolution" and the fools like Drumont who railed against the Jews as the sole cause of all social maladies were loners. It took the whole ingenious clumsiness of the Dreyfus-Campagne to artificially produce an antisemitic movement.'²⁵² As for Dreyfus himself, 'if he has evidence for his innocence,' Liebknecht concluded, one could only hope that he received the opportunity to present it, but to do so he would 'clearly have to remember the proverb: God protect me from my friends!'²⁵³

In one important respect, of course, Liebknecht's stance stood *sui generis*. It was predicated on the assumption that Dreyfus was indubitably guilty. This makes it extremely difficult to relate and compare the practical implications of his argument to the tactical prescriptions of other Socialists at the time. The crucial question presented by Jaurès to prominent Socialists in 1899, whether the movement could 'without abandoning the principle of class struggle' take sides in a conflict 'among various bourgeois factions, whether to save political liberty or, as in the Dreyfus Affair, to defend humanity,'²⁵⁴ surely presupposed Dreyfus's by then firmly established innocence. Hence Liebknecht's stance did not in fact answer that particular question in the negative nor did those who answered it in the affirmative thereby provide a critique of Liebknecht's take on the matter.

Leaving the issue of Dreyfus's guilt or innocence aside for a moment, though, the verve of Liebknecht's malicious and in part clearly delusional portrayal of the Dreyfusard campaign and the imagery he employs in the process are surely remarkable and testify to more than the 'incredible naivety' Silberner ascribes to these articles. That even Silberner should conclude that they 'contain not a word with as much as an antisemitic connotation,'²⁵⁵ is somewhat baffling but perhaps a good illustration of the problems that arise if 'a word with an antisemitic connotation' is ultimately held to constitute an 'antisemitic remark' which invariably renders the text in which it features an 'antisemitic text' and its author an 'antisemite'. One need not conclude that Liebknecht's texts on the Dreyfus Affair were antisemitic and that Liebknecht was hence an antisemite in any straightforward sense of the word to concede that Liebknecht's critique of the Dreyfusard campaign requires an explanation. It clearly bears testimony to an irrational approach to antisemitism and matters Jewish that we need to understand to develop a more thorough understanding of fully-fledged antisemitism and its virulence and pervasiveness in German society both in the short and the long term. If we can only either indict Liebknecht as an antisemite or give him an entirely clean bill of

²⁵¹ *Idem*, 'Zweierlei,' 6–7.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁴ Quoted from Jacobs, *Socialists*, 15.

²⁵⁵ Silberner, *Sozialisten*, 211.

health on the matter we lose these nuances which can indeed only be properly examined if we initially postpone judgement, as it were, and focus instead on the wider set of perceptions of (supposedly) Jewish phenomena the significance of which I have tried to establish throughout this study.

Ultimately, given the vehemence of Liebknecht's scorn *vis-à-vis* the Dreyfusards, one cannot help wondering whether his apodictic insistence on Dreyfus's guilt was not in fact a rationalization and the stubbornness with which he maintained it a reflection of the unsettling effect the anti-antisemitic aspect of the Dreyfusard campaign had on him. The fact that Liebknecht had in fact written to Kraus as late as 5 August 1899 that 'I neither think Dreyfus guilty nor innocent,'²⁵⁶ would seem to underscore this suggestion.

Strangely enough, the 'mitigating circumstances' that actually might help explain this vehemence, seem to have been entirely overlooked in the extant literature. Throughout the articles, Liebknecht makes numerous remarks indicating that his prime target were the German Dreyfusards. In France, he claimed, the campaign 'is nowhere near as strong as it is in Germany, even though, as the French do, they are making far more of a song and dance about it.'²⁵⁷ 'Was it not just totally absurd,' he asked, 'to proceed with the "Campagne" for a man imprisoned for treason in that country to which he was supposed to have betrayed his fatherland? That was totally grotesque,'²⁵⁸ he suggested. 'The outbursts' of the German Dreyfusards 'against the "band of forgers", "criminals", "degenerate Frenchmen" were reminiscent of the wildest orgies of war fanaticism in 1870/71,' he criticized, adding that among those supporting the campaign 'the German press sinned particularly badly. Liberal and democratic papers indulged in an orgy of anti-French chauvinism [Franzosenfresserei] that must have inspired envy in our most bigoted *Junker* and police patriots and was restrained only by their antisemitism. This chauvinist orgy was, after all, being enacted in honour of "the Jew Dreyfus".'²⁵⁹ What if the boot were on the other foot, if Dreyfus were a German officer and an organized press campaign for him transpired 'primarily in the French press,' he asked.²⁶⁰ What would those now supporting Dreyfus in Germany make of that? His critique held 'true most of all of the "Campagne" as it transpired in *Germany*,'²⁶¹ he clarified, and later finally made explicit his concern. 'Charity begins at home,' he wrote in English, then adding that 'the press of free countries differs from the press of unfree countries in that it uncovers the faults at home and only then deals with those abroad.'²⁶²

Within limits, Liebknecht had a point here, of course. All other things being even, a Dreyfus Affair admittedly could not have transpired in Germany, as has been pointed out many times, because a Jew would never have made it into the General Staff. Moreover, French society was actually torn down the

²⁵⁶ Quote in Karl Kraus, 'Briefe Wilhelm Liebknechts (Zur 100. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages, 29. März 1826),' in *Fackel* 27, 713–23 [March 1926]: 6–31, here 7. Hereafter Kraus, 'Briefe Wilhelm Liebknechts'.

²⁵⁷ Liebknecht, 'Nachträgliches' I, 3

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*, 'Nachträgliches' II, 9.

²⁶¹ *Idem*, 'Nachträgliches' III, 6.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 8.

middle by the convulsions of the Affair where its German counterpart, confronted with a similar situation, would at best have frayed at the edges.²⁶³ What, then, gave parts of the German public who were either at peace with this state of affairs or incapable of altering it the legitimacy to denounce the situation in France? That said, it remains profoundly questionable just how useful a course of action it was to bash those who were at least trying, as it were, or, at the very least, to risk bashing them too while lashing out at the more mainstream *Franzosenfresserei* that may indeed have played a role among German Dreyfusards and is an issue that would merit closer examination. Even so, all that could explain only in part the vehemence and aggressive tone of his dismissal of the Dreyfusard campaign and the lengths to which he went to express it; I certainly do not know of any other instance in which Liebknecht dedicated a whole series of articles (and agreed to have them printed as a pamphlet) to bash not so much the actual cause supposedly dealt with but rather a particular segment of those supporting that cause.

What is true, though, is that Liebknecht clearly was inclined to adhere to his ‘charity begins at home’ stipulation when comparing conditions at home and abroad, so much so that it aroused open conflict in the party on at least one occasion. As Jost Hermand has recently pointed out, Liebknecht’s recollections of his journey to the USA with Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling in 1886,²⁶⁴ for instance, offer neither an account of his actual activities and experiences nor an accurate portrayal of the state of affairs there.²⁶⁵ They ultimately offer a semi-fictional, utopian account designed to present the USA, or rather, ‘his dream America’, as ‘a positive foil for the, to his mind, extremely negative state of affairs in Imperial Germany.’ ‘In the final [...] more theoretical section,’ Hermand suggests, ‘Liebknecht develops his vision of a liberated, classless society, which he indeed calls “America” but at the same time encapsulates the vision of a different, better German Reich.’²⁶⁶ As Liebknecht himself explained in his Marx memoirs,

“patriotism” is a disease by which a sensible person is only befallen abroad; at home there is such an abundance of wretchedness that anyone who does not suffer from brain paralysis and curvature of the spine is immune to the germ that carries this political dizziness also known as chauvinism or jingoism [...] Lessing said – “in Saxony I praise Prussia, in Prussia I praise Saxony.” And that is the most sensible patriotism, one that seeks to remedy the defects of the fatherland by pointing to the – really or ostensibly – better example abroad. I have benefited from this dictum of Lessing from an early age.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Against this background Volkov’s suggestion that ‘Germany never experienced such a test case, and we shall never know how she would have reacted. But it is instructive to remember that many in Germany at the time of the Affair saw in it a proof of the inferiority of the French system, and even the Jews expressed the concern of the better-situated brother,’ (Volkov, ‘Written Matter,’ 48–49) does seem rather far-fetched and one cannot help wondering whether the societal context she seems to envisage in connection with her ‘cultural code’ concept is not perhaps in its entirety one that resembles the state of affairs in France rather more than the realities of Imperial Germany.

²⁶⁴ Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Ein Blick in die Neue Welt* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1887).

²⁶⁵ Jost Hermand, ‘Ein Blick in die Neue Welt (1887). Wilhelm Liebknechts Bericht über seine USA-Reise 1886,’ in *Wilhelm Liebknecht. Revolutionär, Demokrat und Sozialist (1826–1900). Wissenschaftliche Konferenz anlässlich seines hundertsten Todestages* (Berlin: Helle Panke, 2001) – Hereafter *Liebknecht-Konferenz* –, 31–45, here 37.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 38, 44.

²⁶⁷ Liebknecht, *Karl Marx*, 82–83.

In April 1897 Schoenlank in fact took Liebknecht to task for a report on his recent lecture tour in the Netherlands²⁶⁸ and caused quite a stir in the process.²⁶⁹ As Schoenlank noted in his diary on 5 April, he had given Liebknecht a piece of his mind for the gushing praise [Lobhudelei] of conditions abroad meted out 'at our expense'.²⁷⁰ Following Liebknecht's death, Gerlach later wrote about this dispute that 'one of his own party comrades, the astute deputy Schönlank, demonstrated in a much discussed article that he still lugged the unpleasant habit from his exile along behind him of underestimating everything at home and overestimating everything abroad.'²⁷¹

We might note in passing that it seems to have been this conflict between Schoenlank and Liebknecht which facilitated or at least helped along the reconciliation between Mehring and Schoenlank. As Schoenlank noted in his diary on 23 April, he had received a 'refreshing [herzerfrischend]' letter from Mehring, and he promptly stuck it into the diary. He had intended for some time, Mehring explained, to write to Schoenlank about the Liebknecht business but had not found the time. Now, however, he had just seen the newest edition of the *Neue Zeit*, Mehring explained, in which Kautsky claimed that Liebknecht had pertinently given short shrift to Schoenlank.²⁷² This was totally inappropriate. 'That Liebknecht's writing has harmed the party for many years now is, after all, *communis opinio* among the sensible members of the party; if you now tell it as it is and criticize his silly whitewash of conditions abroad in a reasoned manner that is, if anything, too timid, then it was the duty of the party press to support you, not to pounce on you, as most party papers have done.'²⁷³ Less than a month later Schoenlank's diary registered another 'rather pleasing' letter from Mehring. 'I have in any case always held the *LVZ* to be the best daily of the party,' Mehring explained, 'but the recent affair with Liebknecht has made me all the more determined to be primarily at its disposal to the extent that I will be able to focus on the daily press once I have completed my party history and, of course, to the extent that you are inclined to count on my contributions.'²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Wilhelm Liebknecht, 'Acht Tage in Holland,' in *NZ* 15-II, 27–28 [24–31 March 1897]: 4–9, 48–53 and *NZ* 15-II, 30 [14 April 1897]: 107–115. Schoenlank's misgivings concerned specifically the second instalment. Liebknecht responded to Schoenlank's critique at the end of the third instalment (*ibid.*, *nI*), quoting his initial response first published in the *Vorwärts* 14, 87 [13 April 1897]: 3.

²⁶⁹ Bruno Schoenlank, 'Ein holländisches Stilleben,' in *LVZ* 4, 83 [10 April 1897]: 1–2. The ensuing controversy, especially between *LVZ* and *Vorwärts*, dragged on for a full month.

²⁷⁰ Schoenlank's diary is held by the Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn (Ältere Nachlässe: Schoenlank) and was published in Paul Mayer, *Bruno Schoenlank 1859–1901* (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1971): 99–139, here 119. Where in doubt, I have followed Mayer's transcription. Hereafter Schoenlank, *Tagebuch*.

²⁷¹ Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die Führer der deutschen Socialdemokratie,' in *Zeit* 24, 306 [11 August 1900]: 83–85, here 83.

²⁷² Karl Kautsky, 'Die Haltlosigkeit des Erfurter Programms,' in *NZ* 25-II, 30 [14 April 1897]: 123–125, here 123.

²⁷³ Schoenlank, *Tagebuch*, 124.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 131. I was no longer able to find Mehring's second letter in the original diary in June 2002. On the turbulent relationship between Mehring and Liebknecht cf. most recently Thomas Höhle, 'Sozialdemokraten und Intellektuelle. Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Liebknecht und Mehring in den neunziger Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts,' in Beutin et al. (eds.), "*Gesellschaft der Freiheit*": 83–97 and

Liebknacht's pronouncements on the Dreyfus Affair thus raised a number of potentially contentious issues pertaining to antisemitism and matters Jewish. Surely, the degree of interest and sensitivity it would have taken for the delegates to perceive of Mehring's involvement with Hans Leuß as critique-worthy specifically because of the latter's stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish would have required the delegates to be similarly critical of Liebknacht's articles in the *Fackel* on the same count. None of these issues, however, hinged on the one aspect under which Liebknacht's collaboration with Kraus was initially raised and subsequently discussed, namely the fact that Liebknacht had chosen to publicize his stance in a non-Socialist periodical that indulged in 'malicious and spiteful criticism' of the party. Nor had this fact in any way influenced the problems that resulted for the Dreyfusard Socialists in France either way. After all, the French anti-Dreyfusards could and presumably would have utilized Liebknacht's articles in just the same way, and perhaps even more effectively, had they first been published in a Socialist periodical. And yet, none too surprisingly, given all that we know about the nature of this particular debate in Dresden by now, both responses elicited by Braun's remarks on Liebknacht's collaboration with Kraus were concerned with the suggestion that Liebknacht had knowingly contributed to a periodical known to indulge in 'malicious and spiteful criticism' of the party and not by the furthest stretch of the imagination with the content of his articles on the Dreyfus case.

Nor, his own Jewish extraction and his apparent refusal to convert for the sake of an academic career²⁷⁵ notwithstanding, do we have any reason to assume that Braun himself subscribed to a more critical view of these matters and may have been trying to steer the debate towards the issue of antisemitism and matters Jewish. Responding to the electoral successes of the antisemites a decade earlier he had made it patently clear that he subscribed to the official party line hook, line and sinker. 'That antisemitism represents a strong social trend,' he had stated in his *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* in 1893, 'is as undeniable as is the fact that within it, next to the attacks on Jewry, a more general radically anti-capitalist

Thomas Höhle, 'Die wechselvollen Beziehungen zwischen Wilhelm Liebknacht und Franz Mehring,' in *Liebknacht-Konferenz*, 46–50.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Julie Braun-Vogelstein, *Ein Menschenleben. Heinrich Braun und sein Schicksal* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich, 1932), 83. Hereafter Braun-Vogelstein, *Ein Menschenleben*. Braun-Vogelstein quotes an account by her late husband, written thirty-five years after the event (which would be around 1918), in which he states that he had rejected the suggestion that he convert to facilitate his *Habilitation* 'although, or perhaps precisely because, I have no inner relationship to Judaism.' Cf. also Arno Herzig, 'Paul Singer – Heinrich Braun. Zum Revisionismusstreit der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vor dem 1. Weltkrieg,' in *TAJb* Beiheft 6 (1984): 123–149, here 129. It is worth pointing out that Braun-Vogelstein acted as a devoted biographer not only to her late husband but also to her marital predecessor. Cf. Julie Vogelstein, *Lily Braun. Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin-Grunewald: Hermann Klemm, [1922] n.d.). We therefore have no reason to assume that she had any interest in showing Lily Braun up, whom she credits, in her biography of Heinrich Braun, with the notion that Braun must surely have been the child of an affair his mother had with some aristocratic land magnate. 'Where else might he have gained the free, the non-bourgeois, the aristocratic nature from, if not from magnates' blood? Unprejudiced as she was, even philosemitic, it nevertheless remained inconceivable to her that a Jew should bear no trait of the ghetto at all' (Braun-Vogelstein, *Ein Menschenleben*, 11.) On Braun-Vogelstein's biography of Braun cf. also the interesting discussion by Karl Kautsky, 'Heinrich Braun. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie,' in *Die Gesellschaft* 10, 2 (1933): 155–172.

tendency is trying to assert itself with ever greater clarity and self awareness. Thus it draws closer to Social Democracy and *Reichskanzler* von Caprivi is completely justified in calling it the harbinger of Social Democracy.²⁷⁶ The significance of the 'work in the field of social policy' that the antisemites were currently undertaking by 'surmounting the centuries-old mindlessness of the peasants and setting this most inert segment of the population into passionate motion,' as well as its propaganda among craftsmen and subordinate bureaucrats, could barely be overestimated. It seemed more or less a foregone conclusion that 'the law of social gravitation, as it were,' would let the antisemitic movement 'merge into the stronger and more powerful Social Democratic movement,' although it was hard to say how long exactly that might take.²⁷⁷

Nor, we might add, was the *Neue Gesellschaft* subsequently a particular hotbed of anti-antisemitism. *Inter alia*, it published an utterly euphoric and ultra-assimilationist review of Jakob Fromer's *Vom Ghetto zur modernen Kultur*²⁷⁸ by none other than Stefan Großmann who was, of course, at the time still associated with Austrian Social Democracy and worked for the Viennese *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

The first response to Braun's mention of Liebknecht's collaboration with Kraus, then, came from Kautsky. Speaking immediately after Braun, he conceded that

it is indeed true that Liebknecht wrote for the *Fackel* [...] I agree with Braun that Liebknecht made a mistake in doing so. I believe, however, that Braun would be well advised to imitate the great things Liebknecht achieved and his revolutionary fervour rather than an occasional gaffe on his part! (From the floor: Bravo!) [...] I can only think of one explanation for Liebknecht's gaffe, namely, that the *Fackel* is published in Vienna and Liebknecht was unfamiliar with the conditions there.²⁷⁹

The second response came in the form of a personal statement by none other than 'my friend Dr Adler'. He regretted inordinately to have to participate in this debate, Adler began. He then conceded that

Liebknecht did indeed publish a series of articles in the *Fackel* that we found disagreeable. [...] I owe it to Liebknecht, though, to diminish the force of the accusation levelled against him. [...] Austrian party comrades wrote articles for the *Fackel* under their full name – we were in no position to prevent it but the events in Germany will serve us as a warning. Liebknecht could, hence, assume we took no exception to this periodical.

Moreover, 'the effect of these articles was by no means as detrimental to the Austrian party as Braun claimed,' Adler added in a rather strange twist, as if the 'brother party' faced with difficulties as a result of Liebknecht's pronouncements in the *Fackel* had been the Austrian rather than the French party.

²⁷⁶ Heinrich Braun, 'Zur Lage der deutschen Sozialdemokratie,' in *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* 6, 3 (1893): 506–520, here 513.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 514

²⁷⁸ Jakob Fromer, *Vom Ghetto zur Kultur. Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Charlottenburg: Selbstverlag, 1906).

²⁷⁹ *Parteitag* 1903, 175.

Kraus himself, we might add, responded on 18 September by sending a letter to the Party Congress, clarifying that ‘not a single Austrian Social Democrat wrote for the *Fackel* under his name prior to Liebknecht [...] That Liebknecht could have thought the Austrian Social Democrats took no exception to the *Fackel* is hence incorrect. The truth is, quite to the contrary, that Liebknecht knew the opposite to be true and honoured the *Fackel* with his collaboration nonetheless.’ By implication, Kautsky’s contention ‘that Liebknecht would not have written for the *Fackel* had he known it,’ was equally incorrect.²⁸⁰ Kraus, we might add, was to all intents and purposes right. ‘Incidentally,’ Liebknecht had written to Kraus on 8 November 1899, ‘I made careful inquiries before writing for you and even *opponents* told me nothing that would blemish your honour.’²⁸¹

That Mehring’s detractors (and the Congress more generally) should have failed to pick up on either of these issues and yet held Mehring’s dealings with Leuß to be critique-worthy specifically because of Leuß’ (and, by implication, Mehring’s) stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish seems barely plausible. Moreover, we might note that although Mehring’s critics had combed through his past to construe their case against him, of all the issues they could have picked up on, one was, from our point of view, conspicuously missing: the accusation levelled at Mehring in 1891 that he had written anti- and philosemitic articles for different papers at the same time, an accusation that Mehring himself had, as we saw in the first chapter, related (and refuted as best he knew how) in *Kapital und Presse*. Had his detractors’ concern been Mehring’s attitude towards matters Jewish, their failure to raise this issue would surely be extremely puzzling.

What then of the two direct references to antisemitism (beyond the party-political label) and matters Jewish that arose in connection with the proceedings in Dresden? One of them sprung from an editorial by Harden and the other actually directly concerned Mehring. Among the articles from the *Zukunft* cited by Bebel as evidence for its ‘malicious and spiteful’ attitude towards the party, to begin with the former, was Harden’s editorial ‘Die rothen Primadonnen’. Why was this editorial so ‘malicious and spiteful’? It had claimed that it was generally accepted ‘that antisemitism was becoming more and more prevalent in the party; not, of course, officially, but in private conversations.’²⁸²

In the editorial in question, Harden commented on the fact that the debate on antisemitism initially planned for the Berlin Party Congress in 1892 had been postponed.²⁸³

One motion also addressed the issue of antisemitism which was supposed to be dealt with in a speech by Bebel and a subsequent discussion. Anyone vaguely familiar with the psychology of political parties knows that motions are usually palliative devices inspired by awkward situations [...] antisemitism has made such rapid progress among the Social Democrats that one seriously

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Kraus, ‘Briefe Wilhelm Liebknechts,’ 20–21 *n.l.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸² *Parteitag 1903*, 221–222.

²⁸³ Officially, the debate was postponed for time reasons (*Parteitag 1892*, 248–249.) Bebel initially stated he would hold his planned speech at a gathering in Berlin soon after the Congress and then publish it (*ibid.*, 294.) In the event, as we saw, the speech was then shelved until the following Congress.

had to fear one might encounter covert or explicit Ahlwardt-style utterances [Ahlwardtereien] in the debate; hence this most interesting item of the agenda was carefully circumvented. Officially, of course, this is denied with the most emphatic determination, in private conversations, however, even the most enthusiastic comrades admit it with a shrug of their shoulders.

He then added a somewhat ominous remark I have not as yet managed to interpret plausibly: 'The simple truth of the matters is that Vollmar has his group and Singer, who is said to have bequeathed his fortune to the party, is an even more powerful man.'²⁸⁴ Bernstein's contention, in a letter written to Engels on 18 August 1884, that Singer 'believes, out of an exaggerated scrupulousness, that he himself must play the antisemite and the state socialist,'²⁸⁵ is, of course, well known, as is Bernstein's slightly later remark to Engels on 24 September identifying Singer as one of those who, 'like most of the Jews in the Party, [...] considers himself to be obliged to accommodate himself to antisemitism.'²⁸⁶ More recently, as we already saw, he and Adler had, moreover, pleaded vehemently with Cahan to withdraw his anti-antisemitic motion tabled at the International Socialist Congress in Brussels in 1891. That Singer might have been instrumental in having the debate on antisemitism planned for the 1892 Congress postponed is by no means implausible and the suggestion that he should have been in cahoots with Vollmar on the matter is highly intriguing.²⁸⁷ That Harden's contentions most likely did not spring from pure fantasy is borne out precisely by the way in which Bebel commented on the editorial. 'We can already see here,' he added immediately,

the way in which Maximilian Wittkowski-Harden was privy to private conversations among comrades. It is one of the saddest things that have transpired in the party, that at that time on certain evenings in the week, usually Saturday night, a number of prominent comrades, I too was occasionally among them, came together for a drink and that a mass of bourgeois writers from various papers would gradually come along and that party issues were discussed there in the

²⁸⁴ Apostata [Maximilian Harden], 'Die rothen Primadonnen,' in *Zukunft* 9 [26 November 1892]: 385–391, here 387.

²⁸⁵ BWEBE, 293; translation from Jacobs, *Socialists*, 56.

²⁸⁶ BWEBE, 299; translation from Jacobs, *Socialists*, 56.

²⁸⁷ Among Vollmar's papers (IISH Vollmar 3456) is a slightly later (May 1895) printed circular from the Bavarian party executive instructing the organization how to deal with a propaganda tour through Bavaria planned by Ahlwardt. One would only bestow undeserved importance on a regressive movement with little chance of success, it argued, if one responded publicly to Ahlwardt and tried to cross him. The Bavarian comrades should therefore refrain from trying to usurp Ahlwardt's assemblies. We might note, incidentally, that the relatively common practice of visiting antisemitic assemblies to explode them or change their agenda, a practice that both Leuschen-Seppel and Rürup place particular emphasis on, was by no means free of the ambiguities of Social Democratic anti-antisemitism that we have discussed throughout this study. On 22 August 1901, to give just one example, the SAZ reported one such instance in which Social Democrats had effectively managed to abort a planned antisemitic assembly in Ludwigshafen at which an antisemitic deputy had intended to speak on 'Liberal and Social Democratic *Brotwucherschwindel*' ('Kleine politische Nachrichten,' in SAZ 12, 194 [22 August 1901], 2.) Now, we need not even be able to work out how exactly this deputy assumed the Liberals and Social Democrats were deceiving whom exactly in connection with the debate on tariffs on agricultural products and food stuffs, to recognize that this topic made no direct or invariable reference to matters Jewish and the determination of the local Social Democrats not to let themselves be accused of the deceit in question in and of itself was not therefore automatically anti-antisemitic in the more specific sense of the word.

presence of opponents with a recklessness that disgusted me and led me to avoid the gathering.²⁸⁸

Bebel's concern here, then, is not with the content of the information obtained by Harden but with the way in which he obtained it. What is more, unless we assume that Bebel was criticizing his comrades for recklessly discussing party issues in a way suited to put about false rumours, Bebel's comment surely implies that the information Harden had thus obtained was essentially correct. This precludes us from assuming that Bebel may not have responded directly to the content of Harden's remark on the postponement of the debate on antisemitism because he simply thought it went without saying that Harden's ruminations on antisemitism within the party were ridiculous. Bebel's response thus does more to underscore Harden's original claim than to undermine it.

What then, finally, of the specific reference to antisemitism and matters Jewish connected directly to Mehring? Rather tellingly, we find it not in the context of the serious deliberations – we find it in the satirical paper issued on the occasion of the Congress and probably edited²⁸⁹ by none other than Eduard Fuchs (1870–1940), who was a long-standing friend of Mehring's, later became his executor, and was apparently already on friendly terms with Mehring at this time.²⁹⁰ *Inter alia*, it juxtaposed three spoof programmatic statements designed to caricature the different camps in the party. One sought to mimic the radicals and specifically Mehring ('Steglitz-Leipzig bei Stuttgart-Friedenau'), the second Bernstein ('E.B. im messianischen Zeitalter'), and the third, perhaps a little surprisingly, Heinrich Braun (introduced as 'unser Geldsack-Mitarbeiter', although the word 'Geldsack' was in fact replaced by a little drawing of an opulent money bag; this was obviously an allusion to the money Braun had made by selling his *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik*). In the text caricaturing Mehring we find a reference to the press publications of 'Löb Sonnemann' and 'Isidor²⁹¹ Harden'. Mehring's quarrel with Harden was in any case on the agenda, of course, and his long-standing enmity towards Sonnemann may have been an issue at the time not least because the publication of the second edition of his *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* was imminent and in it he had finally let himself be persuaded to remove the references to 'Löb Sonnemann' still included in the first edition.

²⁸⁸ *Parteitag 1903*, 222.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Ulrich Weitz, *Salonkultur und Proletariat. Eduard Fuchs* (Stuttgart: Stöffler & Schütz, 1991), 272.

²⁹⁰ Cf. the letter from Mehring to Max Quarck, dated 18 August 1903 (Nachlaß Quarck 4: 62), mentioned in the previous chapter (cf. there *n114*). In this letter Mehring explains to Quarck that the suggestion he, Mehring, had made during the day they had spent together in Frankfurt that a certain indiscretion was down to Fuchs had since been confirmed during a recent visit by Fuchs who had readily admitted everything and clarified the matter. The way in which the role played by Fuchs in this context is discussed by Mehring is extremely mild and, to my mind, clearly suggests that he and Fuchs were close at the time.

²⁹¹ On the significance of the first name Isidor cf. Bering, *Stigma*, 232–237, 294–296.

Mehring habitually liked to refer to Leopold Sonnemann (1831–1909) in this way both in public and in private²⁹² and usually called Sonnemann's *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the undisputed flagship of liberal journalism in Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century and, of course, beyond, the paper of the 'Frankfurt stock exchange democracy [Frankfurter Börsendemokratie].'²⁹³ On one occasion he also referred to Sonnemann's colleague in the business section of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* as 'a Jewish-democratic, not Cohn,²⁹⁴ but at least Cohnstädt'.²⁹⁵ Clearly this did not go unnoticed and was therefore made an issue of in the forum that, to put it bluntly, matched the seriousness of the issue – namely, in the satirical paper produced for the Congress in Dresden.

Lest anyone be tempted to read any more into this, we should add that this satirical paper contained many more references to antisemitism and matters Jewish in the widest sense of the word. Among its ostensible contributors was one 'Prof. Talmu-d'Ede'. Both Bernstein and Luxemburg were depicted throughout with monstrous crooked noses. Among its spoof adverts is one for a book by 'Isidor Cohnchen, Antitheoretische Theorie der Theorie. Mit Vorwort von Eduard Granatstein. Im Selbstverlag.' Another praises a product called 'Bernstein-Karbol' (carbolic soap). No other product 'disinfects Socialism so thoroughly that it is no longer in the least bit contagious.' This product was exclusively distributed by the 'Apotheke zur heiligen Mespoke'. The spoof auditor of the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, finally, who vouched for the fact that the journal has acquired '4 new subscribers, 63 new contributors, one paid advert and 127 new opinions over the last three years' and that the journal also 'pulled teeth and split hairs', was called 'Isidor Möchteles'.

Of course this was all meant as a bit of harmless banter. Needless to say this was banter that would not and could not have worked in a society that was not pervaded by a wealth of anti-Jewish stereotypes and we know from Bering's research that the usage of these names was in fact anything but harmless. To the minds of the Social Democrats who produced and read this satirical paper, however, all this was indeed harmless banter – just as the reference to Mehring's habit of calling Sonnemann Löb was just a bit of harmless banter. This, then, it would seem, is where explicit references to antisemitism and matters Jewish found their proper place – in the satirical paper produced for the Party Congress, not in the deliberations of the Congress itself. Rather suitably perhaps not least in the light of the material we have examined in this chapter the title of that satirical paper was: *Das große Mißverständnis!*²⁹⁶

²⁹² Cf. Mehring in a letter to Quarck on 4 May 1896 in which he shows himself satisfied to see that 'Löb Sonnemann is still the old rascal and know all' he had always known him as (Nachlaß Quarck 3: 69).

²⁹³ Cf., for instance, Franz Mehring, 'Ueber Geschäfts- und Prinzipblätter,' in *NZ* 11-I, 11 [30 November 1892]: 329–334, here 334 (reprinted in *GS* 14: 16–23); no less than four times in *Idem*, 'Und abermals Jaurès,' in *LVZ* 10, 5 [8 January 1903]: 1–2; *Idem*, 'Demagogisches Kauderwelsch,' in *LVZ* 10, 35 [12 February 1903]: 1–2.

²⁹⁴ On the significance of the family name Cohn cf. Bering, *Stigma*, 206–211.

²⁹⁵ Franz Mehring, 'Großfinanz und Preßgewerbe,' in *NZ* 12-I, 16 [10 January 1894]: 481–485, here 482 (reprinted in *GS* 14: 55–60).

²⁹⁶ *Das große Mißverständnis! Zentralisierte neuzeitliche Tag-, Wochen- und Monatshefte für echten, revidierten und gemischten Sozialismus. Herausgegeben von Karl Kaumarx, J. Blech und Bruder Heinrich unter unaufhörlicher Mitarbeit von Prof. Talmu-d'Ede. Dresden, im September 63 p.A.B.n.* (Dresden, Max Beyer, [1903] n.d.), 1, 8, 9, 12, 13.

Chapter 4

Several exceptionally unsympathetic qualities of German Jewry. Mehring vs. Bernstein (1904)

If the prevalent discourse within Imperial German Social Democracy deemed it a mark of particular analytical acuity to refrain from an all too unambiguous or straightforward critique of antisemitism, then little could perhaps seem more apt to signal ultimate intellectual sophistication than the ability to know when and where an incisive anti-antisemitic criticism really was required. Rather remarkably, Mehring identified his dispute with Bernstein following the 1904 Party Congress in Bremen as one such occasion. It would be worthwhile to describe this dispute in some detail, not only because it has, to the best of my knowledge, received almost no attention in the extant literature, but also to show what a bolt out of the blue the indictment really was with which Mehring sought to end it. Given the constraints of this study we can do no more, though, than provide the general context and then summarize the dispute unfolding between Mehring and Bernstein.

Among the evidence Schleifstein enlisted to underscore Mehring's radical credentials is a letter to Karl and Luise Kautsky written by Rosa Luxemburg during her imprisonment for *lèse-majesté* in the autumn of 1904. 'How great the importance was that all the Marxists attached to Mehring's work for the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* at the time is shown by' the letter in question, Schleifstein explained, which Luxemburg had written 'following a report on Mehring's resignation as editor-in-chief of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*'. Schleifstein then cited Luxemburg's shocked and despondent reaction without, however, adding a single word to explain the background of Mehring's resignation or what had become of it.¹

Kautsky, in his 1918 philippic against Mehring,² towards the end of his discussion of the events in Dresden, offered an explanation, not of the course, but of the context and significance of the events in question. 'Mehring's position in the party hung by a thread' in 1903, Kautsky argued in 1918, and that thread 'would perhaps have torn if Bernstein had presented the letters Mehring wrote him in 1901 and 1902, letters that were so very friendly and in part directed against me.' The material at Bernstein's disposal would have underscored the case against Mehring by demonstrating that one by no means needed to hark back to

¹ Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*, 53–54. Nettl, too, makes an implicit reference to this letter, stating that 'the thought that he [Mehring] might resign [...] caused her [Luxemburg] consternation,' without offering any explanation and merely adding the grossly exaggerating remark that this 'was a threat which Mehring repeated monotonously' (J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* 1–2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), here 1: 198.) Clara Zetkin too was extremely perturbed by the development. On 1 October she wrote to Mehring: 'I have just read the newspaper reports on the "Conflict within the Leipz. Volkszt.". I am shocked, almost speechless. It would do untold harm to the party, should this brilliant and steadfast editorial team cease to exist,' she wrote. 'Das kann, das darf nicht sein' (Fonds 201: 959.)

² Karl Kautsky, *Franz Mehring und die deutsche Sozialdemokratie. Ein Beitrag zur Parteigeschichte. Im Selbstverlag des Verfassers. Als Manuskript gedruckt* (Dessau: Buchdruckerei H. Franke, [1918] n.y.), 28. From the spring of 1912 onwards Kautsky finally thought of Mehring as an ultimately deranged but potentially dangerous opponent and when Mehring publicly declared his support for the Bolsheviks in June 1918 Kautsky felt it his duty finally to denounce Mehring publicly as the maniac and foe that he was. He

conflicts that transpired decades earlier to demonstrate how Mehring's personal vendettas led him to adopt and abandon political opinions and alliances in the most erratic fashion. Bernstein had, however, kept quiet in 1903. 'Only a year later, on the occasion of a new conflict,' had he made the letters public, 'but by then the psychological momentum had abated,' and the publication of the letters had failed to turn the situation around.³ Back in 1904, Kautsky had, somewhat ironically, backed Mehring unreservedly against Bernstein and arguably played the single most influential role in discrediting Bernstein's efforts.⁴

If the 'psychological momentum' towards which Bernstein might, in Kautsky's opinion, have made the crucial contribution in or after Dresden had waned by the autumn of 1904, Bernstein nevertheless had another prerequisite for an all-out assault on Mehring at his disposal then that he had lacked the year before. He now stood at the helm of a political periodical of his own, the weekly *Das Neue Montagsblatt*,⁵ of which thirty editions were published between 2 May and 21 November 1904. Although hardly short of opportunities to publish material of a more substantial and theoretical nature, his scope for journalistic interventions in current affairs had become increasingly curtailed, and when he was finally sacked by the *Vorwärts* in the autumn of 1903, he clearly felt a need to regain his freedom to manoeuvre in this sphere as he saw fit.⁶

Early in 1902 the Berlin radicals, on the initiative of Max Grunwald (1873–1926), the subsequent party archivist and secretary of the *Reichstagsfraktion*, had first envisaged the option of trying to take a share of the market created by the fact that the Berlin dailies traditionally did not publish a Monday edition, but they had failed to see the project (in which Mehring would presumably have played a formative role) through.⁷ The radicals were hardly likely to find Bernstein's enterprise palatable anyway and the fact that he set out to venture what they had ultimately not dared do presumably only added to their misgivings about the *Montagsblatt*. While the party officially declared Bernstein's enterprise a private matter,⁸ constituency representatives in Berlin called for a boycott of the paper from the outset, a suggestion that was to resurface regularly during the not quite six months of its existence.⁹ That *Montagsblatt* and *Leipziger Volkszeitung* were at loggerheads from the outset and the contentious issues in question often tended to be of

had the manuscript of his planned pamphlet printed and circulated it among his associates. They advised him against publishing it, however, and he followed their advice.

³ Ibid., 28.

⁴ Cf. his editorial, 'Bernstein und Ruberrimus,' in *LVZ* 11, 237 [11 October 1904]: 1. Hereafter Kautsky, 'Bernstein und Ruberrimus'.

⁵ The following section on the *Montagsblatt* is largely based on *Fricke* I: 608–609.

⁶ Cf. Eduard Bernstein, 'Ein offenes Wort in eigener Sache,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 3 [16 May 1904]: 2. Cf. also *Idem. Die Geschichte der Berliner Arbeiter-Bewegung* 3 (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1907): 156.

⁷ Cf. *RLGB* I: 604–605; Fricke also refers to this letter.

⁸ Cf. also 'Aus der Partei: Eduard Bernstein,' in *LVZ* 11, 93 [23 April 1904] Beilage 2: 1.

⁹ In addition to Fricke's reference cf. for instance 'Aus der Partei: Bernsteins Montagsblatt,' in *LVZ* 11, 99 [30 April 1904] Beilage 3: 1; the editorial comment 'Boykott-Manie,' in the final edition of *Montagsblatt* 1, 30 [21 November 1904]: 2 which was a response to a report under the rubric 'Aus der Partei,' *LVZ* 11, 226 [15 November 1904]: 2; 'Partei-Nachrichten: Den Berliner Vertrauensleuten,' in *Vorwärts* 21, 271 [18 November 1904] Beilage 1: 2.

considerable personal import to the two battling editors-in-chief¹⁰ goes without saying and there can, as we will see, be very little doubt that Kautsky's diagnosis in 1918 was essentially accurate: Bernstein did indeed think of the assault he launched against Mehring after the Party Congress in Bremen as an attempt to rectify what now struck him as an extremely grave omission on his part at and after the Party Congress in Dresden.

There are other psychological enigmas among us. The conflict erupts

By far the most emotive and consuming issue addressed by the Congress in Bremen were the political antics of Mehring's former *Neue Zeit* colleague Max Schippel¹¹ (1859–1928). Schippel, a journalist and academic who represented Chemnitz in the *Reichstag* from 1890 to 1905, had come a long way since his involvement with the semi-anarchist *Jungen* in the early 1890s¹² and was now an outspoken reformist. It was by no means the first time that he had courted controversy in this capacity. From 1897 onwards, he had sought to persuade the party to relinquish its categorical opposition to the Imperial government's naval policy and to opt instead for a bargaining strategy based on the notion of 'People's Rights for Canons [Volksrechte gegen Kanonen]'.¹³ Schippel had also become an increasingly vocal proponent of the tariffs on food stuffs and agricultural goods that the party had always been bitterly opposed to, and early in 1904

¹⁰ The *Vorwärts* and the *Montagsblatt* were, for instance, the two papers to publish the statement mentioned in the previous chapter in which Wolfgang Heine denied certain assumptions on which the arbitrators' ultimately favourable assessment of his behaviour in Dresden had rested. The *Montagsblatt* could not have explained its *raison d'être* more convincingly than by publishing Heine's statement, the *LVZ* immediately shot back in an editorial. Heine 'accepts the arbitral acquittal but makes a mockery of the reasons given for it.' Were this sort of behaviour to be tolerated the party would become 'the laughing stock of its opponents' ('Die Fessel am Fuße,' in *LVZ* 11, 112 [17 May 1904]: 1–2.) A week later, Mehring again took *Montagsblatt* and *Vorwärts* to task for having 'executed Heine's assault' on the arbitrators (Franz Mehring, 'Erklärung,' in *LVZ* 11, 117 [24 May 1904] Beilage 2: 1.) Cf. also the response: 'Glossen und Notizen: Franz Mehring,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 5 [30 May 1904]: 2. Mehring's persistently critical attitude towards Jaurès, a matter of particular concern to Bernstein, also soon became an issue between the two papers. Cf. Franz Mehring, 'Eine Pritsche,' in *LVZ* 11, 148 [29 June 1904], reprinted in *GS* 14: 705–707; 'An die Adresse der "Leipziger Volkszeitung",' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 12 [18 July 1904] Beilage: 4; 'Aus der Partei: Das Neue Montagsblatt,' in *LVZ* 11, 165 [19 July 1904]: 3. Needless to say, the *LVZ* related the imminent demise of the *Montagsblatt* with some glee. Welcoming a new initiative to call for a boycott of the paper, the *LVZ* added that this initiative could have little more than a symbolic function because the 'distaste of the Berlin comrades for this sort of gossip- and scandal-mongering journalism has shown itself so effective for quite some time now that the *Montagsblatt* will shortly cease to exist.' Mehring even gave it a final, unreservedly damning send off after its demise in his article 'Partei- und Preßfragen,' in *LVZ* 11, 276 [28 November 1904]: 2–3.

¹¹ The following section on Schippel is largely based on *Fricke* 1: 253–254. Cf. also Stanley Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Working-Class Mentality in Germany, 1887–1912* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1993): 35–41. Hereafter Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals*.

¹² Cf. Hans Manfred Bock, 'Die "Literaten- und Studenten-Revolution" der Jungen in der SPD um 1890,' in *Argument* 63 [March 1971]: 22–41, here 24 and Dirk H. Müller, *Idealismus und Revolution. Zur Opposition der Jungen gegen den Sozialdemokratischen Parteivorstand 1890 bis 1894* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1975): 18, 20–45. Pierson has suggested that it was not least Schippel's election to the *Reichstag* that 'probably accounted for his diminishing militance' (Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals*, 37).

¹³ Cf. Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*, 264, 271.

Kautsky had taken him to task for a public speech on the matter.¹⁴ On 1 February, Bebel informed Kautsky that he was in favour of Schippel's immediate removal from the party but simply had no idea how to precipitate it. Since Schippel had voted against the tariffs in the *Reichstag* and hence not broken the discipline required of the party's deputies, his sins were merely of a theoretical and not of the practical nature technically required to take immediate steps against him.

The reformist wing of the party, incidentally, was hardly any happier about Schippel's behaviour, much as they ultimately felt compelled to defend him when matters came to a head in Bremen. Wilhelm Kolb (1870–1918), an enthusiastic revisionist and regular contributor to the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, complained to Bernstein on 29 February 1904 that Schippel's activities were in fact only grist to the radicals' mill and that, however commendable his position, he should either speak out unreservedly or keep his mouth shut altogether. In the event, the Party Congress opted neither to remove Schippel from the party nor even to request that he resign as a deputy, but merely censured him for the 'ambiguity and lack of clarity' of his position.¹⁵

Among Schippel's supporters during the debate in Bremen was Albert Südekum (1871–1944), a leading reformist, himself not only a former editor, as we saw, of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, but also of the *Vorwärts* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, who was first elected to the *Reichstag* in 1900. Later infamous for the both overt and clandestine services he afforded the Imperial government at the outset, and in the course, of World War I, he had, at the time of the Party Congress in Bremen, recently been involved in a rather cloak-and-dagger fashion in the dealings of Princess Luise of Koburg (1858–1924),¹⁶ the eldest daughter of King Leopold II of Belgium.

Married against her will to one of her father's cousins, Philip of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, an Austrian courtier, she had been institutionalised by her family in 1898 when she threatened to give evidence exonerating her former lover, Geza von Mattachich-Keglevich, who had been tried for fraud after having apparently been set up on the behest of her estranged husband.¹⁷ Following a failed attempt two years earlier she had now escaped from a spa near Dresden and sought a divorce. Initially Südekum denied any involvement in the matter and stated that he did not even know the Princess, though conceding that he had aided the earlier attempt to free her.

¹⁴ Cf. Mehring's comments on this dispute: 'Querulanten,' and 'Ketzerrichter,' in *LVZ* 11, 30 [6 February 1904] and 11, 36 [13 February 1904], reprinted in *GS* 14: 642–644 and 649–651.

¹⁵ *Parteitag 1904*, 136, 264; cf. *Fricke* I: 253.

¹⁶ For the following cf. 'Die verschwundene Prinzessin,' in *ST* 24, 210 [8 September 1904]: 2–3 (including Südekum's initial statement in the *SAZ*) and 24, 211 [9 September 1904]: 2; Albert Südekum, ['Zur Flucht der Prinzessin von Coburg,'] in *Montagsblatt* 1, 20 [12 September 1904]: 1; cf. also the Princess's letter to the *Vooruit* (Ghent), reprinted as 'Fürstliches Familienleben,' in *ST* 24, 217 [16 September 1904]: 7.

¹⁷ On this cf. also Geza Mattachich-Keglevich, *Aus den letzten Jahren. Memoiren* (Leipzig: Kultur-Verlag, 1904).

Subsequently it transpired that the Princess had in fact spent several days in Südekum's flat in Berlin before moving on to Paris. He explained his earlier denial with security concerns and was then apparently quite happy to publicize his participation at some length in the *L'Humanité*, raising yet more eyebrows among his German comrades who were now forced to turn to a French publication to learn of the details of his involvement. The fact that the Austro-Hungarian Social Democrats Ignacy Daszinsky (1866–1936) and Friedrich Austerlitz (1862–1931) had criticized Mattachich's sentence as a miscarriage of justice and campaigned for his release¹⁸ presumably explains how Südekum became involved. Even so his engagement in the matter obviously begged the question whether these were really the circles whose concerns Social Democrats should be sharing and many questioned whether the concept of chivalry that had determined his activities in support of the Princess, on the one hand, and the concept of solidarity one would expect of a Social Democratic deputy, on the other, were really all that compatible.¹⁹ However seriously or lightly these considerations were ultimately taken, the incident certainly made Südekum the object of considerable mockery as well as occasional lewd suggestions in the run up to the Congress in Bremen.

The exclusion of members from the party was governed by very precise regulations laid out in the party statute, Südekum explained to the delegates on the afternoon of Wednesday, 21 September 1904, the third day of the Congress in Bremen. In keeping with these regulations those who wanted to see Schippel removed from the party should initially apply for arbitration. Confronted with considerable opposition and calls from the floor insisting on the supremacy of the Party Congress, he countered that the Congress indeed had the right to alter the statute as ever it saw fit, but were it directly to exclude a member it would be denying that member the rights established by the present statute; it would be placing the last stage of due process before the first. What, however, Südekum asked, was the case against Schippel? He was being held accountable not only for his most recent pronouncements on the tariffs, Südekum argued, but also for 'all his previous convictions, as it were,' for all the instances in which he had 'caused the party discomfort and embarrassment' in the past. Should these indictments be justified, he continued, 'then the case is as follows: *Schippel is a psychological enigma*, and the party is supposed to solve it. But then, as is well known, there are *other psychological enigmas among us*, that remain unsolved.'²⁰

Everybody knew, of course, what, or rather whom, Südekum was alluding to, and Mehring's colleague, Gustav Jaeckh (1866–1907), felt that this called for a response.²¹ He came up with a short, flimsy, and in

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, esp. 184–203. Mattachich had eventually been pardoned in August 1902 (*ibid.*, 155.)

¹⁹ This issue was in fact also to feature in the dispute in which Mehring and the *LVZ* became embroiled following the events in Bremen and Mehring discussed it in two articles under the title 'Ein Parteiproblem,' *LVZ* 11, 241 [15 October 1904]: 1–2 and 11, 242 [17 October 1904]: 1.

²⁰ *Parteitag 1904*, 251–252.

²¹ The stenographic minutes detailing the exact wording of Südekum's speech were not, of course, immediately available and the reports circulated by party press correspondents at the time were apparently not only more succinct but also more pointed. 'At the end of the day what the indictment amounts to is that Schippel is deemed a psychological enigma,' the *ST*, for instance, paraphrased Südekum, adding that this remark had been greeted with amusement, and then continuing its paraphrase as follows: 'There are,

part barely intelligible editorial rant, published in the paper's Thursday edition, that made numerous hardly particularly stylish allusions to Südekum's involvement with the Princess and noble circles and was apparently meant to be satirical.²² In the course of the morning of 22 September, Dietz, as the chairman of the Congress, informed the delegates that 35 of them²³ had tabled a motion censuring the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* for its comments on Südekum.²⁴ Following a short debate, the *Vorwärts* manager and member of the *Reichstag* for the constituency Berlin II, Richard Fischer (1855–1926), suggested that the motion be considered carried unless further opposition made itself heard but on the intervention of Stadthagen and others it was then decided to discuss the motion along with other miscellaneous issues at the end of the agenda.²⁵

To Jaekch this development presumably signalled the vindication of his initial hunch that Südekum's provocation might be designed to precipitate an all-out assault on Mehring and, by implication, on the paper and its political profile, and in the Friday edition he promptly responded in kind. 'It is completely incomprehensible,' he retorted, 'why the Party Congress should deal with an initially *purely private* matter. If Südekum feels wronged, he can pursue his case through the prescribed channels and we will readily justify ourselves. In dealing with the matter for which it is at this stage in no way the correct forum, the Party Congress would only rob us of the preceding stages of due process, as Südekum himself explained the day before yesterday in connection with Schippel's case.'²⁶

When the matter was finally discussed in Leipzig, however, it transpired that Jaekch in fact stood alone²⁷ and Saturday's *Leipziger Volkszeitung* then informed its readers that

however, other psychological enigmas among us without anyone demanding their expulsion' ('Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag,' in *ST* 24, 223 [23 September 1904]: 5).

²² Gustav Jaekch, 'Bürger Albert Südekum,' in *LVZ* 11, 221 [22 September 1904] Beilage 3: 3. Reprinted in *Parteitag 1904*, 287 n1; also in *ST* 24, 225 [26 September 1904]: 2.

²³ The congress was attended by 225 delegates (cf. *Fricke* I: 342.)

²⁴ Motion 140, cf. *Parteitag 1904*, 138.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 287–288.

²⁶ 'Telegraphische Depeschen,' in *LVZ* 11, 222 [23 September 1904] Beilage 1: 4.

²⁷ As the *LVZ* was to report on 5 October 1904, Mehring subsequently sent an open letter to the editor of the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Arbeiterzeitung* (Dortmund), Konrad Haenisch (1876–1925), with whom Mehring was on good terms for many years. In this letter he detailed the circumstances of Jaekch's decision to publish his comments on Südekum ('Die Presse über den Konflikt in Leipzig,' in *LVZ* 11, 232 [5 October 1904]: 3). On Mehring's relationship with Haenisch cf. Matthias John (ed.), 'Franz Mehrings Briefe an Konrad Haenisch (Auswahl),' in *BzG* 43, 4 (2001): 132–166. Haenisch published Mehring's letter and it was subsequently reprinted in a number of party papers, *inter alia*, in the *ST*. Now that the editorial team in Leipzig had been forced out, Mehring explained, he felt free to explain certain issues about which he had not previously been able to speak openly and which even now he could not publish in the *LVZ* lest they lead to misunderstandings. Presumably Mehring wanted to avoid the impression that he might be seeking to justify himself at Jaekch's expense. Jaekch was a workaholic, Mehring explained, a man whose enthusiasm for work exceeded his stamina. What the political section of the paper had achieved in recent years was mainly down to Jaekch and he greatly welcomed this opportunity to acknowledge his debt to Jaekch. The editorials that other party papers had found worth reprinting, generally assuming that Mehring was their author had, by and large, been by Jaekch. Jaekch had recently agreed to write a history of the International, a project that had steadily grown in size and scope as he progressed. Eventually Jaekch had foregone his annual leave in the summer in order to complete the text. Consequently, Jaekch had been

we have this morning sent the following statement to the Party Congress: "The short piece on Südekum was sent to the press by an individual editor who felt compelled, in the interest of the paper, to respond to Südekum's unprovoked and covert allusion to the events of Dresden. As he himself, having thought the matter through thoroughly, now acknowledges, however,²⁸ he went too far and hence retracts the comments in both tone and content and expresses his regret. The editorial staff in its entirety would have prevented the publication of the comments, had it seen the manuscript, and to the extent that it is accountable to the party for the overall content of the paper it subscribes to its colleague's expression of regret."²⁹

Just what happened next was to remain contentious. When the issue came up for discussion again late on Saturday morning, very near the end of the Congress, the initial motion censuring the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* was withdrawn in favour of a new one that had been tabled in the meantime with the support of no less than 116 delegates.³⁰ Dietz then announced the arrival of the paper's telegram and read it out to the delegates. The motion was 'in any case not really suited for a vote', he suggested. Its genuine purpose was 'to express the opinion of the 116 delegates'. Hence it should suffice for the Congress to take note both of this opinion and of the telegram and thereby pronounce the matter settled. Since no one argued to the contrary, matters were then indeed left at that.³¹

hopelessly overworked. 'And now the Südekum case! While Jaekkh, in the interest of the party, burdened himself with a sixteen-hour working day, Südekum roamed the land as the cavalier of deranged Princesses, making himself the Homer of his own chivalrous deeds. Then he came to the Party Congress and showed so much respect for it that he managed to *construe an utterly tenuous connection* to the events of Dresden which it was the will and the wish of the Party should not be touched upon in Bremen. I certainly regret that Jaekkh allowed Südekum's broadside to provoke him into deploying a canon against a sparrow, but if there was ever a journalistic *faux pas* accompanied by mitigating circumstances then this case is it.' Once the motion censuring the *LVZ* had been tabled, however, 'Jaekkh and I could hardly, without making ourselves look ridiculous, say: the author got it wrong, due to the overwrought state he got himself into in good faith and in the interest of the party.' Surely, the Party Congress could have instructed a few representatives to contact the editorial staff and find out why things had come to pass as they had. They could then have assured the Congress that the paper's retraction had amply atoned for the *faux pas* and the matter could have been laid to rest ('Aus der Partei: Genosse Mehring,' in *ST* 24, 232 [4 October 1904]: 3.) Clara Zetkin subsequently wrote to Mehring on 7 October: 'I just quickly want to press your hand for your open letter about Jaekkh [...] This letter is a feat [...] I treasure and admire you more than ever for this letter. Yes, you are right: Jaekkh has worked like no other editor of our press, not only with indefatigable diligence, but more importantly with conscientiousness and loyalty' (Fonds 201: 960.) There can be no doubt that Mehring's working relationship with Jaekkh was, by Mehring's standards, characterized by a quite exceptional degree of trust and persistency (cf. Michael Rudloff, Thomas Adam, Jürgen Schlimper, *Leipzig – Wiege der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), 138 n332.) Jaekkh effectively ran the *LVZ* while Mehring, who continued to live in Berlin, was its nominal editor-in-chief and the whole constellation would have become instantaneously untenable had the relationship between them faltered. Jaekkh was to be the second man at its helm (after Schoenlank) whom the *LVZ* quite literally worked to death; in the spring of 1905 he too had to be institutionalised (cf. *RLGB* II: 84, 147) and was replaced by Paul Lensch (1873–1926) who was to succeed Mehring as editor-in-chief in 1907, the year in which Jaekkh died.

²⁸ Jaekkh subsequently claimed he had even tried to stop his initial comment from being printed but came too late. Cf. 'Der Leipziger Parteikonflikt,' in *ST* 24, 237 [10 October 1904]: 1–2, here 1.

²⁹ 'Mitteilung,' in *LVZ* 11, 223 [24 September 1904] Beilage 1: 1.

³⁰ Motion 141, cf. *Parteitag 1904*, 138.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

What seemed crucial to Mehring at this point was that although the motion had not been put to the vote, it had not been officially withdrawn either. He immediately wrote an editorial for the Monday edition, vehemently attacking the 116 delegates who had, as he saw it, continued to support the motion despite the paper's retraction and expression of regret. 'When a party comrade corrects a mistake it has hitherto been customary in the party to consider the matter settled,' he wrote. That the same standards had not been applied in this case now seemed to indicate that there had indeed been something altogether more sinister and orchestrated behind Südekum's seemingly spontaneous provocation. Südekum, 'usually guards the good reputation of his fellow human beings so attentively that he recently published a statement in the *Vorwärts* to dispel the suspicion, a suspicion, we might add, that existed only in his own imagination, that the former Crown Princess of Saxony was his lover,' Mehring explained. If this same Südekum had chosen to insult the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, then the paper had been perfectly within its rights to respond to Südekum's provocation, although it was admittedly quite another matter whether it had been wise to make use of that right.³²

The *Parteivorstand*, when it later examined the matter, concluded that Mehring had not yet known the full facts when he wrote his polemic against the 116 delegates. The motion had not formally been withdrawn, it argued in its final statement, because that 'would have required the Party Congress to allow for a break to give the motion's supporters an opportunity to discuss and agree a course of action.' That had not been a realistic option so late in the day. It added that, had Dietz asked whether the motion 'could be considered withdrawn, probably no one would have objected.'³³ The *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, however, disputed this interpretation. The editorial staff had known all the pertinent facts at the time, not least due to the information received from the delegates returning to Leipzig who had reported that they went to Vollmar, 'the main proponent of the motion of indignation [Hauptbetreiber der Entrüstungsresolution],' earlier that morning, 'our apologizing telegram in hand,' to request the withdrawal of the motion, but Vollmar had turned them down.³⁴

When the Leipzig constituency assembly convened in advance for the Thursday following the Party Congress to discuss its results moved an unexpected motion censuring the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* with 159 against 90 votes, Jaekkh declared his resignation and informed the assembly that Mehring had written him a letter declaring his intention to follow suit. Mehring submitted his resignation the following day, offering to forego his period of notice.³⁵ At the same time Herman Duncker (1874–1960), then a trade union official in Leipzig and himself a previous trainee of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* who was on good terms with

³² Franz Mehring, 'Die 116,' in *LVZ* 11, 224 [26 September 1904]: 1. That Mehring wrote this editorial was confirmed by Kautsky, 'Bernstein und Ruberrimus'.

³³ 'Zum Konflikt zwischen dem Neuen Montagsblatt und der Leipziger Volkszeitung,' in *LVZ* 11, 253 [29 October 1904] Beilage 3: 1–2, here 2. Hereafter PV, 'Konflikt'.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 'Die Parteiversammlung für den 12. und 13. Reichstagswahlkreis,' in *LVZ* 11, 228 [30 September 1904] Beilage 1: 2–3.

Mehring,³⁶ accused the proponents of the motion of having ‘exploited the not very well attended assembly to launch an assault on the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* that even the “Harden mob” would not have been capable of.’ The bulk of the membership had not known that the motion would be tabled and should now demand that a new assembly be convened to ensure its involvement in so important a decision.³⁷ A constituency meeting a week later then indeed vindicated Jaekch and Mehring, apparently with an overwhelming majority of some 2,000 votes against 12,³⁸ and thus ended the dispute in Leipzig itself.³⁹

Working with double concepts. Das Neue Montagsblatt intervenes

On 3 October, the first edition of Bernstein’s *Das neue Montagsblatt* prepared after the events in question had fully unfolded⁴⁰ appeared. In the editorial, Bernstein stated that ‘we would not regret the resignation of the two editors. Especially in the case of Franz Mehring whose knowledge and literary talent we do not question, we hold that he is devoid of a number of character traits that are particularly crucial for the editor-in-chief of an outstanding party organ and the lack of which can, as has already been demonstrated repeatedly, have the most disastrous consequences for the party.’⁴¹ One can just about imagine that Mehring might have let this go, or at least that his response might have consisted of no more than a (few) sarcastic remark(s) dropped casually at the next best opportunity. Appended to Bernstein’s editorial, however, was a depiction of events in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* by an author signing with the pseudonym Ruberrimus, that Mehring took for an open declaration of war, and it is indeed hard to envisage how Mehring could have been expected to assume that Ruberrimus’s remarks were meant in any other way, even if he had been an inordinately more temperate man than he was and Ruberrimus and Bernstein knew him to be. According to Ruberrimus, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* had launched a ‘Harden campaign [Hardenfeldzug] against Südekum’. He claimed that Jaekch’s initial defiant response to the criticism aired

³⁶ Cf. Thomas Höhle, ‘Mehring: Demokratie, Sozialdemokratie, demokratischer Sozialismus,’ in Beutin, Hoppe, *Franz Mehring*: 33–42, here 33; Günter Griep, Alfred Förster, Heinz Siegel, *Hermann Duncker – Lehrer dreier Generationen* (Berlin: Tribüne, [2nd corr. ed.] 1976), 22–23; *Fricke* I: 559.

³⁷ Hermann Duncker, ‘Erklärung,’ in *LVZ* 11, 228 [30 September 1904]: 3.

³⁸ ‘Der Leipziger Parteikonflikt,’ in *ST* 24, 236 [8 October 1904], 3; cf. also Hans-Jürgen Friederici, ‘Franz Mehring und die “Leipziger Volkszeitung”. Seine Jahre als Chefredakteur,’ in Jürgen Schlimper (ed.), *“Natürlich – die Tauchaer Straße.” Beiträge zur Geschichte der “Leipziger Volkszeitung”* (Leipzig: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Sachsen, 1997): 287–297, here 294, who speaks of 10 votes against the motion in favour of the *LVZ*.

³⁹ Cf. Franz Mehring, ‘Vom Revisionismus,’ in *LVZ* 11, 235 [8 October 1904]: 1. Hereafter Mehring, ‘Revisionismus’.

⁴⁰ Somewhat ironically, Bernstein’s editorial on the Party Congress in the previous edition did not mention the dispute concerning the *LVZ* with a single word while finding warm words of praise for the compassion with which Schippel had ultimately been treated. Cf. Eduard Bernstein, ‘Was Bremen gebracht hat,’ in *Montagsblatt* 1, 22 [26 September 1904]: 1. That Bernstein’s failure to pick up on the conflict cannot be ascribed purely to the tight schedule is borne out by the fact that the *ST*, for instance, did report on 26 September that ‘towards the end the article of the *LVZ* provoked an incident that was, however, resolved in a very satisfactory manner’ (‘Der Bremer Parteitag,’ in *ST*, 225 [26 September 1904]: 1).

⁴¹ Eduard Bernstein, ‘In Sachen der Leipziger Volkszeitung,’ in *Montagsblatt* 1, 23 [3 October 1904]: 2.

in Bremen had in fact been the response of the entire editorial staff, but its members had subsequently lost their courage and then had their first response removed from the already set paper and replaced it by the more compliant statement subsequently made known to the party congress. 'However,' Ruberrimus claimed, 'three copies of the "real" *Leipziger Volkszeitung*' had accidentally been placed among the 'corrected copies' sent to Bremen and were 'in the hands of three delegates and have also been seen by numerous party comrades.' Now that the Congress was over, the editors had regained their courage, resumed their assault on Südekum and continued to 'Harden against him [Südekum wurde weiter angehardent]. What,' Ruberrimus concluded, 'would the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* say, one wonders, if a "revisionist" editor worked with such double concepts and demonstrated such an abundance of courage and truthfulness?'⁴²

That the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* had altered its stance between two extant versions of one and the same edition was, of course, simply untrue and Ruberrimus had no choice but to admit it almost immediately. He subsequently shifted his emphasis towards the fact that the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* had resumed its mockery of Südekum after the end of the Congress. Hence their initial retraction had, he argued, been disingenuous and the essence of his accusation, namely, that the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* had demonstrated a 'lack of courage and truthfulness' in its response to the criticism directed against it in Bremen, remained valid.⁴³ Although this line of argument was by no means altogether unreasonable, given that Mehring's polemic against the 116 delegates had, as we have seen, mocked Südekum with fresh and particularly 'delicate' allusions to his involvement with the Princess, there could be no doubt that Ruberrimus's initial mistake represented a major blunder and embarrassment and that what otherwise might well have amounted to a substantial indictment in its own right now looked rather feeble compared with the more sensationalist ring of the initial 'revelations'. Ruberrimus nevertheless had no intention of budging and Bernstein backed him fully, stating that he took full responsibility for the contentious comments which remained 'essentially unrefuted and unrefutable,'⁴⁴ the 'utterly irrelevant mistake' on Ruberrimus's part notwithstanding.⁴⁵ Should Mehring previously have nurtured any doubts as to the orchestrated character, if not of Südekum's initial provocation, then of the events that followed it, then these doubts were clearly dispelled by the turn Bernstein and Ruberrimus had now given the matter.

On 8 October, vindicated, as mentioned above, by the constituency assembly in Leipzig on the day before, Mehring published an editorial 'On Revisionism'. The revisionists 'entertained the illusion,' he argued, 'that they could overcome revolutionary scientific Socialism by destroying the individuals that in their humble opinion are its particularly effective proponents.' In the previous year several of the most prominent revisionists had ganged up with Harden in an attempt to fell one particular individual, but to no

⁴² Ruberrimus, 'In Sachen der Leipziger Volkszeitung,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 23 [3 October 1904]: 2.

⁴³ *Idem*, 'Wie die Leipziger Volkszeitung berichtigt,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 24 [10 October 1904]: 2.

⁴⁴ Eduard Bernstein, 'Berichtigung,' in *LVZ* 11, 241 [15 October 1904]: 3.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, 'Leipziger Allerlei,' in *Das Neue Montagsblatt* 1, 25 [17 October 1904]: 2.

avail; now they had sought to repeat the game in Bremen. 'A few totally casual and irrelevant comments' had been 'greedily picked up and exploited' to launch an assault on the paper's editors.

'We know the revisionists,' he continued, 'and immediately knew what was being played. Our editors explained yesterday that they had retracted the comments to thwart the revisionist plan and spare the party a fresh scandal. Strictly speaking, there was not the slightest reason to take back the comments.' Since when, after all, was satire insulting? Yet while the contentious comments had been retracted the revisionists simply continued to make their political capital out of the incident anyway, as borne out by the assault launched by Bernstein's *Montagsblatt* and Ruberrimus' 'totally invented revelations'.⁴⁶

'Had I believed for a moment that the two editors meant their resignation seriously I would have remained silent,' Bernstein claimed one Monday on, 'just as I remained silent a year ago, in and after Dresden, despite the massive provocation'⁴⁷ because then he had believed in Mehring's determination to resign.⁴⁸ Bernstein then introduced a number of issues as the dispute unfolded. The two of particular interest to us here concerned the fact already hinted at by Kautsky, namely, that Mehring had been unduly friendly to Bernstein only a year or two before the Congress in Dresden. Then he had shown none of the categorical disdain for Bernstein's revisionism that he paraded now. Secondly, within a year Mehring had switched from praising Bernstein for his work on Lassalle to denouncing him as an utter ignoramus on matters pertaining to Lassalle, a switch that, according to Bernstein, was the result of a ridiculous personal quarrel between them. As already mentioned, the more general message Bernstein's contentions sought to promote was that Mehring's opinions indeed fluctuated erratically and that they indeed did so predominantly for personal reasons but that one by no means needed to go back quarter of a century to his anti-Socialist phase to observe this, as his detractors in Dresden had done.

Claims and counter claims abounded as matters heated up and argumentative consistency was hardly at the forefront of Mehring's or Bernstein's concerns as they wilfully perpetuated unnecessary misunderstandings to score points. Thus Mehring hardly cut a better figure than Bernstein even though his version of events was by and large the more plausible one. Bernstein in particular presented the material he felt he could use against Mehring step by step, hinting each time that Mehring knew what he was up against and that he, Bernstein, would refrain from showing Mehring up if he saw sense and conceded defeat; he would then use the next best opportunity to reiterate that Mehring had been warned but had left him no option but to make

⁴⁶ Mehring, 'Revisionismus,' 1–2.

⁴⁷ Eduard Bernstein, 'Die Zwei. In Sachen Franz Mehring und Gustav Jäckh,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 24 [10 October 1904]: 1–2.

⁴⁸ This was hardly a particularly convincing line of argument, of course, given that then too Mehring had 'resigned' specifically to force his rehabilitation; the only tangible difference was that this time it had only taken him a week to achieve his goal. Somewhat ironically, Mehring was, as we saw in the last chapter, clearly far more disillusioned with his work both for the *LVZ* and the *NZ* in 1904, especially following the to his mind utterly unsatisfactory outcome of the arbitration proceedings against his assailants at the Congress in Dresden. While it was to all intents and purposes never his intention to give up his posts in 1903, it was inordinately more likely that he might use this conflict as a welcome opportunity finally to

known to the public what he would now publicize. Mehring, by contrast, soon stated that he would no longer respond to Bernstein and had requested that the *Parteivorstand* settle the matter, but that did not in fact prevent him, when it suited him, from trying to refute Bernstein and viciously hitting back at him anyway.

Days of reckoning and ultimate lessons. Matters come to a head

Preparing the 24 October edition of his *Montagsblatt*, Bernstein apparently felt that the day of reckoning had finally come, giving his new response the title *Der Fall Mehring. Eine Abrechnung*. Much as he welcomed the appeal to the *Parteivorstand*, he wrote, he still felt compelled to dismiss Mehring's specific brand of 'Steglitz-style historiography [Steglitzer Geschichtsschreibung]' in public too.⁴⁹ He then elaborated liberally on some of the issues he had previously said he would refrain from going into 'unless provoked into doing so'.

'You will have read Bernstein's most recent gossip,' Mehring wrote to Kautsky on 25 October, the day following the publication of Bernstein's *Abrechnung*.

In my initial outrage about his perfidious mendacity I wrote a long rejoinder but then, upon more reasoned consideration, withdrew it and merely had a few copies made which I've had sent to the *Parteivorstand* with the request that, should it consider Bernstein's newest rant when making its decision, [...] it also take notice of this response. I enclose two copies, one for you and one for Wurm.⁵⁰

On 28 October, the *Parteivorstand* issued its decision on the conflict between *Montagsblatt* and *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. It confirmed that the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* had, initially, acted correctly in connection with the retraction of Jaech's comments. For Ruberrimus and the *Montagsblatt* to have levelled so grave an accusation without carefully checking the facts constituted a form of disloyal conduct that called for the severest condemnation. Mehring's polemic against the 116 delegates, the *Parteivorstand* maintained, had been based on false assumptions and was hence untenable. Moreover, it had been tactically unwise to renew the conflict based on so deficient a factual base. Even so, the thrust of that article was understandable, which was more than could be said for the editorial 'On Revisionism'. The latter could

shed at least the editorship of the *LVZ* and in this sense his initial decision to resign in 1904 was, contrary to Bernstein's ruminations, of a potentially far more serious nature than his step the year before.

⁴⁹ Eduard Bernstein, 'Der Fall Mehring. Eine Abrechnung,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 26 [24 October 1904]: 2–3. As indicated in the last chapter, Steglitz was the suburb of Berlin in which Mehring lived.

⁵⁰ IISH Karl Kautsky D XVII: 236. Kautsky's copy of the galleys of the article, originally entitled 'Revolverjournalisten [gutter press journalists]' (hereafter Mehring, 'Revolverjournalisten'), is in his 'Mehring Dossier' [ibid., G7: 195]; I came across a second copy among Motteler's papers [IISH Motteler: 2134]. The title 'Revolverjournalisten' alludes to remarks by Bernstein (in his 'Abrechnung') and Ruberrimus ('Kritischer Wochenbericht,' *Montagsblatt* 1, 23 [3 October 1904]: 2). Bernstein had called Mehring's polemic against the 116 delegates a 'scandalmongering article [Revolverartikel]' and Ruberrimus had accused the *LVZ* of displaying the 'most blatant gutter press manners [im schönsten Revolverblättchenstyle]'. In this draft version Mehring concluded by returning the accusation: '*Practices of gutter press journalists indeed, but where?*' (i.e. on whose part).

only be rejected in the strongest possible terms. The motion of the 116 delegates had had absolutely nothing to do with revisionism, let alone with a revisionist conspiracy. The editorial had made it perfectly clear that the decision to retract Jaech's comments had not been earnest but merely a tactical manoeuvre. 'Were it to become customary to comment *post facto* in this way on statements as unambiguous as that of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, loyalty and trust within the party would be lost causes.'⁵¹ The *Leipziger Volkszeitung* published the *Parteivorstand*'s findings on 29 October, expressing its dismay at the fact that it had been reproached in this way without having been heard on the matter. Bernstein published the *Parteivorstand*'s decision in the next edition of the *Montagsblatt*⁵² and in turn rejected the criticism the *Vorstand* had directed at his paper.

Bebel had in fact written to Mehring on Wednesday, 26 October, to inform him that the *Vorstand* had reached its decision (without, however, hinting at the outcome). The statement would, once printed, be circulated among the members of the *Vorstand* once more for examination before its publication which would therefore hardly occur before the end of the week, he explained. He then informed Mehring that the *Vorstand* had

not been inclined to intervene in the most recent dispute that has erupted between you and Bernstein for the following reasons:

To the *Vorstand*'s request that he submit the card in question and to the inquiry whether Bernstein would subscribe to a ruling by the *Vorstand* on the matter, Bernstein did respond positively and sent us the card in question but at the same time stipulated that nine further questions that he had formulated and intended to publish in his paper be addressed in the course of the *Vorstand*'s deliberations.

Some of these questions 'are discussed, as I only subsequently became aware of, in your statement that we received from the editorial board of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* yesterday evening.'⁵³ The *Vorstand* had concluded that a satisfactory discussion of the questions would consume inordinate amounts of time and effort. This would not have been justified since the underlying issues were becoming increasingly personal and were of insufficient interest to the party as a whole. Moreover, the *Vorstand* had not wanted to create a precedent. 'I for my person,' Bebel continued,

would like to add that I welcome it as an act of self-denial if you refrain from publishing your response to Bernstein's article in the most recent edition of the *Neues Montagsblatt*. I doubt that

⁵¹ PV, 'Konflikt,' 1. Given the fact that Heine had, despite the *LVZ*'s vocal criticism at the time, in no way been held accountable when he, as we saw earlier, in effect denied the assumptions on which the arbitrators had based his acquittal in connection with the events in Dresden, one can well imagine that this judgement, to Mehring's mind, must have reeked of double standards and this may well have reinforced his impression that he was being given a unduly raw deal by the *Vorstand*'s decision, thus fuelling his determination finally to give Bernstein the treatment he, as Mehring saw it, deserved but the *Vorstand* had been unwilling to mete out to him.

⁵² 'Zum Konflikt zwischen dem Neuen Montagsblatt und der Leipziger Volkszeitung,' in *Montagsblatt* 1, 27 [31 October 1904]: 2–3.

⁵³ This must, surely, as is also borne out by the subsequent content of the letter, refer to the proofs of the 'Revolverjournalisten' draft Mehring had had sent to the members of the *Vorstand*. That Bebel's remarks refer, as Beske and Müller suggest (*ABARS* 9: 398 *nn*1128, 1128a), to comments by Mehring in the 27 October edition of the *LVZ* is hardly likely in the light of the relevant evidence presented here.

many readers of the *Neues Montagsblatt* will have been interested in his statement and very few will have read it all the way through. As far as I can see the press hostile to us hasn't taken any notice of it either, the best indicator that it has made no impression.⁵⁴

The news of Bernstein's apparent determination to raise the stakes and the *Vorstand*'s decision to duck the dispute may have persuaded Mehring straight away that this act of self-denial was now no longer an option. Alternatively, Mehring may only have decided that the *Vorstand* had neither backed him sufficiently nor dealt with Bernstein and his *Montagsblatt* appropriately when its decision was finally circulated (assuming he really did not become privy to it in advance).⁵⁵ In any case, he now extensively revised the response he had initially decided to hold back and published it in the same edition of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* as the statement of the *Parteivorstand*.

While Mehring felt he had established that he had not let his earlier quarrel with Bernstein influence his judgement on Bernstein's ongoing work on Lassalle, there was no denying that he had later questioned Bernstein's competence in matters concerning Lassalle, and Mehring had no intention of denying it. His later polemic, written over a year after his decision to break off the contact with Bernstein, he explained, had been justified in both form and content. What exactly was Bernstein accusing him of? 'Because I commented very favourably on one of his essays on Lassalle which was substantially inspired by Engels, I am supposed to praise everything he has ever written, is writing, or will write about Lassalle?' he asked. Up to this point the obvious implication would seem to be that Bernstein's publications on Lassalle, like any piece of work, needed to be judged in each instance on their individual merit. In fact, however, Mehring was gathering pace for a most astounding attack on Bernstein:

Does Eduard Bernstein not know that his opinions on Lassalle and mine are "totally different", so that I can also dismiss an opinion of his on Lassalle for other reasons than the dishonest ones he attributes to me? Does Eduard Bernstein not realize that he hardly qualifies as an infallible authority on Lassalle, if for no other reason, then simply because he denigrates the very Lassalle whose admiring biographer and editor he plays in public all the more maliciously in secret? Oh, Eduard Bernstein knows that full well. For in a letter he wrote me and the original of which I have before me, he says, in these exact words (I have added only the emphasis):⁵⁶

"Finally I have to come back to our conversation about Lassalle. We would be fooling ourselves were we to deny that we simply look at Lassalle *from totally different* perspectives. Here each of us is apparently affected by personal motives. For you Lassalle is something of a fellow sufferer, to the extent that that term is suitable in this context; *for me he epitomizes – and the more so, the more I concern myself with him – several exceptionally unsympathetic qualities of German Jewry* [der Typus einiger ganz besonders unsympathischer Eigenschaften der deutschen Juden].

⁵⁴ Fonds 201: 739; published in *ABARS* 9: 79–80.

⁵⁵ We might add that Bebel had already appealed to Mehring's 'self denial' following the final arbitration decision on Braun's case in June 1904 despite conceding his own misgivings about the outcome (Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring*, 52–53). That Bebel was now asking him for the second time in less than six months to subordinate his own essentially valid interests for the sake of calm in the party is hardly likely to have made him more inclined to comply.

⁵⁶ Originally this paragraph read: 'If Bernstein demands, however, that because I commented very favourably on his review of Lassalle's letters, which was largely based on comments by Engels, I should now also be compelled to praise everything he writes about Lassalle, then the loyalty of this demand is sufficiently illuminated by the following sentences by Bernstein in a letter to me:' (Mehring, 'Revolverjournalisten'.)

His great talent, as well as the sincerity of his efforts I acknowledge as you do. *But the way in which he proceeds, his literary manner, is often almost repulsively histrionic.* His examples, if one looks into them more closely, as I was, of course, compelled to do, *are often the meanest advocate's tricks.* I have often made the *worst experiences* with him."⁵⁷

Bernstein refers here first to Lassalle as a representative of certain 'unsympathetic qualities of German Jewry' and then to his critique-worthy 'literary manner'. How these two indictments are linked remains unclear at this point; it is, however, an issue we will need to return to.

In the initial version he had then decided not to publish, Mehring had continued at this point as follows: 'How could I admire a party comrade who honours me with such fair professions as anything other than an infallible authority on Lassalle.' He then returned to his decision to terminate his dealings with Bernstein following the earlier quarrel between them, stating that he had not responded to Bernstein's attempts to smooth things over after this 'breach of trust'. He had assumed that Bernstein would take his hint. 'The "exceptionally unsympathetic quality" by no means of "German Jewry" [as a whole] but of the Berlin *Mühlendammer*, not to understand when one shows them the door politely,' had not been one he associated with Bernstein. 'Perhaps I was wrong.'⁵⁸

When he revised his draft for publication Mehring sharpened his conclusion. In the initial version Bernstein had been saddled, as we just saw, with an implicit accusation of antisemitism *and* an anti-Jewish stereotype. It now seems to have dawned on Mehring that for effect, if for nothing else, it would have to be one or the other. He dropped the issue of the *Mühlendammer* and their pushiness but now explicitly called Bernstein an antisemite. Having quoted the passage from Bernstein's letter in question, the published version of the article concluded as follows:

And this Eduard Bernstein, who makes me a confidant of his antisemitic resentment of the "Jew" Lassalle accuses me of the "practices of gutter journalists" [Praktiken von Revolverjournalisten] because I cannot approve of his publicly advertised "Neo-Lassalleanism"! One will understand that after all that I can have no further dealings with Eduard Bernstein. I would willingly have spared him this ultimate lesson, but I have explained at the outset why I had to defend myself. Now, however, I am through with this man and shall let his mud volcano spew forth of a Monday whatever it will.⁵⁹

On this occasion, then, Mehring actually opted for an outright anti-antisemitic attack,⁶⁰ bravely disregarding the risks and vagaries of 'philosemitism' he had spent so many years so emphatically warning his fellow Social Democrats about. That said, the question immediately arises, of course, what exactly it was that Mehring was taking issue with at this point.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, 'Die letzte Lektion,' in LVZ 11, 253 [29 October 1904]: 2. Hereafter Mehring, 'Letzte Lektion'.

⁵⁸ *Idem*, 'Revolverjournalisten'.

⁵⁹ *Idem*, 'Letzte Lektion'.

⁶⁰ The only scholar to have picked up on this astounding occurrence is to my knowledge Lambrecht who does not, however, discuss it (Lambrecht, *Subjektivität*, 272 n190.)

Even if we allow for the fact that argumentative consistency was not necessarily held in the highest regard by either party in this dispute, it is surely implausible to suggest that Mehring should have objected, as a matter of principle, to the generalization that lay in Bernstein's imputation of faults as typical of German Jewry in its entirety. For that to be the case, Mehring was far too fond of such generalizations himself. As Mehring's reference to 'the "Jew" Lassalle' clearly indicates, it was not the stereotyping as such that Bernstein had undertaken in this instance, nor its specific content that Mehring rejected. When applied to other individuals of Jewish extraction, he himself would readily have subscribed to that stereotyping. Here, however, a political opponent whose good faith he fundamentally questioned had accused an individual whom Mehring revered and who, to Mehring's mind, had transcended his Jewishness, of specifically 'Jewish faults'. Ultimately, then, it was the fact that Bernstein had called Lassalle a Jew that outraged Mehring.⁶¹ The fact that calling someone a Jew automatically amounted to a denunciation of that person did not trouble Mehring; what did trouble him was the fact that in this instance that denunciation had hit the wrong man. In other words, Bernstein had used an essentially legitimate and valid form of 'critique' in an illegitimate and irresponsible way.

Mehring had, as we saw, grappled with this whole issue in the unpublished initial version of this polemic, combining the implication that Bernstein himself displayed a particular 'Jewish' trait with the rebuke that the trait in question was one typical, not of Jewry in its entirety, but only of the *Mühlendammer*. What Mehring did here was truly remarkable. He applied one anti-Jewish stereotype (*Mühlendammer*) in order to saddle an opponent of Jewish extraction with another (pushiness) while concomitantly accusing him of anti-Jewish stereotyping. Whether this was merely an authentic reflection of Mehring's twisted perceptions or a particularly spectacular, intentionally crafted show piece designed to demonstrate just how sophisticated and playful one could get in one's discussion of antisemitism and matters Jews is hard to determine; presumably it was a bit of both. Ultimately, however, Mehring had, as we saw, streamlined his thoughts on the matter when revising the text and in the final, published version, it does seem rather obvious that Bernstein's sin, to Mehring's mind, lay not in the fact that he subscribed to anti-Jewish stereotypes, but in the impudence of daring to apply these stereotypes to Lassalle. Clearly, then, Bernstein was, to Mehring's mind, an antisemite primarily because it was he who made the contentious remarks and because it was Lassalle they were directed against, not because the content of those remarks as such was invariably antisemitic.

The constellation we are looking at here is of course highly intriguing: we see Mehring, the man who, if we follow conventional wisdom, was arguably the leading Imperial German Social Democrat most likely to have inclined towards antisemitism accuse Bernstein, the man generally credited with the greatest

⁶¹ We might note in passing that Mehring and Bernstein only became privy to the correspondence between Marx and Engels in the autumn of 1910. Hence the pejorative remarks referring to Lassalle's Jewishness in the correspondence between Marx and Engels cannot have provided a point of reference for this particular dispute between Mehring and Bernstein. Even assuming that Bernstein may have heard Marx or Engels

sensitivity among his peers for matters Jewish, of antisemitism. To what extent their fundamental assumptions on antisemitism and matters Jewish really differed, both before and after Bernstein abandoned Marxism and mounted his revisionist challenge, is an issue that I hope to address elsewhere but lies beyond our scope at this point. My impression is that on this count too established scholarly opinion may well be in need of revision.

However much their stances on antisemitism and matters Jewish may or may not have differed at the time, though, it is in any case clear that Mehring's denunciation of Bernstein as an antisemite at the end of this dispute was ultimately little more than a freak occurrence. This is demonstrated not least by a slightly later exchange. If Bernstein had accused Mehring, as we saw, of having developed his own particular brand of 'Steglitz-style historiography' during their dispute in 1904, in the autumn of 1909 he accused him of basing his critical assessment of liberal indignation at the execution of the Spanish educational reformer and anarchist Francisco Ferrer Guardia (1859–1909) for his alleged implication in the attempted assassination of Alfons XIII in 1906⁶² on his own particular brand of 'outer Pomeranian historiography'. To this Mehring responded as follows: 'What an excellent habit to mock someone's stance by reproaching him for his place of birth! Was comrade Bernstein not then born in Jerusalem? [Und in Jerusalem ist Genosse Bernstein am Ende auch nicht geboren?]'⁶³ That references to antisemitism and matters Jewish could be enlisted in so arbitrary a fashion to denounce one and the same political opponent in mutually attenuating ways is surely remarkable and suggests that a dynamic and thrill inhered in any mention of, or allusion to, matters Jewish, almost irrespective of the actual thrust of the argument, that made it appealing and worthwhile to refer to these issues even when only the most tenuous of connections to them could possibly be construed.

We might note in passing that Mehring's indictment of Bernstein as an antisemite in 1904 was not in fact Mehring's first anti-antisemitic pronouncement of that year. He too had been among those who took *Reichskanzler* von Bülow to task for his remarks about 'Mandelstamm and Silberfarb' mentioned in the second chapter.⁶⁴ Now, there is, of course, no *a priori* reason why Bülow's reference to 'Mandelstamm and Silberfarb' should be any less legitimate than Social Democratic references to 'the great, hallowed names' Rothschild und Bleichröder. Again, then, it was not the stereotyping as such that was at stake here but the question: who was doing the stereotyping and against whom specifically was it directed?

make anti-Jewish remarks against Lassalle, the odds that Mehring would have known of this are immensely slim.

⁶² Cf. Franz Mehring, 'Der Fall Ferrer,' in *NZ* 28-I, 4 [22 October 1909]: 97–100.

⁶³ Franz Mehring, 'Die öffentliche Meinung,' in *NZ* 28-I, 7 [12 November 1909]: 225. Schupp quotes this passage without further comment to demonstrate that Mehring was not ashamed of his outer Pomeranian origin (Waldemar Schupp, 'Biographisch-genealogische Ermittlungen zu Franz Mehring und zur Pfarrerrfamilie Mehring,' in Beutin, Hoppe, *Franz Mehring*, 115–122, here 116.)

⁶⁴ Franz Mehring, 'Ein verhüllte Fremdherrschaft,' in *NZ* 22-I, 23 [2 March 1904]: 713–716, here 714–715.

On this occasion a severe bout of embarrassment of anti-semitism followed promptly. A fortnight later he hastened to point out that ‘even the Jewish papers’ had sanctioned Bülow’s inappropriate remarks, their desire to please him being just as strong as Bülow’s desire to please the tsarist regime by expelling exiled Russian radicals.⁶⁵ On the same day, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* led with an editorial under the title ‘Mandelstamm und Feige’⁶⁶ most likely written by Mehring himself. It juxtaposed Mandelshtam’s revolutionary heroism with the case of a Jewish legal official from Breslau called Feige who had complained to the Kaiser because his son had not been made an officer of the reserve. While the bourgeois press had had no misgivings about the denunciation of Mandelshtam, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* remarked, Feige’s case had precipitated “‘the most widespread indignation’.” The argument that then followed offered yet another variation on the ‘conflation of right and morality’ theme that we discussed in some detail in the second chapter. The word ‘feige’, as an adjective, means cowardly, of course, hence ‘the name of this Maccabee from Breslau is telling,’ the editorial commented. It was incidents like this that helped explain why antisemitism, its utter political futility notwithstanding, simply would not die out, it added. ‘A Jewry that emancipates itself by joining forces with the oppressed classes fighting for their emancipation is as respectable and sympathetic as that other Jewry is repulsive and contemptible that seeks to swap the role of the oppressed for the role of the oppressor,’ the editorial concluded. Whether the embarrassment of anti-semitism might have borne any similar fruits had Bernstein pursued the fact that Mehring had accused him of antisemitism any further we cannot, of course, know.

How, then, finally, did Bernstein react to this accusation? Surely, if the more far-reaching claims that have been made both regarding Social Democracy’s categorical opposition to antisemitism (beyond the merely party-political) and the exceptional nature of Mehring’s notions on the matter were valid, then Bernstein could and would not have let this opportunity pass. As we saw, he was out to get Mehring and to see his role in the party reined in substantially. Given Mehring’s track record in terms of his outspoken stance on antisemitism and matters Jewish throughout his career in the party, Bernstein would surely not have hesitated to use this opportunity, had Mehring’s general stance on the matter genuinely been radically at odds with both his own pertinent notions and those prevalent within Social Democracy. It is more than evident from Bernstein’s response, however, that he never considered anything of the sort.

Mehring’s ‘ultimate lesson’ was published in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* on Saturday, 29 October. Bernstein gave a first, short response in the *Montagsblatt* published on 31 October. There can be no doubt, then, that we are looking here at that rare occurrence of a pretty much spontaneous response composed under considerable time pressure. ‘Once again’ Mehring had

resorted to the lowest of polemical tricks: the capricious imputation of motives and forgery of opinions.⁶⁷ Thus he uses a passage from a letter I wrote him, in which I speak of Jewish faults on

⁶⁵ *Idem*, ‘Außerhalb der Kultur,’ in *NZ* 22-I, 25 [16 March 1904]: 778–780, here 779.

⁶⁶ ‘Mandelstamm und Feige,’ in *LVZ* 11, 62 [16 March 1904], 1.

⁶⁷ The underlined words were printed in spaced and bold type.

Lassalle's part [jüdischen Fehlern Lassalles] to brand me an antisemite and someone who plays 'Lassalle's admirer' in public and 'denigrates' Lassalle 'all the more maliciously in private'. As if I had not spoken quite unreservedly of Lassalle's mistakes in *all* my publications *right up to the present*; as if the recognition of an individual's or an ethnic group's [Volksstammes] faults implied a failure to appreciate their positive aspects or merits. So base an interpretation reveals only one thing: impotent rage.⁶⁸

This calls for a number of observations. It is surely most remarkable that Bernstein clearly maintained that Lassalle's critique-worthy characteristics were indeed 'Jewish faults'. He too clearly did not assume the thrust of Mehring's indictment to be directed against the underlying generalizations and stereotyping, nor did he feel a need to justify himself for applying the stereotypes in question to Lassalle. What was, to his mind, crucial and in need of a refutation, however, was Mehring's accusation that he articulated his notions on the matter only in private while conveying a different picture in public. This Bernstein denied. He had not only 'quite unreservedly' put the finger on Lassalle's 'Jewish faults' in all his writings but had also taken care not to let these 'Jewish faults' deter him from an appreciation of Lassalle's positive sides.

In a more detailed response to Mehring's 'ultimate lesson' as a whole, published a week later, Bernstein returned to this particular issue once more, now stating that

Anyone who reads my just published work *Lassalle und seine Bedeutung für die Arbeiterklasse* will find pronounced there on page 69 materially exactly the same things about Lassalle's literary-polemical bad habits that Mehring has announced full of relish and in bold type as a revelation of my allegedly secret thoughts about Lassalle.

I do not have the slightest cause to conceal the fact that a number of Lassalle's faults repelled me for a good many years. They never prevented me, however, from appreciating Lassalle's positive aspects, and the repeated study of Lassalle's letters eventually even taught me to love him.⁶⁹

While adding nothing new to his initial reaction, then, beyond the mention of a specific location as evidence for his contention that he had always played his cards openly, he had now erased all explicit references to antisemitism and matters Jewish. In connection with Mehring's initial indictment we had noted that the nexus between Bernstein's critique of Lassalle's 'Jewish faults', on the one hand, and the supposedly critique-worthy aspects of his 'literary manner', on the other, remained unclear in the letter by Bernstein from which Mehring was quoting. That Bernstein should have thought that Lassalle's 'Jewish faults' consisted merely of the critique-worthy aspects of his 'literary manner' is unlikely, given that he had described Lassalle as epitomizing 'several exceptionally unsympathetic qualities of German Jewry'. What is now clear, however, is that he held those critique-worthy aspects of Lassalle's 'literary manner' to be specifically 'Jewish faults' that epitomized at least one of German Jewry's 'exceptionally unsympathetic qualities'.

If we turn to the recent publication that Bernstein himself refers us to we find there, as far as I can see, just one passage that discusses Lassalle's Jewish origins. Bernstein explained there that 'Lassalle repeatedly made it clear that he experienced his Jewish origins as a burden, that he felt no inner connection with

⁶⁸ *Montagsblatt* 1, 27 [31 October 1904]: 3.

⁶⁹ Eduard Bernstein, 'Und noch einmal Mehring,' *Das Neue Montagsblatt* 1, 28 [7 November 1904]: 2.

contemporary Jewry; that he saw in the Jews of his day only “the extremely degenerate [entarteten] sons of a great but long vanished past,” as he put it in his confessional letter written in October 1860 to Sophie Sontsev.’ Lassalle’s stance had been based on an ‘exaggerated, but understandable generalization of certain nasty phenomena within Jewry [übler Erscheinungen im Judentum].’⁷⁰ We find no critique of Lassalle’s own ‘Jewish faults’ here and this indeed is not, of course, the passage Bernstein was referring to. On the page in question, Bernstein discussed Lassalle’s major polemic against the liberal economist and politician Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808–1883).⁷¹ This publication, Bernstein argued,

epitomizes Lassalle’s merits and Lassalle’s faults. In this publication, to begin with the latter, Lassalle frequently indulges in the most ugly quibbling [sehr häßliche Silbenstecherei] that tends towards a distortion of his opponent’s notions. His inclination, professed by himself in his diary, to take refuge in shouting down [Ueberschreien] where arguments fail, shows itself here too: on several occasions the polemic no longer refutes, but merely shouts down. Lassalle is not content with the demonstration of his opponent’s inadequacy in terms of his scholarly aptitude and the nature of his suggestions, ultimately he also questions his opponent’s motives excessively, while passing over Schulze’s factual objections to the idea of state-financed production co-operatives with a few unproven assertions.

However, ‘these and other faults of the book,’ Bernstein then went on to explain, were ultimately offset by its ‘brilliant merits [glänzende Vorzüge].’⁷² Had Bernstein not told us so, we would have no reason to suspect that he assumed the faults he described here to be in any way specifically ‘Jewish faults’. The fact that he has told us so, however, allows us to grasp a reality that has potentially far-reaching implications. It is indicative of the extent to which perceptions of matters Jewish obviously pervaded all walks of life and provided at least a subtext in manifold instances in which we are no longer inclined even to suspect it. At the same time, it compels us to conclude that each and every critical allusion Bernstein made to the ‘literary manner’ of individuals of Jewish extraction in the course of his long career as a writer may well contain an implicit critique of, or comment on, one of German Jewry’s ‘exceptionally unsympathetic qualities.’ That this should be a phenomenon restricted to Bernstein or his comments on ‘literary manners’ seems unlikely.

⁷⁰ *Idem, Ferdinand Lassalle und seine Bedeutung für die Arbeiterklasse* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1904): 10. Hereafter Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle*.

⁷¹ Ferdinand Lassalle, *Herr Bastiat-Schulze von Delitzsch, der ökonomische Julian, oder: Capital und Arbeit* (Berlin: Schlingmann, 1864).

⁷² Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, 69–70.

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