

Karl Marx: Anti-Semite

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Karl Marx was not only Jewish, he was descended from an established rabbinical family. His father had abandoned the practice of Judaism in order to function more freely in and with the newly established Prussian state, and in order to attract more clients to his law practice. Biographers do agree that age-old Jewish traditions continued to run deep in Herschel Marx's family long after he had ceased attending the synagogue. Karl Marx probably had no formal ties with Judaism, but he was acutely aware of its theology and its traditions. Lack of formal practice cannot here be equated with ignorance. Indeed, Karl Marx apparently had studied the bases of all Western religions throughout his life.

As a "Young Hegelian," commonly known as the Hegelians of the Left, Marx had been exposed to the often bizarre interpretations of organized religion. Among the earliest of his publications was *The Holy Family*, little more than a plagiarism of the leftist Hegelian leader Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. It was in the juvenile *Holy Family* that Marx coined the oft-quoted phrase "Religion is the opiate of the people." The idea was hardly original with him. It was a reasonably cogent summation of one of the principal of Feuerbach's ideas, which was that man is alienated from himself by virtue of his dependence on God. By concentrating on God and by assuring himself that God will right all wrongs and reward all sufferings in the next world, man is said to fail to realize that he can correct injustice and prevent the evils of the world in this world by and through his own efforts. Religion has a narcotic effect by soothing us so that we do not mind that we are miserable. All our sufferings, trials and tribulations, sorrows and despair are part of a divine plan wherewith we work out our salvation; thus they are to be accepted and cherished, not defeated or circumvented or prevented.

The Holy Family was an attack on all religion, without prejudice against any one specific variety. There was no real attempt in it to separate Christianity from Judaism. Inasmuch as many of the Young Hegelians were apostate Jews, some had shown especial concern for the status of Judaism, but not prejudice against Jews for religious reasons. Hence, in a sense, freedom from religion was really a form of release for Jews. These leftist followers of George William Frederick Hegel assumed that without any religion in the new state there would be no point of separation between Jews and Gentiles, ex-Christians and ex-Jews. The onus of "Christ killer" would no longer be meaningful, any more than accusations leveled against any other group for killing any other individual or group of individuals. Indeed, Christ as a rejected symbol of false hope would be killed for a second time, and at least this second death would be the cause of liberation, rejoicing and new hope for the suffering masses. With most of this Marx could wholeheartedly agree. Christ had to die a second time, and this time there would be no resurrection. Marx agreed that without religion there could and would be no religious persecutions and prejudices. This was a sound example of an analytic logic in which he had great faith.

But there were parts of the argument put by the Young Hegelians with which Marx totally disagreed. And this disagreement marks the first clear-cut application of Marx's anti-Semitism. The Jew would and could not change his character and habits any more than a tiger could shed its stripes. Marx concluded that Judaism was more than possible even without God, the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant, or the Bible. Judaism had nothing, or at least very little, to actually do with God or religion. It was essentially a *cultural* phenomenon, based on the acquisition of material wealth. It was a system of cultural and religious deception whose real concern was capital, bullion, currency - in short, whatever the coin of the realm or the currency of the era presented or valued. With this, Marx has a somewhat original idea to present to his fellow Hegelians of the Left. He had not merely copied this insight from Moses Hess, Bruno Bauer, Lorenz von Stein, or Feuerbach. He had added the popular perception of the times and, as an intellectual and a cultural and ethnic, if not religious, Jew, he presented the argument in a form somewhat

more articulate than that of the streetcorner pamphleteer.

The apostate Jew and direct descendant of a long line of rabbis, Karl Marx, had provided powerful ammunition for the Jew-baiter and the anti-Semite among the apostate Jewish community of intellectuals at the German universities. He had spoken the unspeakable and had challenged the fundamentals of religion. He had in fact created a racist theory second to none among the intellectuals of the nineteenth century on the European continent. There is nothing in Arthur de Gobineau or in Houston Stewart Chamberlain that is more powerful or damning in its content with reference to Jews than Marx's *On The Jewish Question* (1843), also known as *A World Without Jews*.

This odd little book on the "Jewish Question" was written in response to Dr. Bruno Bauer's *The Jewish Question* (1843), also known as *The Capacity of Today's Jews and Christians to Become Free*. Marx's booklet has had a curious publishing history. The first unexpurgated English translation did not appear until made available through the clearly anti-Zionist Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow about 1955. Then the Philosophical Library published an English edition (1959) with a curious and apologetic introduction by the press's editor, Dagobert Runes. German and other editions are scarce, save for those distributed by the communist state press.

More intriguing than the scarce-availability of the book is the fact that most scholars have either seemed acutely unaware of its existence, or have simply chosen to ignore it. Certainly, the booklet does not fit in well with the secular humanistic and liberationist theological picture of Karl Marx as the great humanitarian and liberator of the oppressed. Truly, the work presents an obstacle. How can Marx be presented as the champion of all that is good and right in the world when he was in fact so unalterably opposed to Jews and Judaism? A passing remark here or there might be excused; a whole essay *on* - and *of* - nothing but anti-Semitism is an entirely different matter and a more complex question. The liberal-left is no more able to cope with *A World Without Jews* than is the communist world able to deal with Marx's bitter attacks on Russia, in his several essays denouncing Russian communist movements which have been collectively published as *Marx Against Russia*.

Marx made specific charges against the Jews in his polemic. Jews worship Mammon, not God. Jews practice usury. Their true religion is predicated upon the acquisition of money through any and all means. The emancipation of all Europeans means the emancipation from Jewry: "emancipation from usury and money, that is, from practical, real Judaism, would constitute the emancipation of our time." Jews seek to control the world through the control of money: "What is the object of the Jew's worship in this world? Usury. What is his worldly god? Money. . . . What is the foundation of the Jew in this world? Practical necessity, private advantage. . . . The bill of exchange is the Jew's real God. His God is the illusory bill of exchange." Marx further alleges: "Money is the one zealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may stand. Money degrades all the gods of mankind and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-constituted value set upon all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world, of both nature and man, of its original value. Money is the essence of man's life and work which have become alienated from him: this alien monster rules him and he worships it."

It is from such statements as these, and from the basic tenets of *A World Without Jews*, that we discover some of the reasons for the mass appeal of National Socialism among the German working class to which Marxism-Leninism had once appealed. The fundamental and overriding racism of Marx himself helped to create an atmosphere in which Alfred Rosenberg's *Zur Protokollen wisen Zionismus* could be accepted. The anti-Semitism of the master communist planner and theorist - and Jew - Karl Marx, helped to create the preconditions for the later acceptance of Alfred Rosenberg's many conclusions about Jews in *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

There is no clear and direct charge in *A World Without Jews* of a universal Jewish conspiracy. Marx's work lacks the charge of clear-cut direction of and central control over the Jewish community contained in *The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*. But only that separates the two works. Both agree in the fundamentals of a Jewish mammonistic approach to the world and its

inhabitants. Both agree that Judaism is nothing more - or less - than a form of money-grabbing and money-worshipping secularism. Judaism's culture, the two works agree, is a pseudo-culture that seeks only material gain for its adherents.

Marx believed that man originally was good and that he naturally looked at all objects as an extension of his self. Objects were weighed according to the good that could accrue in the sense of self-fulfillment and in terms of providing a unified and integrated man, or, as Marx might prefer to put it, in terms of guaranteeing that man would not become alienated from himself. Alienation is the basis of man's illness, in the Marxist paradigm. The "Jewish mentality" that seeks only material gain from objects is necessarily productive of alienation. Man reduces objects to their monetary value. One does not keep that which has no value, unless he cannot sell it; one sells for money and for riches anything that he has, and disregards the cost in loss of self (self-alienation). Marx charged that even mother or wife is thereby reduced to a monetary transaction, thought of in terms of gains and losses. "Even the relations between the sexes, between man and woman, becomes an object of commerce. The woman is auctioned off."

The world of aesthetics is reduced to a world of monetary gain. A painting is great because it can command a large price. An opera or other musical composition is judged according to its salability. Poetry and prose is to be valued for its market potential, not for its thoughts, expressions or beauty. Thus, a pornographic work may become greater than a true creation of inspired genius because its market potential is greater. Beyond market considerations, art has no value. Marx accuses the Jewish religion of having nothing but "contempt for. . . art, history and man." The Jew "cannot create a new world," be it an historical one or one of aesthetic escapism; he can merely calculate how the world might be turned into a profit. Other men create, while the Jew, Marx assures us, can only create the marketplace in which creative products are to be sold; he creates a scale of values by which to measure in terms of money the worth of a creation.

The rampant materialism which Marx abhorred - despite his own materialism and economic determinism - was the work of the earth-centered Jew. Marx concluded that the Gentile had created capitalism, but the Jew had perfected its marketing potentials. In short: without the Jew, capitalism would have been an entirely different phenomenon. The Gentile had to create it because the Jew could not conceive any new worlds on his own, but the Jew could turn capitalism into a wholly materialistic and money-oriented system based on gain at any cost.

An obscure essay by Alfred Rosenberg, *The Earth-Centered Jew Lacks a Soul*, has much the same theme: The Jew made capitalism into an earth-centered system that is thoroughly dehumanizing. He had created an atmosphere in which he and many Gentiles operated. Competition forced the non-Jew to perform his business functions like the Jew -or fail. If the modern capitalist state would continue even without Jews, Rosenberg concluded, it would be as it is now because the Jew had removed the soul from the system. Economics was no longer moral; it was a system with no soul. It had been successfully divorced from moral philosophy. One knew Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, but not his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. If the capitalist system was to survive intact, in the form with which men were familiar, the Jew would survive as the archetype of the capitalist man.

Neither Rosenberg nor Marx attempted an apology for the status of the "earth-centered Jew." There was no historical tracing of the *why* of it all: of the prejudices and restrictions that may have forced the Jew into money lending or commerce. The Jew was not as he was depicted by these critics because of conditions that were dehumanizing and beyond his control. The Jew was as he was, they agreed, because that is the way of all Jews: it is a racial-cultural characteristic that cannot in any way be altered or ameliorated.

A World Without Jews was not an isolated work in the sense that it alone contained Marx's anti-Jewish thoughts and positions. Other essays such as *The Class Struggle in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* contained strong statements indicting the Jews for various crimes against humanity. Even in *The German Ideology* one finds occasional statements like "It is

the circumvention of the law that makes the religious Jew a religious Jew." His dislike for rival socialist leader Ferdinand Lassalle prompted Marx to refer to that writer as "Juden Itzig [Jew-Nigger]."

What emerged from Marx was a clear condemnation of both Jews and Judaism. They had been wholly identified with all the worst elements of capitalism, most notably exploitation of the workers and the manipulation of money in the practice of usury. Marx did not state precisely whether he would have preferred a refabrication of society - without the Jews or whether it would have been sufficient to merely remove the "Jewish mentality."

The portion of the communist program relating to the confiscation of alien property, as given in Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, has been thought by some to relate to the expropriation of Jewish property. This is debatable, but it is a curious addition to that document, whatever the rationale for its inclusion. The overall weight of evidence suggests that the "liberation from Judaism" of which Marx wrote so often is the liberation of society generally from Jews, rather than the liberation of Jews from an earth-centered climate of opinion. "The emancipation of our time," Marx wrote, "means the emancipation from practical Jewry."

We must not think of Marx's racism as confined merely to his baiting of Jews. Marx was a true European of his time, and for him no race save the Caucasian had established itself, committed deeds that might be recorded in history. The yellow and black races were definitely excluded from history, having had no role in the development of the world or of the idea of history.

Marx never, however, wrote anything attacking other races or peoples comparable to his attacks on the Jews. There exists bits and pieces of racist rhetoric, such as his use of the term *Itzig*, which can be translated best as "nigger." Even had Marx been a more productive and wide-ranging writer, and his attention been drawn more to other nations and other peoples, there seems little doubt that he would indeed have shrunk away from writing something such as Carlyle's *Disquisition on the Nigger Question*.

A careful reading of Marxism does reveal what, though not explicitly stated, Marx's "line" was on these matters. The Proletarian Revolution will not occur in nations of the undeveloped, non-Caucasian (as we call it now, Third) world. Marx often named the nations in which his thought and prognosis were applicable: Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, Holland, and other European or Caucasian nations. Marx never included in his grand schematic the nations of the Far East, Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa.

The exclusion of Russia from his system provides a good insight into his thinking. If Russia was to be considered a European nation then it might, at least one day in the future, be subject to the dialectical and historical stages of progress and development through which the remainder of the European nations had passed or were passing. If Russia were, however, Asiatic, at least in the main, it would not pass through the stages and progressions of other nations built and inhabited by Caucasians.

The man who invented the Dialectic, G.W.F. Hegel, had made no provision for applying the dialectical operations of his *Weltgeist* (World-Spirit) to nations other than those traditionally grouped as "Western Civilization." Marx did not choose to alter this in his own construction. If the Dialectic does not operate in a nation, that nation is quintessentially outside history. Events still occur and time passes, but nothing of true historical meaning or value can pass.

It remained for other Marxist-socialist theorists to excise or cover-up the racist remarks in the writings of Karl Marx, and to establish a worldwide appeal for Marxism. Friedrich Engels was able to establish something of a historic and revolutionary role for Third World nations, and Lenin included them in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. The German socialist Eduard Bernstein removed anti-Semitic remarks from Marx's *Letters to Engels*. It remains that *A World Without Jews* is unknown to all but a handful in the West. Racist remarks in other of Marx's works have been excised by sympathetic editors or passed over apologetically with the flip explanation

that Marx was doing nothing more than reflecting the prejudices of his time and place.

But Soviet communism has in fact returned to its anti-Semitic roots. Theoretically the Soviet communist state allows the practice of Judaism, while opposing political Zionism. And it is most interesting that the distinction made in Soviet Russia and in other communist satellite nations between the "Sabbath Jew" and the "Zionist Jew" is remarkably similar to the distinction made in National Socialist Germany between the practicing Jew and the earth-centered, irreligious Jew.

Bibliographical Note

The primary source for the racist theories of Karl Marx is his *A World Without Jews* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), which was edited and translated by Dagobert D. Runes. Since Runes made reference to the official Soviet edition of the same work we may safely assume that this undated edition published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow was done before 1959. Of the other works in which Marx made passing references to Jews, editions abound. These works include: *The German Ideology*, *The Class Struggle in France*, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, and *Letters to Engels*. Many of the letters were published in L. Feuer (ed.), *Marx and Engels: Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (Anchor Books). The Foreign Languages Publishing House editions of Marx's many works tend to be accurate and inexpensive.

One of the first discussions in English of Marx's anti-Semitism was Zygmund Dobbs, "Karl Marx: Father of Modern Anti-Semitism," *Plain Talk* (September 1949). The fundamental secondary source for Marx's racism and anti-Semitism is Nathaniel Weyl, *Karl Marx: Racist* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1979).

On the parallels to Alfred Rosenberg in National Socialist Germany, consult Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (Torrance Calif.: Noontide Press, 1982). Rosenberg's essay "The Earth-Centered Jew Lacks a Soul" is found in George Masse, *Nazi Culture* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966) and in J.B. Whisker (ed., trans.), *National Socialist Ideology: Concepts and Ideas* (Greensboro, North Carolina: W.U.N. Press, 1979).

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