Anonymous, “The Antipathy to Jews” (1879)

Abstract

This article was published anonymously on November 20, 1879, in the journal *Im neuen Reich* [*In the New Empire*], which represented mainstream liberal nationalist opinion, not the far Right. The article appeared only five days after Heinrich von Treitschke’s famous pronouncement: “The Jews are our misfortune” [“Die Juden sind unser Unglück”]. In the first paragraph, the author notes the novelty of approaching the “Jewish Question” as purely a question of race, not religion. The author also emphasizes the economic roots of anti-Jewish sentiment since the beginning of the Great Recession in 1873. The last lines of the article reflect typical arguments against Jewish influence in the stock market and other dysfunctional features of a liberal capitalist system. This article was mentioned in a report from the British envoy in Dresden, George Strachey, to the British Foreign Office (report of November 20, 1879).

Source

Reports from the Empire and Abroad

From the Rhine. The Antipathy to Jews. — It is a fact that has not been fully explained: for some years, people’s antipathies against the Israelites have again been growing. In the past, the agrarians were at the forefront of this movement. Now they are hardly mentioned anymore, but this attitude of theirs has continued on many fronts. New writings against the Jews are always appearing; W. Marr has now even founded a journal, the *Deutsche Wacht* [*German Witness*] which represents this anti-Jewish tendency. A novel creation in this area is the “Antisemitic League.” In North America, the acclaimed land of all liberties, a vast assembly in Newport has ostracized all Jews and has attacked them in the grossest way, including even death threats. For a long time, the Liberal Party always believed that people’s antipathy toward Jews was fundamentally religious. The party thought it was doing something useful by passionately preaching the freedom of religion and the need for tolerance, and by denouncing Jewish opposition as an echo of the dark ages and its persecution of heretics. Something of this nature can in fact still be observed in certain attacks on Jews, but it is rare. Now, the situation is quite different. The main attacks on Jews are now carried out by those who have no interest in religious matters, and who openly admit that they view a baptized Jew—that is, one who, after generations, has verifiably taken on German nationality—in the same manner as a Jew who has not been baptized. This antipathy is therefore a racial antipathy. Thus, one can only ask, why is this kind of antipathy experiencing such a revival now?

It cannot be denied that the economic position of Jews today is the chief factor, partly because of the great success that Jews have achieved in the free competition of today’s capitalist state, and partly because of the corresponding, sad situation of the Christian masses. This fact is indisputable. The major banks are predominantly in Jewish hands, and Jews dominate the stock markets and the fields of national and international financial speculation. Many high officials and landowners, because of their financial situation, are dependent on Jews, and that trend continues on down to peasants, who are sucked dry through “legal channels.” This is well known. The situation is only occasionally improved by court hearings, which (in the case of Geysa in Saxe-Weimar, for example), from the years 1876 and 1877, show usury of up to 2600 per cent. “In vain we seek among those usurers for a Christian name in order to pillory him.” As I said, this is well known everywhere, and when one speaks with judges, their liberalism does not restrain them from telling what they have learned about the social harm Jews have caused. Everybody knows well enough that Jews shy away from any hard work. While in 1861 there was 1 Jew to

every 72 inhabitants in Prussia, there was only 1 Jew for every 1,700 inhabitants who work as peasants, gardeners, and winegrowers, but 1 Jew out of every 5 ⅕ persons working in commerce.

On the Rhine, in particular the itinerant sales trade is in Jewish hands, and the Jews in the Rhine Province live more in the countryside and in small towns, while elsewhere they usually hasten to the larger cities. It is not unknown that the Jews have just over one-third as many men able to serve in the military as an equal number of Germans. In short, due to racial diversity, a labor and employment disparity that has developed over centuries has formed, which now, in the modern capitalist state and world economy, has led to a fateful, if certainly not deliberate, favoring of Judaism over the less quick-witted Germanic nature. If one were to make a new discovery of this, which of course one often quietly confesses in a sigh to one's neighbor, this is due to another circumstance: the fact that Judaism dominates the press almost entirely. The publishers or editors or their employees—or all these persons together—of most newspapers in Berlin are Jews. There is an agreement among them that nothing may be said against Judaism, and if this kind of offensive cannot be kept silent, it is skillfully and sometimes justifiably represented as an expression of narrowness and intolerance. Therefore, articles against the Jews usually appear as separate pamphlets.

All this is not said in order to moralize. A strong people needs no laws to defend itself against a minority of racial foreigners. And Jews are no longer foreigners among us. Liberalism will refuse to endorse laws specifically intended for Jews. For the most extreme possibilities, for example, such as Jews ruling the nation, if one makes no laws, then the masses will help themselves. If one wants to address this evil at its base, one must deal precisely with the whole range of legislation concerning acquisition of capital, the stock market, mortgage law, inheritance law, etc., and not be prevented by the precepts of the so-called "Manchester theory" from making the most accurate criticism of the existing laws.

Source: Anonymous, "Berichte aus dem Reich und dem Auslande," *Im neuen Reich: Wochenschrift für das Leben des deutschen Volkes in Staat, Wissenschaft und Kunst* 9, vol. 2, no. 47, November 20, 1879, pp. 769–71.

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