



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Friedrich Engels and the Jews

Author(s): Edmund Silberner

Source: *Jewish Social Studies*, Oct., 1949, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct., 1949), pp. 323-342

Published by: Indiana University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4464841>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Jewish Social Studies*

JSTOR

FRIEDRICH ENGELS AND THE JEWS

BY EDMUND SILBERNER

In the history of socialism the names of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx are linked together so closely and so justly that in most cases it does not seem very important to distinguish the contribution of each to the common work. From our particular point of view, however, a separate analysis is indispensable because of certain vital differences between them. The fact that Marx was of Jewish origin while Engels was not is important inasmuch as Marx, just because of his origin, was emotionally blocked on the Jewish question,¹ while Engels never was. Marx held during his whole lifetime more or less the same ideas on the Jews while Engels' view on the subject underwent an interesting change. This change is partly due to the fact that Engels outlived Marx by over a decade (1883-1895), during which time he witnessed not only a rising wave of political antisemitism, but also a rapid development of the Jewish labor movement, in England as well as in the United States.

Abraham Cahan, a leading figure in the American Jewish labor movement, who in 1892 was introduced to Engels by Eleanor Marx, recounts how his host read to him a few lines in Yiddish (from the New York *Arbeter Tzeitung*) and then remarked: "Do you think that

¹ On Marx and the Jewish problem, see Silberner, E., "Was Marx an Antisemite?" in *Historia Judaica*, vol. xi (1949) 3-52; Mayer, G., "Early German Socialism and Jewish Emancipation," in *JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES*, vol. i (1939) 409-22; Bloom, Solomon, "Karl Marx and the Jews," *ibid.*, vol. iv (1942) 3-16.

I cannot read *lashon hakodesh* . . . The capitalist newspapers had some reason in saying that I, myself, am a Jew." ²

Among Engels' writings of particular significance for our subject are, apart from his correspondence with Marx, Sorge, Bernstein and others, his articles in a variety of newspapers and magazines such as *Telegraph für Deutschland* (1839), *The Northern Star* (1846-47), *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* (1847-48), *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848-49), *New York Tribune* (1851-52), *Volksstaat* (1872), *Arbeiterzeitung* (1890), *Vorwärts* (1893), and *Neue Zeit* (1894-95). Of his books, *Herrn Eugen Dühring's Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (1881) includes a relevant passage and one must add to this *Die deutsche Ideologie* (1845-46), which was written by Engels and Marx in such a way that the recognition of their individual shares seems impossible. The Marx-Engels Institute, which has published thus far only a small part—though an important one—of the manuscripts of Engels, suspended the publication of his collected works in 1935. There is little doubt that some of the presently inaccessible manuscripts would be of interest for the present study. Thus Gustav Mayer points out the existence of a manuscript note of Engels "on the Jew in Germany," but does not say a word about its content. ³ None the less, enough material is available on Engels' attitude towards the Jews. As yet the subject has not been examined in a monograph nor analyzed in general works. Even Gustav Mayer's fine biography of Engels neglects to examine this subject.

I

The very first casual remarks that Engels made about the Jews are of interest only insofar as they reflect his rather unbiased attitude towards them. Evaluating the work of certain contemporary writers, he indicates in passing the Jewish origin of some of them. ⁴ He was particularly impressed by Karl Isidor Beck, "a man of genius," and

² Cahan, A., *Bleter fun mein leben*, vol. iii (New York 1926) p. 264. Words written in Hebrew already occur in a letter of Engels to Friedrich Graeber of February 22, 1841. (Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by the Marx-Engels Institute, pt. i, vol. ii, p. 562). Cf. also *Neue Zeit*, vol. xiii (1894) 40.

³ Mayer, G., *Friedrich Engels. Eine Biographie* (The Hague 1934) vol. ii, p. 455.

⁴ Engels to Friedrich Graeber (January 1839), *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. ii, p. 497. Cf. also p. 539.

the fine picture of Jewish misery that he painted in his *Nächte, gepanzerte Lieder* (1838).⁵ Soon, however, his new poems disappointed Engels.⁶ A few years later, he ridiculed his appeal to his co-religionist, Rothschild, to improve the world.⁷ His *Trödeljude*,⁸ says Engels, includes some "naive and nice" verses,⁹ but his description of economic discrimination against the Jews is devoid of all poetry, and nothing but "liberal-Young-German Jewish drivel (*Judensabbel*)."¹⁰

II

From the middle 'forties, Engels' ideas on the Jews move in the same direction as those of Marx. In 1844, Marx published his *Zur Judenfrage*. That Engels was fascinated by Marx's views on the Jewish problem is clearly visible, not only from some of his later pronouncements, but also from his letter to Marx about their first joint work, *Die heilige Familie* (1845). The latter includes three sections on the Jewish question written by Marx, in which he briefly summarized what he had said on the subject in *Zur Judenfrage*. Engels was delighted with these sections. "Your discussion of the Jewish question," he wrote to Marx, is "brilliant" and will produce an "excellent effect."¹¹ It is thus clear that almost from the beginning of his literary career, Engels' opinions on the Jews were to a large extent determined by those of Marx.¹²

Typically enough, the word "Jew" is used by Engels as an equivalent of "speculator" or "financier." This is done first indirectly, that is by way of translation or quotation of texts in which the word appears with this connotation. In fact, Engels included in his translation of Fourier three pages from the latter's *Théorie des quatre mouvements*,

⁵ Engels to Wilhelm Graeber (July 1839), *ibid*, 536.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 57-61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p. 35-47.

⁸ In Karl Beck, *Lieder vom armen Mann* (Leipzig 1846) p. 53-59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹ Engels to Marx, March 17, 1845, in Marx-Engels *Briefwechsel*, 4 vols. (Berlin 1929-31) vol. i, p. 19.

¹² For a few disparaging remarks on the Jews in their joint work *Die deutsche Ideologie*, Cf. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. v, p. 162, 386.

where the Jews are identified with fraudulent defaulters.¹³ True, in his introductory note, Engels himself does not make use of antisemitic terminology; but neither does he find fault with the language of Fourier, which he certainly would have done if he had any objection to make. The same procedure is followed by Engels when he reproduces a passage from an anonymous article in *La Réforme*—a leftist organ to which he himself contributed—where the words “these Jews, these poison-mongers,” are used in reference to different kinds of tyrants and exploiters.¹⁴

Engels also defends, by implication at least, a well-known antisemitic pamphlet brought out in 1846.¹⁵ In an article in *The Northern Star*, a Chartist newspaper, he points out that the contemporary social system in France is attacked in different ways by different sections of the French people. He writes:

But there has been started in Paris, a short time ago, a new mode of attack which deserves to be mentioned. A working man has written a pamphlet against the head of the system, not against Louis-Philippe, but against “Rothschild I. King of the Jews.” The success of this pamphlet, (it has now gone through some twenty editions,) shows how much this was an attack in the right direction. King Rothschild has been obliged to publish two defences against these attacks of a man whom nobody knows, and the whole of whose property consists in the suit of clothes he wears.¹⁶

Whether the attack was in the right direction simply because the pamphlet was a best seller is a question which does not fall within the scope of this study. It is, however, necessary to recall that the

¹³ Engels, “Ein Fragment Fouriers über den Handel,” in *Gesamtausgabe* vol. iv., p. 409-53. On Fourierist antisemitism, see Silberner, E., “Charles Fourier on the Jewish Question,” in *JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES*, vol. viii (1946) 245-66, and “The Attitude of the Fourierist School towards the Jews,” *ibid.*, vol. ix (1946) 339-62.

¹⁴ *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vi, p. 341.

¹⁵ Mathieu-Dairnvaell, Georges-Marie, *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, Roi des Juifs, par Satan, pseud.*, 5th ed. (Paris 1846).

¹⁶ *Gesamtausgabe* vol. vi, p. 30. Engels himself rarely points out the Jewish origin of Rothschild. It was but a joke when Engels, alluding to the English-French financial interests in Egypt wrote to Bebel (September 23, 1882), a few days after the British had defeated the Egyptians at Tell-el-Kebir: “Die ganze ägyptische Geschichte war die Rache der Juden (Rothschild, Erlanger etc.) für die alte Austreibung aus Aegypten unter Pharao.” Marx-Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel* . . . (Moscow 1933) vol. i, p. 274.

anonymous pamphlet was not at all socialist in character but rather what the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* were accustomed to call petty bourgeois. It was a kind of forerunner of the modern antisemitic pamphlets which appeared in great numbers at the end of the nineteenth century and later. Its vocabulary is reminiscent of the language of many instigators of pogroms. Its anonymous author ("Satan"), known as a specialist in the *chronique scandaleuse*, was not as poor as Engels depicted him. He was Georges-Marie Mathieu-Dairnvaell, a democratic writer and bookseller in Paris. None of his opuscles shows the slightest trend towards communism. In view of these facts, Engels' praise is the more significant.

The Jew as reflected in the writings of Engels at this time is either a merchant or money-lender. The Jews have monopolized the exchange of manufactured commodities against agricultural produce in Poland and Bohemia. "This" he writes, "has been, though in a less degree, the case in all the east of Europe. The handicraftsman, the small shopkeeper, the petty manufacturer, is a German up to this day in Petersburg, Pesth, Jassy, and even Constantinople; while the money-lender, the publican, the hawker—a very important man in these thinly populated countries—is very generally a Jew, whose native tongue is a horribly corrupted German."¹⁷

On the other hand, he notes that there are, in the West, wealthy Jews. Speaking of recent social changes in Prussia, Engels points out that the rapid development of industry and especially of the stock-exchange swindling has dragged all ruling classes into the whirlpool of speculation. The corruption imported from France is growing with an unheard of rapidity. "Shrousborg [a German-Jewish financier] and Pereire [a French-Jewish banker]" says Engels, "take off their hats to each other. Ministers, generals, princes and counts deal in stocks in spite of the most cunning bourse-Jews, and the state recognizes their equality by making the bourse-Jews barons in large numbers."¹⁸ The singling out of Jewish speculators is the more strange as Engels saw in the stock-exchange an institution which does not directly affect the

¹⁷ Engels, "Germany, VIII. Revolution and Counter-Revolution," in *New York Tribune*, March 5, 1852, p. 7. For other short references to Jewish peddlers or merchants, see *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, June 9, August 9, 1848, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vii, p. 41-42, 228.

¹⁸ *Volksstaat* (Jan. 4, 1873) 2.

workers: the bourse changes only the distribution of the surplus value already stolen from the workers. But it also accelerates the concentration of capital and therefore is as revolutionary as the steam-engine. Hence he was opposed to the introduction of taxes on stock-exchange dealings.¹⁹

The Jew is a subject of ridicule in more than one article written by Engels in 1848. Since he sympathized with the Polish cause it is obvious that he was opposed to those Germans and Jews of Posen who wanted to Germanize this province.²⁰ In his polemics, however, he went far beyond what was necessary for the elucidation of a political problem. In order to show that the Jews of Posen are not Germans—as the German bourgeoisie then asserted—he simply mocks at the way they speak German.²¹ And he also points to what all antisemites consider as specifically Jewish characteristics. In his controversy with Prince Felix Lichnowski, who advocated a policy of Germanizing the Poles, and alluding to the well-known lines of Ernst Moritz Arndt, Engels wrote that the fatherland of the Prince extends

*“So weit ein polnischer Jude deutsch kauderwelscht,
Auf Wucher leiht, Münz und Gewicht verfälscht.”*²²

Curiously enough, Engels himself, in an article written for Marx, asserted only a few years later that in Western Slavic countries (Poland, Bohemia) the Jews, “if they belong to any nationality, are in these countries certainly rather Germans than Slavonians.”²³ And speaking of Hungary, where, according to him, the Germans are in all respects except language true Magyars, he noted that only “the Jews and Saxons

¹⁹ *Die Briefe von F. Engels an E. Bernstein* (Berlin 1925) p. 110, 112, 116.

²⁰ *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vii, p. 165, 176.

²¹ *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vii, p. 41-42, 291, 297, 331. Some forty years later, in a letter to Sorge, (April 29, 1886), Engels gives the following example of the Jewish way of constructing sentences in German: “Als der Bismarck ist gekommen vor die Zwangswahl, hat er lieber den Papst geküsst auf den Hintern als die Revolution auf den Mund.” *Briefe . . . an Sorge* (Stuttgart 1906) p. 218.

²² “Die Polendebatte in Frankfurt,” in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, September 1, 1848, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vii, p. 331.

²³ “Germany . . .,” in *New York Tribune*, March 5, 1852. Engels says nothing about the nationality of the Jews in the non-Polish provinces of Russia. He notes, however, that Russia—in contradistinction to Poland—knows thoroughly how to assimilate (“nationalize”) foreign elements such as Germans and Jews (Engels to Marx, May 23, 1851, *Briefwechsel*, vol. i, p. 206).

in Transylvania make an exception and insist upon the preservation of an absurd nationality within an alien country.”²⁴ It is not clear from the context what the real nationality of these Jews is supposed to be; their “absurd nationality,” according to Engels, seems however, to be German.

Evidence of Engels’ contemptuous attitude towards the Jews is particularly abundant in his correspondence with Marx. To designate a Jew, he uses, apart from the regular German word “*Jude*,” the slang terms “*Jud*” and “*Jid*.”²⁵ Alexander Weill, in Engels’ opinion, “is too much of a Jew” to write articles without being paid for it.²⁶ The Jewish parentage of Leo Fränkel, a well-known revolutionary, is expressed in an untranslatable way: “*Das Fränkelche ist das richtige Jidche*.”²⁷ Leibel Choras, a man about whom biographical data do not seem to be available, is called “the old damned Jew,” because of the unsolicited visits he paid to Engels.²⁸ In order to ridicule someone Engels simply calls him a Jew or compares him with a Jew. “To cheer you up,” he wrote to Marx, “I am sending you a pamphlet on banks by Professor Geffcken of Strassburg, which belongs to Utin. How clever these people are! And they quote always only their own lousy gang, authorities like Augspurg (who ever heard of the Jew [Jud]?) and the great [Adolf] Wagner, of whom it is said:

*Gilt nichts mehr der Tausves-Jontof,
Was soll gelten? Zeter! Zeter!”*²⁹

Occasionally Engels also mocks at Jewish names. Thus once he calls

²⁴ Engels, “Ungarn,” in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, January 13, 1849, in *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx*, vol. iii, p. 239.

²⁵ *Briefwechsel*, vol. iii, p. 128; vol. ii, p. 121, 210, vol.iii, p. 433; vol. iv, p. 137. About a few Austrian writers “of very indifferent ability, but gifted with that peculiar industrialism [sic] proper to the Jewish race,” cf. Engels, “Germany. IV. Revolution and Counter-Revolution,” *New York Tribune*, November 7, 1851. Cf. also Engels’ letter to Marx, February 11, 1868 (vol. iv, p. 21): “Wiener Literaten, lauter in allen Wassern gewaschene Juden.”

²⁶ *Briefwechsel*, vol. i, p. 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 305.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 432.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 410 (December 5, 1873). The verse is from Heine’s “Disputation” (*Romancero*, pt. iii) and refers to Rabbi Yom Tob Lipmann Heller’s *Tosafoth Yom Tob*, additions or glosses to the six orders of the Mishnah. I could not establish whether the economist, Dietrich W. A. Augspurg was of Jewish origin.

Moses Hess "Mausen";³⁰ at another time he wrote to Marx: "There appeared in Paris a naturalist who calls himself *Chmoulevitch* (Schmulsohn!) This beats even Ephraim Gescheit [Lassalle]." ³¹

A particularly spiteful vocabulary is used in connection with Lassalle. Engels called him by turns "the silly Yid," "Judel Braun," "Ephraim," "Ephraim Gescheit" [Ephraim the Smart], "Excellenz Ephraim Gescheit," "pure Ephraim Gescheit," "Jacob Wieseltier" (weasel beast), "Itzig," "the great Itzig," and posthumously: "Itzig selig" and "Baron Itzig."^{31a}

It would be erroneous to attribute these epithets only to personal animosity of Engels to Lassalle. This animosity undoubtedly sharpened the tongue of Engels, but it is indisputable that for him, Lassalle typified the Jew and particularly the Eastern, the Polish Jew, whom he deeply disliked. Lassalle, Engels agreed, certainly has great talent, yet "as a genuine Jew from the Slavic border, he always was ready, under the pretext of party interests, to exploit everyone for his private ends. His mania for forcing his way into high society, for succeeding, even if only in semblance, in whitewashing with all kinds of pomade and make up [the fact that he is] a greasy Jew (*Jud*) from Breslau, has always been repulsive."³² Lassalle is also characterized by "Jewish impudence"³³ as well as by "Jewish reverence for momentary success."³⁴ In spite of his being one of the most notable political figures in Germany,³⁵ Lassalle was called "the Polish Schmuhl,"³⁶ a nickname which in Engels' mouth was the less flattering as even much later, in 1890, he still considered "the Polish Jew as the caricature of the Jews."³⁷ Let us also recall that Lassalle's Jewishness is held as partly responsible for his tragic end in a duel. "Such a thing could only happen to Lassalle,

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 269 (May 12, 1865).

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 3 (January 6, 1868). The catalog of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, mentions a certain Dr. Ia. M. Chmoulevitch, translator into Russian of several veterinary treatises.

^{31a} *Briefwechsel*, vol. ii, p. 191, 323, 371, 401, 458; vol. iii, p. 47; vol. ii, p. 494, 507; vol. iii, p. 85, 138, 141, 219, 235.

³² *Ibid.*, vol., ii, p. 122.

³³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 494.

³⁴ Engels to Weydemeyer, November 24, 1864, in Marx-Engels, *Sochineniia*, vol. xxv, p. 423.

³⁵ *Briefwechsel*, vol. iii, p. 188.

³⁶ From an undisclosed ms. of Engels, according to Mayer, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 80.

³⁷ Engels to Paul Ernst, June 5, 1890, Marx-Engels, *Sochineniia*, vol. xxviii, p. 221.

with that singular mixture of frivolity and sentimentality, Judaism and knight errantry which was peculiar to him.”³⁸ After all that has been said, it is rather surprising that Engels himself points to the fact that Eugen Dühring, the well-known antisemite, referred to Lassalle as “our Jewish hero.”³⁹

Little attention was paid by Engels to Jewish sufferings. In 1848 he noted in passing that, in Russia, Jews are persecuted in the interest of the indigenous bourgeoisie whose business is spoiled by hawkers.⁴⁰ Twenty years later, he interviewed the above-mentioned Leibel Choras about the persecution of Jews in Moldavia, and arrived at the conclusion that the situation there did not seem to be “too bad.”⁴¹

This is virtually all that can be found on the Jews in the writings of Engels up to 1878. Up to this date, his pronouncements are chiefly contemptuous and, to our knowledge, contain no reference to any positive aspects of Jewish history. Even “the so-called sacred writings of the Jews are nothing more than the record of the old Arabian religious and tribal tradition, modified by the early separation of the Jews from their tribally related but nomadic neighbors.”⁴² Once, he refers, by implication only, to a heroic event in Jewish history. He quotes the following passage from Gneisenau’s memorial of 1811: “The clergy of all denominations are to be ordered, as soon as the war [of liberation against Napoleon] breaks out, to preach insurrection, to paint French oppression in the blackest colours, to remind the people of the Jews under the Maccabees, and to call upon them to follow their example . . .”⁴³

³⁸ *Briefwechsel*, vol. iii, p. 188.

³⁹ Engels, *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (Leipzig 1878) p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. vi, p. 396.

⁴¹ “Gestern kam der unvermeidliche Leibel Choras und verhinderte mich am Schreiben. Ich fragte ihn nach den Judenverfolgungen in der Moldau; er jammerte etwas, aber so arg scheint es nicht zu sein: mir missen’s halt dulden, mir Jiden haben nit die Macht; er wäre gern russisch oder österreichisch, aber es fällt ihm nicht ein fortzugehn, Der Hohenzoller sei ein dummer Junge und die Regierung in der Hand der “Schreiber” (hereuntergekommene Bojaren, die Bureaukratie spielen), und die zwacke die Juden so.” Engels to Marx, May 6, 1868, *Briefwechsel*, vol. iv, p. 52.

⁴² *Briefwechsel*, vol. i, p. 471 (May 18, 1853). Engels reached this conclusion after having read Charles Forster’s *The Historical Geography of Arabia* (London 1844). About Engel’s later views on the Jewish contribution to early Christianity,—which I do not intend to discuss here—see his “Zur Geschichte des Urchristenthums,” in *Neue Zeit* vol. xiii (1894-95).

⁴³ Gneisenau as translated by Engels in his “Prussian Franc-Tireurs,” in *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 9, 1870, reproduced in Engels, *Notes on War* (Vienna 1923) p. 107.

III

From 1878 on, one can perceive a gradual change in the attitude of Engels towards the Jews. In that year, he published his famous *Anti-Dühring*, which contains an important, though casual comment on antisemitism. Dühring is attacked there, among other things, for his rabid Judeophobia.

His hatred of the Jews, [writes Engels] which he carries to ridiculous extremes and exhibits on every possible occasion, is a feature which, if not specifically Prussian, is yet specific to the region east of the Elbe. That same philosopher of reality who has a sovereign contempt for all prejudices and superstitions is himself so deeply imbued with personal crotchets that he calls the popular prejudice against the Jews, inherited from the bigotry of the Middle Ages, a "natural judgement" based on "natural grounds," and he rises to the pyramidal heights of the assertion that "socialism is the only power which can oppose population conditions with a strong Jewish admixture.." (Conditions with a Jewish admixture! What 'natural' German language!) ⁴⁴

Why did Engels denounce antisemitism in his *Anti-Dühring*? To understand his motivation it is sufficient to recollect that Dühring considered Marx as a "member of the same race" as Lassalle and attacked him not only on theoretical but also racial grounds. In the struggle between Marx and Bakunin he saw a manifestation of a "racial contradiction in the International," and a warning that "the emancipation of labor cannot be accomplished in the manner of an Alliance Israélite." He also pointed out that Bakunin's repugnance to Marx's "[Jewish blood and German ballast of erudition]" is "understandable." Furthermore, he noted that one cannot "dismiss the suspicion that obstinate Judaism may still have preserved some residues in him [Marx], despite his own ridicule of certain Jewish authors." ^{44a} None of these "charges" against Marx is quoted by Engels, for the obvious reason that he did

^{44a} Dühring, *Kritische Geschichte der Nationalökonomie und des Sozialismus*, 2nd ed. Cf. also p. 119-20.

^{44a} Dühring, *Kritische Geschichte der National-ökonomie und des Sozialismus*, 2nd ed. (Berlin 1875) p. 529, 572-75.

not want to give them any indirect publicity, realizing well that they would remain unknown to the average reader of *Anti-Dühring*. None the less, to pass them over in complete silence would have been for Engels too great a concession to Dühring's aggressiveness. Hence his summary denunciation of antisemitism. The "charges" against Marx were disposed of by a general confutation of Judeophobia. This was the more sufficient as he accused Dühring of mental incompetence due to megalomania." ⁴⁵

Three years after the publication of *Anti-Dühring*, some anti-Jewish riots occurred in Pomerania (July 1881), and elections to the Reichstag were to be held in October 1881. To keep Engels informed about events, Eduard Bernstein dispatched to him some unspecified antisemitic pamphlets. Engels found them more silly and childish than anything he had ever read. The German antisemitic movement, Engels observed, was initiated by the government to obtain a conservative vote and would collapse, on higher orders, as soon as the elections were over, or even sooner if, as had just happened in Pomerania, it overshot the mark set by the authorities. Such government fostered movements, added Engels, cannot be treated scornfully enough, and the *Sozialdemokrat* did well to treat them so. It is obvious that Engels did not see any great threat in the antisemitism of those days. As if to justify his point of view, he quoted Carl Hirsch, a well-known Social-Democratic publicist, who had reported to him from Berlin that though "the Germans have a natural aversion to the Jews," German workers and progressive petty bourgeois hate the government "more energetically." ⁴⁶

The strongest denunciation of antisemitism was made by Engels in a letter to an unknown correspondent, on April 19, 1890. It was published, in part, with the consent of both but without mentioning the name of the addressee, in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* of May 9, 1890. Relatively little publicity was given to it by socialists and its first reprint appeared, to our knowledge, only after the first World War. ⁴⁷ The addressee, some important Austrian Social-Democratic leader, Engelbert

⁴⁵ Engels, *Herrn Eugen Dührings ... in fine*.

⁴⁶ Engels to Bernstein, August 17, 1881, in *Briefe von F. Engels an E. Bernstein*, p. 24-25.

⁴⁷ Engels, letter to an unknown correspondent, April 19, 1890, in Adler, Victor, *Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe* (Vienna 1822) vol. i, p. 6-8.

Pernerstorfer perhaps,⁴⁸ must have been antisemitically minded, otherwise Engels would not have warned him personally of the dangers of political antisemitism, as he in effect did. "I must leave it to your consideration," he stated emphatically, "whether with antisemitism you will not cause more misfortune than good."⁴⁹ After this introductory remark, Engels observed: "Antisemitism is the distinctive sign of a backward civilization and is, therefore, only found in Prussia and Austria or in Russia."⁵⁰ If pursued in England or the United States, anti-Jewish propaganda would simply be laughed at. In France, Drumont's writings—though incomparably superior to those of the German Judeophobes—provoke only an ineffective one-day sensation. Moreover, Engels thought that Drumont, who was then coming forward as a candidate for the City Council, would himself have to declare that he was as much against Christian as Jewish capital.⁵¹

Who is fomenting antisemitism in Prussia? The *junkers*, who with an income of 10,000 marks spend 20,000 and, therefore, fall into the hands of usurers. Who forms the chorus and screams in unison with them? Both in Prussia and Austria it is the petty bourgeois, the artisan, the small shopkeeper, sinking into ruin because of the competition of large-scale capitalism. Yet if capital destroys these reactionary classes, it is accomplishing its historical function, and whether it is semitic or Aryan, circumcised or baptized, it is doing good work: it is helping the backward Prussians and Austrians in reaching a stage of development in which all the old social differences are resolved into the one great contradiction between capitalists and wage-workers.

Only where this is not yet the case, where there is as yet no strong capitalist class and hence no strong wage-earning class, where capital, being still too weak to get hold of the whole national production, has thus the Stock Exchange as the main scene of its activity, and where, consequently, production is still in the hands of peasants, landowners, artisans, and similar classes surviving from the Middle Ages,—only

⁴⁸ As suggested by Max Ermers, *Victor Adler* (Vienna 1932) p. 230.

⁴⁹ Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

there is capital predominantly Jewish and only there is antisemitism to be found.⁵²

Engels does not furnish any substantial evidence to prove the correctness of his "historico-materialist" analysis of modern antisemitism. He simply says that, among the millionaires of the whole of North America, there is not a single Jew, and that, compared with these Americans, the Rothschilds are real beggars. Even in England, Rothschild is a man of modest means compared, for instance, with the Duke of Westminster. And even in Western Germany, on the Rhine, where are the Jews? asks Engels.

Antisemitism is thus nothing but a reaction of the medieval, perishing strata of society against modern society, which essentially consists of capitalists and wage-earners; under the cloak of apparent socialism it, therefore, only serves reactionary ends; it is a variety feudal socialism and with that we can have nothing to do.⁵³

It seems to be an axiom for Engels that antisemitism is a product of capitalistically undeveloped countries and that it hinders the development of capitalism.⁵⁴ Some Socialists considered that, after all, antisemitism is an anti-capitalist manifestation, and hence favorable to socialism in the long run. Engels tried to show that antisemitism does not favor the socialist cause, because, as long as conditions are not ripe for social revolution, it is not in the interest of socialism to impede the development of capitalism.

Added to this [remarks Engels in a revealing passage] antisemitism falsifies the whole state of affairs. It does not even know the Jews it cries down. Otherwise, it would know that here in England, and in America, thanks to the Eastern European antisemites, and in Turkey, thanks to the Spanish inquisition, there are thousands and thousands of *Jewish proletarians*; and, what is more, these Jewish workers are the worst exploited and most wretched of all. Here in England we had *three* strikes of Jewish workers within the last twelve months, and then are we expected to carry antisemitism as a fight against capital?⁵⁵

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

For the first time, Engels draws attention here to the existence of a Jewish working class. Inasmuch as he lived in London, it is obvious that he refers in the first place, to Jewish workers in Anglo-Saxon countries. Why, however, he mentions the Jewish workers in Turkey rather than those, more numerous, in Eastern Europe, is not clear. However this may be, one easily discerns the sympathetic tone in which he speaks of Jewish workers.

His sympathy is not limited to Jewish proletarians exclusively. Quite apart from Jewish workers, concludes Engels, in a more personal way,

we owe much too much to the Jews. To say nothing of Heine and Börne, Marx was of purest Jewish blood;⁵⁶ Lassalle was a Jew. Many of our best people are Jews. My friend, Victor Adler, who is now sitting in jail in Vienna for his devotion to the cause of the proletariat, Eduard Bernstein,⁵⁷ editor of the London *Sozialdemokrat*, Paul Singer, one of our best men in the Reichstag—people of whose friendship I am proud, are all —Jews! Have I not been turned into a Jew myself by the *Gartenlaube*.⁵⁸ And indeed if I had to choose, then rather a Jew than “Herr von . . .”⁵⁹

Whatever he wrote on the Jews after 1890 is only casual but none the less permeated with a new spirit. He no longer singles out *Jewish* bourse-wolves. “Rothschilds and Vanderbilts”⁶⁰ are treated alike. He still sees in the Polish Jew “the representative in Europe of commerce in its lowest stages,”—but envisages his “pettifogging business tricks” as

⁵⁶ This seems to be the only exception to the otherwise correct statement of I. Berlin (*Karl Marx*, London, 1939, p. 236): “the fact that he [Marx] was a Jew neither he nor Engels ever mention.” Even as late as 1884, Engels commenting on Lawrence Gronlund’s *The Cooperative Commonwealth* (Boston 1884, p. 50) wrote to Bernstein: “Marx is not quoted, but is only said: ‘such noble Jews as Marx and Lassalle.’ Au weih!” *Briefe von F. Engels an E. Bernstein*, p. 154.

⁵⁷ Some of his qualities are explained by his Jewish origin: Engels to Bebel, January 20, 1886, in Marx-Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel* (Moscow 1933) vol. i, p. 427.

⁵⁸ A popular German antisemitic magazine.

⁵⁹ Engels, in Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Engels, Preface (1892) to his *Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (London 1892) p. viii. Cf. also his letter to Sorge, December 31, 1892, full text in Marx-Engels, *Correspondence 1846-1895* (New York 1934) p. 503; abridged in view of censorship in *Briefe . . . an Sorge* p. 387 (for an explanation of the word “*Löwe-Judenflinten*” used by Engels, cf. *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, 366, VII, 162.

a characteristic of capitalist production in its early stages rather than a peculiarity of the Jews as such.⁶¹ He was favourably impressed by the American-Jewish labor leader, Abraham Cahan, or “the Jewish apostle,”⁶² as he called him. At the request of Cahan, who then intended to prepare a Yiddish translation of the Communist Manifesto, Engels promised to write a preface for it.⁶³ He not only does not tolerate anti-semitism any longer, but censures it even if it manifests itself among workers. In a letter to Sorge, he does not feel happy about the opposition of the English dockers to the immigration of what they called “foreign paupers,” meaning, in fact, Russian Jews.⁶⁴ At the end of 1894, he warned the French comrades not to make untenable promises to peasants and handicraftsmen, such as guaranteeing to them the ownership of their land or small shops; such promises are worthy of antisemitic demagogues but not of consistent socialists. To make such pledges would mean “to degrade the party to the level of rowdy antisemitism.”⁶⁵ If peasants and artisans do want such pledges, let them go where they belong, namely to the antisemites. There they may learn of how much consequence are the “splendid phrases” of the antisemites and “what tunes are played by the fiddles of which the antisemitic heaven is full.”⁶⁶

Even in his last years, when he showed a greater interest in Jews than ever before, Engels did not examine their ethnic or national character. Of the bulk of the Jewish people, then concentrated in Russia, he only says, in another connection, that the tsarist government had turned them also into deadly enemies of the regime.⁶⁷ Yet from a casual pro-

⁶¹ Engels Preface (1892) to his *Condition of the Working-Class*, p. v-vi. Cf. also his letter to Florence K. Wischnewetzky, March 12, 1886, in Marx-Engels, *Sochineniia*, vol. xxvii, p. 544.

⁶² Engels to Sorge, September 14, 1891, in *Briefe... an Sorge*, p. 368. On the other hand, Georg Adler, author of an anti-Marxian book (*Die Grundlagen der Karl Marx'schen Kritik...*, Tübingen, 1887), is described by Engels as a “miserable Jewish apostate” (Engels to Danielson, January 5, 1888, in *Die Briefe von Marx und Engels an Danielson*, Leipzig, 1929, p. 44).

⁶³ Cahan, *Bleter*, vol. iii, p. 265.

⁶⁴ *Briefe... an Sorge*, p. 365 (August 9, 1891).

⁶⁵ Engels, “Die Bauernfrage in Frankreich und Deutschland,” in *Neue Zeit*, vol. xiii (1894-1895) 303.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁶⁷ Engels, *Kann Europa abrüsten?* (*Separatdruck aus dem Vorwärts* 1893) (Leipzig 1929) p. 20.

nouncement made in 1892, one may infer that, contrary to what he had thought of the Jews in 1852,⁶⁸ he now considered them as a distinct nationality. In fact, dealing with the exceptional position of the native workers in the United States, Engels noted, in a letter to Herman Schlüter, that the American “bourgeoisie knows much better than the Austrian government how to play off one *nationality* against the other: *Jews*, *Italians*, *Czechs*, etc., against *Germans* and *Irish* . . .”⁶⁹ This clearly involves the recognition of the Jews as a nationality apart.

There is no record left to show what, if anything, Engels thought of the national aspirations of the Jews. Even Hess’ *Rom und Jerusalem* (1862) is not mentioned by Engels. The two friends had parted many years before the book was published and did not see each other after May 1848.⁷⁰ Yet Engels showed so little understanding and sympathy for small nations that there can be no doubt that he would have considered Hess’ Zionist ideas, at best, as the fantastic utopia of a dreamer.

IV

From the preceding pages, it is clear that during the latter part of his life—from 1878 on—Engels gradually turned from an antisemite into a staunch enemy of antisemitism. Four main factors of personal as well as of an objective nature seem to explain this about-face.

(1) As a close friend of Marx, who was attacked by Dühring on theoretical and racial grounds, Engels—in his polemic against the German philosopher and antisemite—could not limit himself to doctrinal issues only. He also had to take into account the racial “charges” against the author of *Das Kapital*, which, incidentally, had also been made a few years earlier by Bakunin. This was the more necessary as Dühring was very popular in German Social-Democratic circles, particularly in the years 1875 to 1877.⁷¹ The easiest and the most logical procedure for

⁶⁸ See *supra*, footnote, 23.

⁶⁹ Engels to Schlüter, March 30, 1892, *Briefe . . . an Sorge*, p. 281. Italics mine.

⁷⁰ Engels to Kautsky, December 2, 1885, in Marx-Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel . . .* (Moscow 1933) vol. i, p. 420.

⁷¹ Riazanov, D. B., “Fünzig Jahre Anti-Dühring,” in *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, vol. ii (1928) 466-74. Dühring was also popular among Russian socialists; *ibid.*, p. 476-80.

Engels was to condemn antisemitism *in toto*, and thus to get rid of the necessity to refute antisemitic “charges” in detail. This was done by Engels in 1878.

(2) From what is known about Marx’s daughter, Eleanor Marx-Aveling (“Tussy”), whom Engels treated as if she were his own child, one may infer that she very probably contributed to his reorientation. Both Engels and “Tussy” lived in London, at that time an important center of Jewish immigration with a lively Jewish labor movement. How she got in touch with that movement cannot be ascertained. It is, however, known that in 1887 Engels encouraged a small group of his followers, including “Tussy,” to start a campaign in the East End of London, with a view to establishing trade unions for the great mass of poor, unskilled workers.^{71a} She agitated in the radical clubs, and her work was successful.^{71b} Here in the East End, “that immense haunt of misery,” Tussy must have met, perhaps for the first time, Jewish workers. She was frequently seen at the Jewish Socialist Club in Berner Street, in the late ‘eighties, and, even more frequently, in the early ‘nineties, after the Club, having separated itself from the Anarchists, moved to Christian Street.⁷² She is reported to have learned Yiddish in order to take active part in the Jewish labor movement.⁷³ Abraham Cahan, Morris Vinchevsky, and Eduard Bernstein, who all knew her personally, were all struck by her definite consciousness of being a Jewess. Cahan reported that in 1891, she told him: “We Jews have a special duty to work for the working class.”⁷⁴ He also adds that she liked to speak of herself as being a Jewess,⁷⁵ though in fact she was only half-Jewish. During the International Socialist Congress at Zurich (1893) she said—though half-jokingly—to Vinchevsky, delegate of Jewish trade unions in London: “We Jews

^{71a} Mayer, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 406.

^{71b} *Briefe von F. Engels an E. Bernstein*, p. 192 (May 5, 1887); Engels to Sorge, December 7, 1889, June 10, August 9, 1891, in *Briefe . . . an Sorge*, p. 324, 363, 366.

⁷² Vinchevsky, Morris, “Eleanor Marx,” in his *Gezamelte Verk*, vol. viii (New York 1927) p. 194-95.

⁷³ Winogradasgaia, P., *Jenny Marx (von Westphalen) (in Russian) (Moscow 1933)* p. 126.

⁷⁴ Cahan, *Bleter*, vol. iii, p. 119.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

must stick together.⁷⁶ When he observed that many a socialist cannot imagine that Jewish workers do exist, she was glad to draw the attention of the congress to the fact that he was there representing just such workers.⁷⁷ Bernstein reported, after her death, that she used to start her speeches to the workers with the words: "I am a Jewess."⁷⁸ He also pointed out that her sympathy was not limited to Jewish proletarians, but extended to persecuted Jews of all social classes.⁷⁹

Under these circumstances, one can hardly escape the conclusion that "Tussy," by frequent insistence on her own Jewish origin, and by reporting to Engels on her experience with the Jewish labor movement, drew his attention to the Jews, and thus contributed, directly or indirectly, to his reorientation in the Jewish question.

(3) The rising wave of antisemitism in Germany, and even more in Austria, could not escape Engels' attention. Since the antisemites fought also against the socialists, the latter had to think about measures of self-protection, so much the more as some of their outstanding leaders, Marx, Lassalle, Bernstein, Singer, Victor Adler were of Jewish origin. By 1890, if not earlier, Engels must have realized that antisemitism is, to some extent at least, a dangerous rival of social-democracy, and that to denounce it means also to defend socialism.

(4) The emergence of a Jewish labor movement was another important factor responsible for Engels' reorientation. London, where he resided, harbored tens of thousands of Jewish workers. They immigrated in increasing numbers from Russia and Poland after the pogroms of 1881. So miserable was the condition of their life under the "sweating system," that an English magazine in 1884 drew attention to the extreme

⁷⁶ Vinchevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 199. She also volunteered to furnish Vinchevsky with materials on her father that only she possessed (*ibid.*). It is a great loss, perhaps an irreparable one, that he did not take advantage of this unique opportunity, and did not inquire at all about her father's attitude toward the Jews.

⁷⁸ Bernstein, "Eleanor Marx," in *Neue Zeit*, vol. xvi, pt. ii (1898) 122.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

poverty of some 30,000 Russo-Polish Jews huddled together in the overcrowded districts of London.⁸⁰ Ten years later the number of Jews in London was officially estimated at 80,000, most of them being workers.⁸¹ They were organized in several trade unions, and had their own organs in Yiddish as well as a well-known club in Berner Street, already referred to. They struck not infrequently for higher wages or better working conditions.⁸² There can be no doubt that Engels was aware of these facts. His reading of Yiddish must have made it easier for him to keep informed about the Jewish labor movement in England as well as in the United States. The existence of such a movement obviously could not fail to affect his position towards the Jews. It is true that he had no particular connections with Jewish labor groups.⁸³ None the less, he could not, as he had done in the past, continue to identify Jews with exploiters. These were the reasons why Engels reversed his stand on the Jews. Once freed from many, if not all, prejudices against them, he fought antisemitism more consistently and courageously than many a socialist, Jew or Gentile. This is evident especially in view of the events at the second International Socialist congress at Brussels in 1891. While Engels had unconditionally condemned antisemitism in 1890, the congress did it only half-heartedly and in a very diluted form, since it was afraid of being accused of favoring the Jews. Abraham Cahan made a motion that antisemitism be condemned outright. Because of this, Victor Adler, supported by Paul Singer, reproached him with "tactlessness,"⁸⁴ and the congress, after hearing two French socialists, Regnard and Argyriadès, voted a hybrid resolution condemning both "antisemitic and philosemitic

⁸⁰ "Report . . . on the Polish Colony of Jew Tailors," in *The Lancet* (May 3, 1884) 817-18.

⁸¹ Soloweitschik, L., *Un prolétariat méconnu. Étude sur la situation sociale et économique des ouvriers juifs* (Brussels 1898) p. 29. Cf. also Halperin, G., *Die jüdischen Arbeiter in London* (Stuttgart 1903).

⁸² Burgin, H., *Di geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeterbavegung* (New York 1915) p. 41, 46, 54, 251, 254.

⁸³ An appeal made to Engels (1893) by an otherwise unknown "Association of Jewish Socialists" in Russia had nothing to do with matters Jewish. cf. Tschirikower, A., in *Yivo Historische Shriften*, vol. iii (1939) 798-800.

⁸⁴ Cahan, *Bleter*, vol. iii, p. 162.

excitation.”⁸⁵ Engels’ criticism of antisemitism was also more far-seeing, because he does not seem to have thought, as did the German Social-Democrats at their congress at Cologne (1893), that antisemitism, in spite of its reactionary character, plays “after all” a “revolutionary” role.⁸⁶ In contradistinction to many of his comrades, he thus avoided making a virtue of necessity.

⁸⁵ *Congrès International Ouvrier Socialiste tenu à Bruxelles du 16 au 23 août 1891.* (Brussels 1893) p. 44: “tout en condamnant les excitations antisémitiques et philosémitiques...”

⁸⁶ Cf. the Cologne resolution on antisemitism, in Schröder, W., ed., *Handbuch der sozialdemokratischen Parteitage von 1863-1909* (Munich 1910) p. 35-36.