WILHELM MARR

THE PATRIARCH OF ANTISEMITISM

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Introduction

Historians, psychologists, sociologists, and publicists have invested a great deal of effort in the study and evaluation of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, without paying much attention to the anti-Semites. Were it not for Hitler, Wagner, and a few other "chosen," it is doubtful whether we would have gained any insight into the working of the minds and the frame of reference of those for whom anti-Semitism was the be all and end all, the raison d'être. It would not be hard to surmise how far the study of the sources of Hitler's anti-Semitism would have reached had its subject been a "regular" anti-Semite and not the demon that brought all Europe to its knees. Here is proof: Streicher, the prototype of the most vulgar kind of anti-Semitism, earned the right to a serious biography only in 1974, and little more has been written about him since. Works dealing with Eichmann focused more on the key to the problem of the human automaton than on the question of the man's anti-Semitic motivation. By the same token, the prominent nineteenth-century anti-Semites who did not excel in anything but their "chosen vocation" were never honored with biographies. And so it happened that the personality of Wilhelm Marr, the man who rightly called himself the "patriarch of anti-Semitism," was never given any biographical coverage. Paradoxically enough, the Hebrew version of Marr's biography appeared at the same time as G. Field's biography of H. S. Chamberlain who, despite his renown as a racist and an anti-Semite, had not been given the appropriate scientific attention before.

Several explanations suggest themselves for the relatively wide interest in anti-Semitism and the limited interest in anti-Semites. First, political, social, and cultural anti-Semitism was, and still is, considered symptomatic of fundamental phenomena in human society and history such as nationalism, fascism, or racism. Consequently, it is only natural that the research and analysis that focus on these important historical phenomena should concentrate on these symptoms. Furthermore, because social scientists are

aware of the existence of these phenomena and processes, they have developed tools for their analysis. Thus it has been possible to analyze and to relate to the specific phenomenon of anti-Semitism on the general level. This awareness has developed, as could be expected, mainly after the Second World War, in the wake of the holocaust of European Jewry, and therefore the historical research has been carried out in the special mood characteristic of that period.

Concerning the research produced in Germany, the problem is even more complicated: Until the beginning of the 1960's, anti-Semitism was a concept whose study was overshadowed by the collective bad conscience; more than that, it was a dirty word. Since that time, anti-Semitism has received systematic conceptual treatment, and yet one cannot quite ignore the suspicion that some of the German social scientists are using the research in a surreptitious attempt to clear the collective conscience. While striving to achieve this aim, they often obscure the importance of anti-Semitism by associating it with more general sociological and psychological terms, such as those mentioned previously, or by subordinating it to phenomenological classifications such as "minorities" or "prejudices."

Focus on anti-Semitism as a phenomenon or as a symptom implies lack of interest in the individual anti-Semites, and thus the specific interest in anti-Semitic activities or in anti-Semites becomes marginal. The prevailing attitude is that the social scientist aiming at a high level of generalization has no use for private careers of single anti-Semites. Moreover, if the purpose of the research is to treat anti-Semitism as a collective issue, and if the historians commit themselves to the sociopsychological classifications, then the study of the lives of individual anti-Semites—as long as they do not add up to a group profile—is of doubtful value at best.

There are, of course, also prosaic explanations for the scarcity of biographical studies of this sort: in contrast to anti-Semitism, which was considered an important social and ideological manifestation, the anti-Semites appeared only as the scum of the earth. There was obvious reluctance to write biographies of worthless anti-Semites, and even nowadays, in the era of the revival of great historical biographies, historians prefer writing about "great" men, usually men who caused great damage to mankind—such as Hitler, Wallenstein, or Bismarck—rather than writing about "small fry" or people who were usually only potential murderers. However, historians writing dissertations usually prefer biographies of "lesser" but "respectable" men; a socialist of secondary importance is certainly better than an anti-Semite.

There is also the question of sources. It is quite difficult to find sufficient material on people who were not meant to leave much documentation behind them, and the truth should be told: had I not found the papers of Wilhelm Marr—the anti-Semite who is the subject of this book—it would not have occurred to me to write his biography. Nevertheless, it is surpris-

ing that his huge *Nachlass* has lain in the Archives of Hamburg for
seventy-five years, without challenging even those who made use of it to
initiate a study of the personality of the man who is considered the orig-
inator of the term "anti-Semitism."

   At first sight one could claim that, after all, the study of anti-Semitism
has dealt with the biographical aspect at least from two points of view.
On the one hand, we find the psychoanalytic study of anti-Semitism: the
relation between the Oedipus complex and anti-Semitism, between the in-
hibition of the lust for patricide and anti-Semitism, or between fear of
castration and anti-Semitism. However, the scientific psychohistoric litera-
ture on the subject (except for the kind dealing with the man Hitler)
remains on the level of generalization. The application of those theories
rests with the biography writer who, like myself, has the unenviable task
of reconstructing the facts to prove their accuracy. On the other hand, we
find the historical study of anti-Semitism, which in itself is not as extensive
as we would like to think. This form of research uses biographical ele-
ments in an attempt to deduct from them to the general level. Nonetheless,
biographical glimpses of this sort serve only as an insignificant background
to "anti-Semitism per se." In those instances when there is no biographical
study available, the historical study mainly contents itself with flashes of
insight, lacking in relevancy and accuracy. Wilhelm Marr the man, who
is our concern, is neither relevant nor revealing in most instances where
his name was mentioned. His contribution to the development of anti-
Semitism descends on the researcher and his reader mainly as a case of
deus ex machina, leaving the riddle unsolved.

   There is no doubt in my mind that biographical studies, including
this one, aid in the analysis of anti-Semitism as a historical phenomenon.
The study of Marr's personality serves to illuminate anti-Semitism from a
biographical perspective, and the starting point of this biographical study—
in contrast to those mentioned previously—is the concept of anti-Semitism
as defined and expounded by this figure. It will become apparent to the
reader that the biographical details mentioned until now in historical
literature in connection with Marr the man and his well-known book *Sieg
des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* reveal very little of the complex
personality hidden behind a complex problem. The abundant material on
the man who was usually characterized as a minor figure reveals the broad
sphere of influence within which anti-Semitism worked. Wilhelm Marr is
a figure standing at an important crossroad in German history: he was a
prominent activist in the revolutionary movement during the restoration
regime in the 1840's and a friend of the father of German socialism,
Wilhelm Weitling; a known politician in the revolution of 1848 and one
of Mazzini's circle, he corresponded with Bismarck and waged a personal
war against the leader of the movement for Jewish emancipation, Gabriel
Riesser. Here is a man who experienced the old order and the new, who
was involved in the world of artists and writers, and made a name for

himself as a politician. His biography is not of secondary importance; it throws light on the complexity of relationships within which anti-Semitism evolved and developed. The context, the connection, these are the key-words: anti-Semitism and its patriarch are no longer limited to the infe-riority complex developed by a man through his conflict with Jews, but are part and parcel of the complexity of German and European history of the nineteenth century, in the broadest sense of the word. A biography of this kind also proves the futility of attempting to distinguish between Jewish history and "general" history, and clearly demonstrates the unity of these histories.

But because only the widest sphere of reference lends significance to the anti-Semite, I have resorted, though sometimes indirectly, to the methods used by modern social history. Fundamental in the composition of this biography are the guidelines and terminology of sociologists and psychologists. I show, for instance, that the prejudice in this specific case is actually linked to downward social mobility, or that Marr's criticism of the Jews is a projection of his personal failures and inclinations, or a symptom of his paranoia. But I will not indulge in these explanations at every step, to avoid closing the door on a variety of potential interpreta-tions or lapsing into dilettantism, and especially not to disrupt the flow of the story. Suffice it to say that the facts have been put together in such a way as to suit any person following any of these paths in search of an explanation for the evolution of anti-Semitism and the shaping of the anti-Semite.

In this book I deal not only with the basic question in the study of anti-Semitism—how and why it emerges and works—but also with a more specific question: how was the term "anti-Semitism" coined and circulated until it became the sine qua non of the international vocabulary. It is the study of Wilhelm Marr—the man who spread this term on the waters of propaganda—which will make possible the semantic and historical analysis of the development of anti-Semitism. We shall examine in detail the in-fluence of the term "anti-Semitism" on the phenomenon called before Marr's time simply "hatred of the Jews," while refuting some of the con-ventional clichés on the subject. Another matter I would like to clarify at this point is that a man like Marr does not necessarily justify a detailed biographical study unless it is certain that his personality is worth study-ing. References made to Marr in works written so far seem to exclude an examination of his personality. But this is a false impression. Despite his failings and his failures, Marr has earned the right to be examined. Here is a man who is intelligent, analytical, universal, and learned, a man who fought fanatically for his opinions. This is apparent not only in his writ-ings but, according to the graphologist I consulted, in his handwriting as well. Marr was deeply involved in the events of his day, and even his anti-Semitism is interspersed with systematic criticism of the world he

lived in. His anti-Semitism is permeated with a pessimism that is not a cheap propagandistic trick, as generally assumed by his readers, but a pessimism resulting from a developed Weltanschauung. There is real originality in his opinions, and this fact alone entitles him to close examination. But above all, the contradiction between the anti-Semitism and the "repentance" of the sworn anti-Semite throws new light on the history of anti-Semitism, at least in Germany. Paradoxically, a biography intended to deal with the man as an anti-Semite thus turns into a biography of a man to whom anti-Semitism was only one aspect of his personality and activity, as was the case with people like Wagner, Schoenerer, Drumont, and others.

This biography is based on a large selection of sources by an individual whom we could consider "the man of the nineteenth century," as Marr's life nearly overlapped the years of that century (1819–1904). During his long life he published many papers and articles on various subjects, the greater part in newspapers and journals by which he was employed. These papers and articles alone provide ample information to the historian, but later in life Marr also wrote several works that have never been published—memoirs (in six volumes), a quasi-political testament, and other shorter compositions—which supply important additional information about the man and his times. The wide sphere of his activities is revealed also in his correspondence with some three hundred people, which Marr carefully saved and later left to the State Archives of Hamburg. Such sources therefore grant us insight into the society within which he acted, and hence they are of great importance.

I have selected for inclusion at the end of this study three of Marr's works that are representative of the man and his times. The first is an early shorter essay, Marr's first anti-Jewish writing, dating back to 1862. It was published as a letter to the journal *Courier an der Weser*. The second essay, entitled "Within Philo-Semitism," was written in 1887 by a 68-year-old Marr who was deeply disappointed with the anti-Semitic movement. This work, which has never seen light, is of particular interest for those who look for the connection between the boy, the youth, the adult, and the old anti-Semite; between events connected with his adolescence and those of a later period. But the quest for this connection will certainly be an arduous task. The last, and maybe also the most impressive work, is "The Testament of an Anti-Semite" written in 1891. Like the others, this essay accumulated dust in the files of the archives and was never published. It is a rigorous settling of accounts on the part of the "patriarch of anti-Semitism" with what he calls "business-of-anti-Semitism" (*Geschäftsantisemitimus*). Beyond this, it is judgment passed by a nineteenth-century man, aware of the problems of his day, on the answers supplied to those problems by his contemporaries. No other document could grant us such insight into the role played by anti-Semitism in

the complexity of conflicts, ideologies, and political moves of the century. These three essays provide a complex and interesting answer to the question of the sources and the role of anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe in the overall social process, and hence their importance.

I wish to note that deciphering Marr's handwriting was no easy matter. In several of the letters addressed to him we find the comment, "Please write more legibly," or "hire a secretary." If his handwriting presented problems during his life, it presented even more difficulty after his death. Marr's German handwriting was so illegible that it put off publishers in his day and historians after his death. This could easily be one of the reasons why his memoirs and his later works were never published. If it were not for my mother, Hanna Zimmermann, who helped me decipher Marr's handwriting, which worsened towards the end of his life owing to an arthritic disease, I think these documents would have gone on gathering dust, and an important chapter in the history of anti-Semitism would have remained fragmentary.

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PROLOGUE

Germany in the Nineteenth Century

The value of a biography as historical research can be measured by the weight given to the relationship between the subject of the biography and the historical period—the individual as a mirror, and fashioner, of the period, and the period as the context for the actions of the individual and as the object of his actions. This chapter attempts to clarify this relationship by briefly outlining the significant events in nineteenth-century Germany—the Germany between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I—the context in which Wilhelm Marr's activities took place, a context that explains Marr's actions, and which, in turn, was clarified by Marr.

The concept "Germany" was of limited political significance in 1819, the year Wilhelm Marr was born. Four years earlier, the peace treaty of the Congress of Vienna had concluded the wars that Napoleon had waged against Germany and Europe, and had created the German Confederation (Bund) on the ruins of the First German Reich, which Napoleon had abolished. The Confederation consisted of thirty-nine German states without a leader (i.e., without a kaiser). The two largest states in the Confederation—Austria and Prussia—were also its strongest states and expressed, in the clearest possible fashion, German particularism. Each state zealously guarded its sovereignty. The German Bund had no uniform foreign policy, no army, and no modern national message. The only issue on which the Bund could agree was that of "restoration" (i.e., the reaction against the concepts of liberalism and nationalism). In 1819, after a radical student assassinated a reactionary poet, the representatives of the member states of the Bund agreed to a string of matching censorship laws that were directed mainly against the press and the universities, with the aim of suppressing any expression of democratic nationalism. Thus the term "German Bund," which had been synonymous with the political term "Germany," became clearly identified at this time with the reaction—the antidemocratic, antiliberal, and, mainly, antinational tradition.

The reaction was felt throughout Germany in 1819. The Austria of Metternich set the pace, but its rival, Prussia, was also clearly headed on the path of reaction. The attempts at reform that had begun in Prussia in 1807 were now blocked by King Friedrich Wilhelm III and his advisors, and the restrictions placed in that same year on the democratic and innovative element of the Prussian army, the Landwehr, marked a clear turning point in the transition from reform to reaction. In the smaller German states there was also a general reactionary trend, albeit not one that proceeded at a uniform pace. In twenty years' time, Hannover in the north would become more reactionary, while Baden in the south would become much less reactionary. The city-state of Hamburg, Germany's largest port and the city in which Marr would take citizenship, exhibited a clearly reactionary stance in 1819, when it deferred the attempts to reform its obsolete constitution. The year 1819 therefore encapsuled the political message of Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century: the struggle between the unequal forces of reaction and political innovation, with reaction holding the upper hand.

The year 1819 also sharply expressed the dialectic between reactionary politics and a changing society: economic reorganization was a central mission for the German states in the economic crisis following the Napoleonic Wars; the Restoration had no role to play here. In this same year Prussia consolidated its customs policy for all its provinces, thus becoming a monolithic unit concerning financial management and placing itself in a position to take control of additional German states. The German Customs Union that Prussia formed fifteen years later was based on the steps taken towards internal consolidation in 1818–1819. Also in 1819, the German manufacturers informed the Bund of the need for economic expression of the constitutional structure (the Bund), and requested a reduction in customs between the German states and an increase in customs vis-à-vis other countries with economic advantages, particularly England. This request did not win any response in 1819. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, however, Germany gradually became aware of the need for a radical change in the commercial and economic policies of the German states. This awareness opened the way for a basic change in the general policy of these states.

The Jews also noted 1819 as a significant year in which the "Hep! Hep!" riots against the Jews broke out all over Germany, from the south to the north (with the exception of Austria and Prussia). These riots were also an expression of the dialectical relationship between the Restoration, or reaction, and the change in the social infrastructure. In places where there was fear of change, and where the Jews were seen as the bearers of change, those who had been hurt by the crisis, or who felt threatened by constitutional changes, gave vent to their fears by staging riots. This connection was evident in Hamburg, Marr's city: riots against the Jews broke out during the discussions concerning a change in the status quo of the

guilds. The riots' message was clear: the Restoration had to be complete. The Hamburg authorities acted accordingly: to maintain quiet, they froze both the proposed changes in the area of economic reorganization and the constitutional reforms for changing the status of the Jews. The reaction was complete, and order was restored.

Ludwig Börne wrote in 1826 that "the ministers in Germany would have wanted to wrap every shell in the war in cotton batting, so as not to hear them when they landed. . . . Quiet is the citizen's first responsibility." It was as if quiet was a guarantee for order, as it had been in pre-revolutionary times. Under the conditions which had developed in Germany and in Europe as early as the 1820's and 1830's, it was impossible to halt the shell in flight or to stop politics in its place. Börne, like Heine and Marr, belonged to the revolutionary "Young Germany" movement, which had indeed acted vigorously, both openly and secretly, to achieve a Germany that would be different both politically and socially. The consciousness of liberal, democratic, and national ideals among the intellectual bourgeoisie joined with the discontent of the initiators at the head of the Industrial Revolution—the artisans, farmers, and others—to form a German revolutionary potential. In the 1830's, groups for political reforms were poised for radical action (Marr belonged to such a group); in the early 1840's, the weavers in Silesia revolted; and in 1847–1848, Germany suffered a severe economic crisis.

Finally, in 1848 the shell exploded in Germany: revolutions erupted—or constitutional changes were implemented to allay fears of revolution—in all the German states. The concept of German unification was expressed in the establishment of an All-German Parliament in Frankfurt, which also enacted a new constitution for all of Germany. All the forces that had been actively undermining quiet and order for the past thirty years burst forth during this revolution. The year 1848 was a great year for anyone who actively participated in it, and it was especially significant for Marr, a revolutionary democrat, who viewed it until his dying day more than half a century later as a climax in his life. His political and social actions and thought would revolve around this axis until his old age. Marr was not alone in this: 1848 was also an instructive and decisive year for the famous Bismarck, Marr's senior by four years, and it guided him in making far-reaching decisions. To cite only one example: in 1848 it seemed that the entire issue of German unity depended upon what would occur in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein in the north. These two duchies, with a large German population, which were under the rule of the Danish king, but not part of Denmark, served as the touchstone of German nationalism. Marr, living in Hamburg on the border of these duchies, as well as Bismarck, in nearby Prussia, viewed this as a decisive issue. Both Hamburg and Prussia were involved in the war for the annexation of the two duchies that broke out during the revolution—a war that ended in disgrace for Germany, Prussia, and the proponents of Ger-

man national unification. The war's outcome was engraved, in a traumatic manner, on the consciousness of the 48'ers; both Marr and Bismarck were to be involved again in this issue fifteen years later. The outbreak in 1864 of the "Danish War" over these two duchies, with Bismarck now the chancellor of Prussia, as well as the reaction of the state of Hamburg and of Marr the journalist to that war, can be understood only if one realizes the traumatic significance of a seemingly marginal incident that occurred in 1848.

In the eyes of the following generation that had not experienced the revolution, the impression the revolution had made on its generation was exaggerated. Many historians share this opinion; in the final analysis, the revolution had failed, and it did not receive political legitimization or sympathy in the official German histories. In this book, however, the revolution occupies a central position, with Marr's biography accordingly reflecting the period.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Germany was characterized by the renewed political organization which had led, with the help of three wars, to what was termed "German unification" under Prussia in 1871. At the same time, the nature of Germany had changed as the Industrial Revolution had progressed. These developments left their mark—direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious—on the people who had participated in them, and Marr is most representative of this. The discrepancy between reality and expectations, between the battles that had been and the battles that were taking shape, a discrepancy that explains the conduct and reactions of individuals and masses, was openly expressed in Marr's writings and actions. The hope of 1848 was followed by a decade of frustrating political reaction, which in turn was followed by another decade of hope and political and economic progress. And then came the 1870's, the years following the establishment of the Bismarckian Second German Reich, which also brought frustration to many who had hoped and had been disappointed. The year 1871 had brought Germany not only "unification" but also a seemingly democratic-liberal regime and emancipation for the Jews. Many wanted to find a connection between these events and their frustration, making use of all manner of explanations. Anti-Semitism, with Marr as one of its pioneers during those years, was one of these explanations. An examination of the path that Marr followed during those years will provide a concise understanding of this explanation within the historical context.

Just as many of the people of 1871 had not understood the significance of 1848, there were many people in 1890—the year Bismarck was removed from Germany's political leadership—who did not understand the significance of 1871. The Germany of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was a society and state that not only accelerated and continued previously existing trends but which also underwent a radical change—large-scale and organized capitalism with a

large and organized social democracy, imperialistic nationalism, militarism for its own sake, and cowed liberalism. This generation no longer understood what they had fought for in 1871 or in 1848. The alienation felt at the end of the nineteenth century by those born at the beginning of the century finds its expression in Marr's autobiography and in Bismarck's memoirs, which were written during the same years that Marr wrote his memoirs. These memoirs emphasize the chasm that separated the beginning and end of the century.

Marr died in 1904, a citizen of the German Reich for about a generation. One of the founders of modern anti-Semitism, he died in the same year as Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, and six years after the death of Bismarck, the symbol of German nationalism. In 1904, the Germans were the subjects of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Germany competed against France, Russia, and England for the rule of Europe and the world. This was a Germany that was modern economically but "half-baked" politically. The image of strength was faced by a reality of discontent. In 1903, a year before Marr died, the Social Democratic party, which was antimilitaristic, antinationalist, and anticapitalist, won an unprecedented victory: 32 percent of the vote. Along with the 9 percent of the left liberals (the regime's traditional critics) and the 9 percent of the national minorities, they joined together into a large bloc of the discontented. German society was not a united and monolithic one, as anyone who peered beyond the horizons of his own class could see. This is the reason why Marr, like other critics of German society, viewed the future with great trepidation. The chasm that opened in fin-de-siècle Germany between the conservative-bourgeois regime and the lower class revolutionary workers' movements was reminiscent—for anyone capable of remembering—of what had preceded 1848, but on a larger scale. It is possible that, from this perspective, Marr was indeed exceptional—he did not view the future with tranquility and security, but was profoundly afraid of a catastrophe. If Marr had lived another ten years, World War I and the revolutions which it spawned would have come as no surprise to him.