Antisemitism and Racism in Nazi Ideology

Walter Zwi Bacharach

Before elaborating on antisemitism, racism, and Nazi ideology, including the interaction among them, let us clarify the meaning of each phenomenon. Regarding antisemitism, a letter written by Ernst Richter, addressed to Professor Friedrich Heer, the Roman Catholic scholar who attacked Christianity for its wrongdoings to the Jews, is quite illustrative:

Filled with dismay by your article about the Jews – and with satisfaction at the indignation it has aroused everywhere – I am writing to you to protest most vehemently against the purpose of your arguments, which is to force the peoples of the earth even more under Jewish domination, and even to press the church into its service. Who are you, sir, that you cannot acknowledge what is acknowledged by millions of right-thinking people everywhere? And this you call, in defiance of all the facts, 'the cancer of Christianity'!

Sir, what are you, perhaps you are yourself a Jew, or part-Jewish, so, that with typical Jewish blindness to your own failings, you profess not to recognize this 'infamy'? Or have you been bribed with Jewish money to work against all ideas of Right and Justice, for the subjugation of all peoples under the Jewish yoke? We have no wish to eliminate the distinctions which God in His wisdom made between the various peoples, nor to tolerate amongst us parasitic agitators, such as the Jews in fact always have been. God has not only asked us, He has commanded us to fight against wrong. And that is why we ask Christ, our beloved immortal King, to deliver us from our and His enemies, and to destroy all efforts to betray us forever to our murderers.1

This letter contains the classic topics of traditional Jew-hatred. I will return to its origins shortly.

Regarding racism, I do not want to deal with the history and origins of race theories and the emergence of racism in the Western world, since George L. Mosse has already done so.2 What is of specific concern to us is Nazi racism. It was Hitler who linked Jew-hatred with racism. For the moment, it will suffice to listen to his credo: 'The racial question gives the key not only to the world, but to all human culture',3 'And all occurrences in world history are only the expression of the race's instinct of self-preservation, in the good or bad sense'.4

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4 Ibid., p. 296.
Nazi ideology should be equated with what Hitler called 'Weltanschauung'. In this modern research has followed Eberhard Jäckel's analysis, which is still valid today.\(^5\) Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*:

> Every philosophy of life, even if it is a thousand times correct and of highest benefit to humanity, will remain without significance for the practical shaping of a people's life, as long as its principles have not become the banner of a fighting movement.\(^6\)

And in another passage he wrote:

> For the philosophy is intolerant; it cannot content itself with the role of 'one party beside others', but imperiously demands, not only its own exclusive and unlimited recognition, but the complete transformation of all public life in accordance with its views.\(^7\)

We may pose this question: In what way is the traditional Jew-hatred a challenge to the Nazi Weltanschauung that promotes the primacy and self-preservation of the German race?

Reinhard Rürup stated that since the Hellenistic period we have not been able to talk of a continuity of an 'eternal antisemitism' (ewigen Antisemitismus).\(^8\) Although he admits that 'for centuries Jews were oppressed, isolated, hated and despised', Rürup contends that there was no 'Judenfrage', no Jewish problem. Jews did not constitute a problem that profoundly needed to be solved. Only in the late eighteenth century was a Judenfrage established.\(^9\)

According to his analysis, Jews in earlier ages were economically exploited and a Judenpolitik was initiated by German princes and feudal lords, but there was no Judenfrage.\(^10\) Rürup distinction between antisemitism and Judenfrage is essentially correct. Antisemitism was prevalent in German history, but the Judenfrage was a modern phenomenon that became widespread after the 1842 publication of Bruno Bauer's brochure *Die Judenfrage*. It was no longer attributed to a particular nation or state but now reflected a world problem, as Alex Bein has postulated in *Die Judenfrage: Biographie eines Weltproblems*.

Antisemitism and the Judenfrage became one in modern times. Antisemitism underwent a process of universalization. Ernst Nolte, in his study *Three Faces of Fascism*, commented that:

> It must not be forgotten that every significant ideology of the 19th century had its own brand of antisemitism. Liberal antisemitism accused the Jews of anti-historical rigidity, intolerance and 'national separateness'. In socialist thought the Jews stood for the chief exemplifiers of the

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\(^6\) Hitler, M.K., p. 380; I believe Manheim's translation "Philosophy of life" is misleading. The German term "Weltanschauung" should remain unchanged, as Hitler's opinions are in no way a philosophy.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 454.


\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 75-76.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 76.
capitalist spirit and its 'mamonism'. What conservatives disliked most about the Jews was their spirit of unrest, their tendency toward revolution.\textsuperscript{11}

All these theories and ideologies were manifestations of universal ideals and outlooks, hence also 'their' particular brand of antisemitism became universal.

**Hitler's Antisemitism**

Adolf Hitler was born in 1889 in Braunau, Austria. He moved in 1908 to Vienna and became acquainted with the so-called 'Jewish Problem'. In 1913, he moved to Munich. Upon returning to Munich from his stint with a Bavarian regiment of the German Army during World War I, he stated in his first political document, in 1919, that the final goal of antisemitism must be 'the total removal of the Jews'/ In 1921, he became the chairman of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the NSDAP. His efforts to bring down the government in 1923 failed, and he was sentenced in 1924 to five years imprisonment. In Landsberg prison, he dictated *Mein Kampf*. In 1928 he wrote another book, *Das Zweite Buch* (published in 1961), in which he delivered the grounds for his racist antisemitism, which became so central in his Weltanschauung and political activities.\textsuperscript{12}

If we examine Nazi ideology and the movement as a whole and its relationship to Hitler's personality, we face the basic question as defined by Karl D. Bracher: To what degree does a biography of the 'Leader' disclose the nature and essence of National Socialism? Could we – should we – simply speak of Hitlerism?\textsuperscript{13} Hitler was the driving force of antisemitism in the Nazi movement, not only by setting the ideological tone but also by elevating his intense personal antipathy to an affair of state. Hitler alone defined the Jewish menace.\textsuperscript{14} This clear link between Hitler's anti-Semitic ideology and anti-Semitic practice is further examined in the studies of Helmut Krausnick, Karl D. Bracher, Eberhard Jäckel, Andreas Hillgruber, and Gerald Fleming.

Other historians, popularly known as functionalists, do not see such a clear connection. For example, Karl Schleunes stated that 'during the early years of the Third Reich no one in the Nazi movement, from the Führer down, had defined what the substance of a solution to the Jewish problem might be.'\textsuperscript{15} The psychohistorical efforts to explain Hitler's antisemitism exclude the possibility of discussing the problem historically. In Hitler's case, the weakness of these efforts, evaluated from other angles, has already been exposed by Bracher.\textsuperscript{16} Hitler's case, as any other one, would be looked at as a general human complexity, ignoring its

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] Bracher, "Role of Hitler", p. 207.
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specific unique personal-historic development. In both volumes of Hitler's Mein Kampf, we read the following:

Was it possible that the earth had been promised as a reward to this people which lives only for this earth?... If with the help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other peoples of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity and this planet will as it did millions of years ago move through the ether devoid of men. Hence today, I believe, that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.\(^\text{17}\)

And in the second volume:

If our people and our state become the victim of this bloodthirsty and avaricious Jewish tyrant of nations, the whole earth will sink into the snares of this octopus; if Germany frees itself from its embrace, this greatest danger of nations may be regarded as broken for the whole world.\(^\text{18}\)

Eberhard Jäckel has emphasized another 'new' aspect in Hitler's antisemitism, namely, the universal-missionary trend. The adversary in the struggle of the Jews, Hitler proclaims, was not this or that nation, but all nations, the principle of nation as such, the law of nature and history. Hence, the Jews were not an enemy of the German nation alone, but of all mankind; their elimination was not only a national task but a universal task.\(^\text{19}\)

**German Antisemitism Before Hitler**

As to German antisemitism before Hitler, it will suffice to refer to Fritz Stern's monumental study *Gold and Iron*. Stern scrutinized the history of antisemitism during the Bismarck era. He noted the fact that German liberalism was weaker than, and ideologically different from, its Western counterparts, and that the German Bürgertum never acquired the self-confidence and historic importance of the French or British bourgeoisie. This meant that the Jewish community did not have a liberal shield that would defend its rights as part of a code of universally recognized human rights. Stern also stressed the peculiarity of German nationalism, characterized by its aggressiveness and xenophobia. The resonance to antisemitism among the leading classes of society was greater in Germany than elsewhere.\(^\text{20}\)

In latter-day studies of the German cultural, economic, social, and religious antisemitism of nineteenth-century scholars such as Lagarde, Marr, and Treitschke, one finds that the 'Jewish Question' was raised loudly.\(^\text{21}\) Stern stressed that the core of all variations of antisemitism was

\(^{17}\) Hitler, M.K., pp. 64, 65.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 623.

\(^{19}\) Jäckel, Hitlers Weltanschauung, p. 68. See also idem, Hitler in History (Hanover, 1984), pp. 47-48.


\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 495.
This Nazi racism was exposed to the Jews made guilty for all problems & wrongs in Europe and suited as such the "guilty role in the Nazi ideology. Fascism is the mother ideology that Nazism developed from as a sub-ideology. But because of NSDAP-Hitler-WWII-Holocaust, etc. has the Nazism become the big and the Fascism the smaller. When asking people what precisely were wrong with the Fascism as a political ideology, most hesitate and the Continue Reading. The basic difference between the Fascism and Nazism ideologies is the latter incorporate racism as a core part of its ideology. While Fascism is not racist. This Nazi racism was exposed to the Jews made guilty for all problems & wrongs in Europe and suited as such the "guilty role in the Nazi ideology. Antisemitism and Racism in Nazi Ideology Walter Zwi Bacharach Before elaborating on antisemitism, racism, and Nazi ideology, including the interaction among them, let us clarify the meaning of each phenomenon. Regarding antisemitism, a letter written by Ernst Richter, addressed to Professor Friedrich Heer, the Roman Catholic scholar who attacked Christianity for its wrongdoings to the Jews, is quite illustrative:

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