

8 Kaiser Wilhelm II and German anti-semitism

(from John C. G. Röhl. "The Kaiser and his Court. Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany". 1995. CUP)

In 1894, when Kaiser Wilhelm II had been on the throne for only six years and Bismarck in angry retirement for four, when Adolf Hitler was not yet old enough to go to school, an obscene broadsheet costing 30 Pfennigs appeared on the streets of Berlin which, seen from the vantage point of the present day, poses the question of continuity in modern German history about as starkly as it is possible to pose it. Entitled 'In the 20th Century', an ornate cartoon (fig. 2) pictures the German capital in the year 1950. It projects two scenarios: either the Germans have defeated the Jewish menace, or the Jews have taken over Berlin.

In the latter case, Rothschild rules over Germany, the anti-semites - Bökel, Foerster, Dühring, Schönerer, Stoecker, etc. - are in prison and Ahlwardt is being beheaded. The German people is enslaved in a socialist 'German Workers' Colony' run for the benefit of Jewish profiteers. Opposite the colony, beyond the statue commemorating the Liberal parliamentarian Heinrich Rickert, we see the flourishing stock exchange, the Jewish National Theatre and the Jewish National Museum, whereas the Christian Church is being closed down. Germans are being expelled from their own country, their 'fresh' young children sold along with geese for Jewish kitchens. Everywhere, Jewish 'world supremacy temples' in the form of kiosks are being erected to mark their domination over the 'German slave nation'.

An altogether different world reveals itself as we raise our eyes to the higher section of the picture. In 1950, Kaiser Wilhelm the Third and his empress have just come to the throne. German artisans and peasants march happily through the streets shouting 'Heil' and 'Gott mit uns!'; German athletes compete in German Games; the people stream into the Deutsches Volks-Haus to celebrate the glories of Beethoven, Mozart, Goethe, and Schiller; German children listen once more to German fairy tales. The Church is back at the centre of society; a statue depicts St George slaying the Jewish dragon. The canonical laws discriminating against Jews have been reinstated, the synagogue has been closed and the Rabbi has committed suicide. The last Jew is being expelled from the country - 'Juden raus', proclaims the policeman's banner. Many are in the Zuchthaus, all are forced, before being led away with ropes around their necks', to return their 'stolen goods' to the Church for redistribution to the German poor. And in the high street, to the sound of trumpets and clarinets, to the smell of incense, with the burghers of Berlin looking gleefully on, Jews are being publicly hanged.

In the accompanying text the author prophesies that Germany would, come what may, 'conduct the struggle against Juda in deadly earnest, although in typical Germanic fashion, he declares, 'a cruel streak of humour will not be entirely absent But it would be in the Jewish interest for the solution [Lösung]'; to be found soon, and to be directed from above by a royal hand, since otherwise the German people might be seized by an "ecstasy' under which the Jews would suffer an even more painful fate. The pamphlet appeals to Kaiser Wilhelm II to undertake this most arduous struggle of the soul'. But it warns: 'If the Jewish Question is not solved by Wilhelm II then it will be solved under Wilhelm III.

As a ghostly prefiguration of the holocaust to come, this Dreigroschen pamphlet of 1894 is breathtaking and, along with the other cartoons in the Politischer Bilderbogen series, deserves close study by historians of German anti-semitism . But the pamphlet, with its linking of extreme anti-semitism to the Hohenzollern monarchy, and specifically to Kaiser Wilhelm II, raises the question of continuity in German history in a more general way. What had led the pornographic pamphleteer to imagine that Kaiser Wilhelm II might 'solve' the 'Jewish Question', and what had occasioned the defiance and disappointment apparent just beneath the surface in this cartoon? What was Wilhelm's relationship with the anti-semitism that was so pervasive in Germany before, during and after his long reign? Could it even be that the last German Kaiser, in this respect as in some others, was a sort of precursor of Adolf Hitler, the missing link, so to speak, between the 'Blood and Iron Chancellor', and the Führer? If Wilhelm II proved to be an anti-semite, it would have the effect of bringing extreme anti-semitism out of the gutter into the imperial palace from which he dominated German politics for thirty years; the specifically German roots of Hitlerian anti-semitism would come more clearly into focus and the idea of continuity in German history would be substantially strengthened.

The notion of the Kaiser as an anti-semite is novel, historically highly controversial, politically inopportune and emotionally disturbing.² In the 1960s, when Fritz Fischer succeeded in demonstrating the high degree of continuity that existed between Germany's aims in the First World War and those pursued by Hitler in the Second, some historians were at pains to break the continuity chain again by insisting that Hitler's anti-semitism was unique, and his Third Reich consequently 'qualitatively' different from anything that had gone before: in this perverse way, the holocaust was actually used as an for the German nation. More recently, one or two have argued that the Nazi holocaust is inexplicable, having no historical antecedents and being comparable only to the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. One German historian, Ernest Nolte, virtually

caused riots on the streets by claiming that Nazi holocaust anti-semitism had no roots in German history, but was merely a response to the 'earlier and more fundamental [ursprünglicher] Asiatic barbarism of Stalin!³ Even in more mainstream circles of the historical profession, there would appear to be little understanding of the extent and nature of Kaiser Wilhelm's anti-semitism. Influential historians have argued that, since the Kaiser numbered Jews like Ballin and Rathenau among his friends, he could not have been anti-semitic. They seem unimpressed by (or perhaps simply unaware of) the fact that, on several occasions, Wilhelm stated that he did not regard Ballin as a Jew, and that he reviled Rathenau as a 'mean, deceiving, rascally traitor' whose murder in 1922 'served him right' .⁴ When confronted with new evidence of the Kaiser's anti-semitic expletives in his exile years, they profess themselves shocked but claim that these statements were the result only of personal bitterness: before the abdication, they say, no such anti-semitic expressions are to be found, with the possible exception of one or two IL-112 made by Wilhelm before his accession to the throne, when he was very young and under the influence of Waldersee.

Until very recently, then, the overwhelming consensus on this not unimportant issue was that Kaiser Wilhelm II was not an anti-semite. Unlike Ahlwardt and the other German anti-semites of that day, Wilhelm does not even merit an entry in the Encyclopaedia Judaica. Only three or four historians or literary scholars, Hartmut Zelinsky, Lamar Cecil, Willibald Gutsche and myself, have uncovered and published evidence to the contrary. This new evidence, however, is overpowering in both quantity and quality. It clearly shows that anti-semitism was a central element in the Weltanschauung of the last German Kaiser, and would therefore seem to necessitate a major revision in our assessment of his 'place' in German history.

Before I review the evidence, it might help to establish an interpretative framework by drawing some distinctions between the various kinds or degrees of anti-semitism to be found in Germany, either in practice or in the form of demands, in the seventy-five years between unification in 1871 and the Götterdämmerung of 1945. There is, first, the anti-semitism of the salon, consisting of personal prejudice and collective but still informal discrimination against Jews. This was the type of anti-semitism with which the Jewish minority - 1 per cent of the population of the Reich - was faced in the imperial period. Second, there is the exclusion by law of Jews from certain public positions and the withdrawal from them, again by law, of their civil rights. Legal discrimination of this kind was not institutionalised until 1935, though demands for such legislation are much older, as we shall see. Third, there is pogrom anti-semitism of the type prevalent in both Tsarist and Soviet Russia; there was no

such mob brutality against Jews in Germany between Bismarckian unification and Hitler's rise to power. Fourth, we have the anti-semitism of expulsion, the call for the 'solution' of the 'Jewish problem' by expelling all Jews from the land; this, as we know, became terrible reality in the years after 1933, but demands for such policies can be heard in Germany more than fifty years earlier. Finally there is the ultimate horror, the anti-semitism of extermination, the anti-semitism of the holocaust. In examining the anti-semitism of Kaiser Wilhelm II, we shall need to be mindful of these five different types of anti-semitism. The baneful truth, however, is that at one time or another in the course of his long life he subscribed to all five.

There was a period in Wilhelm's life when he was not an anti-semite. At the Gymnasium in Kassel, when he was in his mid teens, his closest friend was 'a young jew called Sommer', as Wilhelm himself proudly wrote in English to his mother. Wilhelm insisted that Siegfried Sommer hang up his cap next to his own, and that they share each other's Butterbröd. On one occasion the Prince put his arm round his friend's waist 'as one might around a pretty girl's'; on another he even asked Sommer whether he might accompany him to the temple. Sommer was top of the class and, with a little help from Wilhelm, rose to become a judge. He happens also to have been the grandfather of that master historian of Tudor England, Sir Geoffrey Elton.

Though Wilhelm became an enthusiastic member of the aristocratic student fraternity Corps Borussia at the University of Bonn in 1877, no anti-semitic statements are on record from that period.' What is on record from his student days is Wilhelm's wish that he could drain all the 'damned' English blood from his veins !7 The bitter conflict with his parents, to which this curious wish alludes, is the most fundamental fact in the mental and psychological development of the future Kaiser. It lies at the heart of the virulent anti-semitism which he internalised in the 1880s, at the height of the first wave of anti-semitism to sweep German society since unification.

Only three years after the *Reichsgründung* and the emancipation of the half million Jews that lived in the new Reich, the Great Crash of 1873 and the beginnings of the 'Great Depression' shook the faith of millions in the values of capitalism, free enterprise and progressive Left Liberalism with which the Jewish minority, by virtue of its unique occupational structure, was closely identified. As the cartoon demonstrates (see fig. 2), in the new Germany of burgeoning cities, rapid industrialisation, mass circulation newspapers and mass politics, those in traditional occupations, high and low, felt threatened by this modern world and longed for the security of the old monarchic 'Christian state'.

The Hohenzollern military monarchy was looked up to as a bastion against the rising tide of modernity, symbolised by the Jews.

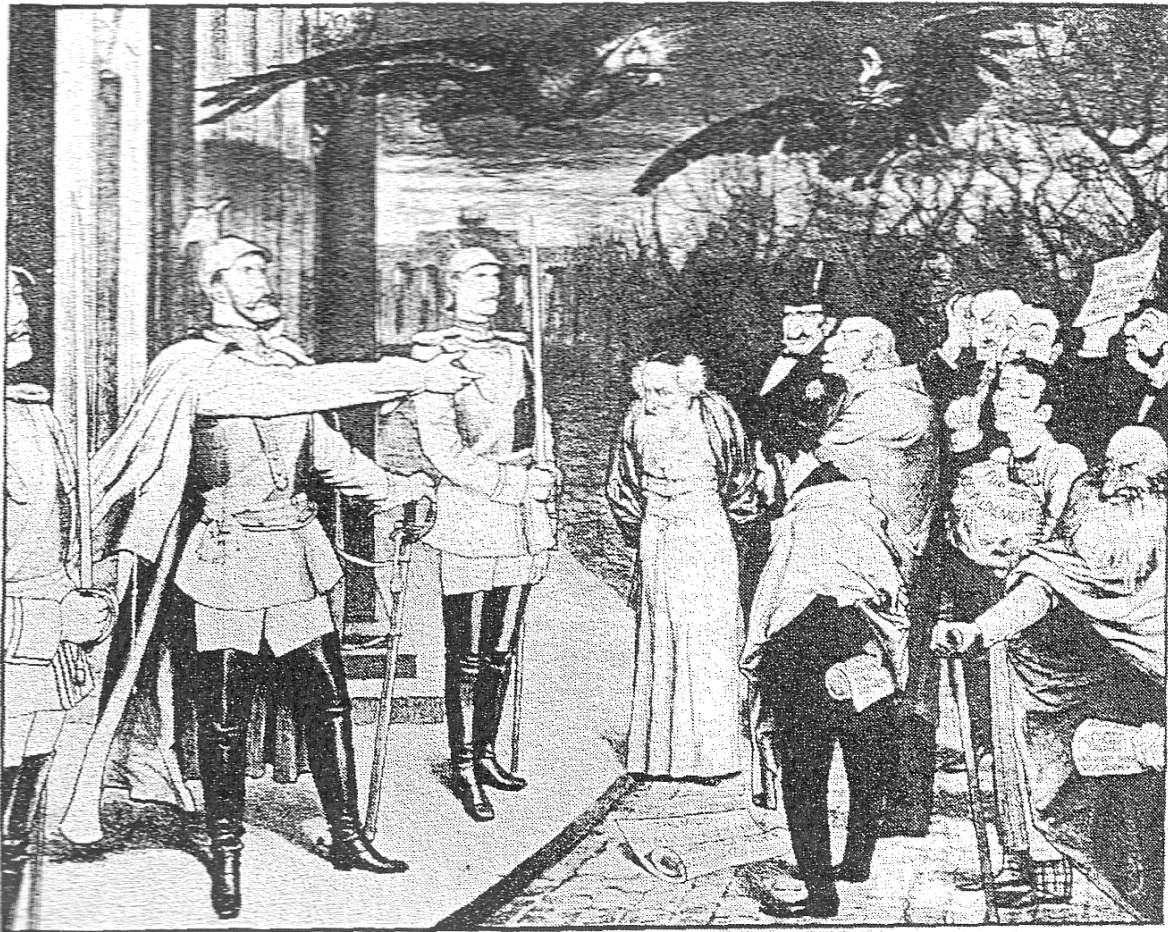


Figure 3 The Hohenzollern monarchy as the bastion against Jewish influence. Bewer's cartoon of 1891. Source: Politischer Bilderbogen no. 28.

Distinctly Manichaeic Christian images and thought structures survived even where Christianity was formally rejected. Pamphleteers and agitators had little difficulty in demonising the Jews, in claiming that 'the Devil himself is a Jew'. By 1880, the new-fangled word 'Aryan' was in common usage in anti-semitic circles as a synonym for earlier code-words for 'non-Jew' such as 'Christian' or 'Christian-German'. In one cartoon of 1901, the Jewish Satan is seen slaying the foolishly tolerant Aryan, destroying Christianity and Monarchy and taking over the European continent (see fig. 4).



Figure 4 The Jewish Satan slays the Aryan and takes over the world. Bewer's cartoon 'Der Weltboxer' of 1901. Source: Politischer Bilderbogen no. 33

If the Jews were synonymous with modernity and specifically with the Left Liberal Progressive Party at home, commercialised, industrialised, parliamentary England (and by extension republican France and America) played the same role abroad. In the minds of German anti-semites there was an almost complete identification of the Jewish and the English menace to traditional Christian-German (or Aryan) values. The 'nation of shopkeepers', also represented as Satan, was the 'vampire of the Continent', keeping the European nations at each others' throat in order to profit from the dissension. We shall see that, towards the end of his life, Wilhelm II conflated these twin dangers to 'Germandom' by coining the term 'JudaEngland'.

One of the more depressing truths about this first wave of German anti-semitism is the extent to which it was led not by guttersnipes such as Ahlwardt, Glagau, Böckel, Foerster, Henrici and their ilk, but by university professors such as Treitschke and court clergymen such as Stoecker. Another is the degree to which, even at this early stage, the anti-semitism of these learned agitators was unequivocally racial. Adolf Stoecker, who founded his 'Christian-Social Workers' Party' in 1879, proclaimed in the Prussian House of Deputies that the Jews were 'leeches' and 'parasites', 'an alien drop in our blood'. The struggle

against them was a struggle of 'race against race', for the Jews were not part of the German nation but 'a nation unto themselves', linked to all other Jews in the world to form 'one mass of exploiters'. The 'war' against the Jews was a fight for the very existence of the German nation, cried Stoecker in 1882. 'We offer the Jews a fight until complete victory and we will not rest until they have been thrown down from the high pedestal on which they have placed themselves here in Berlin into the dust where they belong.' Berlin must be a Hohenzollern city, not a Jewish city, he declared." As the Left Liberal parliamentarian Eugen Richter explained in November 1880, there was something 'particularly perfidious in this anti-Jewish movement, since what it nourished was 'racial. hatred, that is to say something that the individual cannot alter and which can therefore only end either in his being clubbed to death or his expulsion over the border'.

The significance of Stoecker's movement for the political and cultural development of Germany can, as Werner Jochmann has pointed out, hardly be overestimated. In 1891, a quarter of a million people signed a petition demanding the prohibition of Jewish immigration, into Germany, the exclusion of Jews from public office, their removal from all teaching posts in public schools and the reduction of their numbers at universities. As Norbert Kampe's excellent study has shown, the many thousands of university students who signed this mass petition were destined to move into positions of great influence in the state bureaucracy, army, diplomatic corps and the medical, legal and teaching professions at all levels. Most alarming of all was the support the movement received from the Prussian officer corps and the imperial court.

Just about the only ray of light on this dark stage was the extraordinarily courageous stand taken by Wilhelm's parents, the German Crown Prince - who was an enthusiastic freemason - and his English wife Queen Victoria's eldest daughter. Wilhelm's mother regarded 'Treitschke and his supporters as lunatics of the most dangerous sort'. She suggested that Stoecker, Kögel, Puttkamer, Kleist-Retzow and the other anti-semites might like to found a lunatic asylum in Berlin with themselves as inmates. She was ashamed that men like Treitschke and Stoecker 'behave so *hatefully* towards people of a different faith and another race who have become an integral part (and by no means the worst) of our nation!'. In early 1880, Wilhelm's father attended in the full uniform of a Prussian Field Marshal the service at the Berlin synagogue in a deliberate demonstration against Treitschke's 'disgraceful' attacks on the Jews. A few days later he publicly condemned the anti-semitic movement as a 'shameful blot on our time', thereby reassuring many Jewish families who had been preparing to leave Berlin in terror. 'We are ashamed of the *Judenhetze* which has broken all bounds of decency in Berlin but which seems to flourish under the protection of

the Court clerics', he wrote. On the eve of the first debate on the 'Jewish question' in the Prussian parliament, the Crown Prince and Crown Princess caused an uproar by attending a concert in the synagogue at Wiesbaden 'to demonstrate as clearly as we can what our convictions are'. And in 1881 the Crown Prince made another speech in Berlin in support of the 'poor ill-treated Jews', as Queen Victoria recorded with warm approval. One is forcefully reminded of the heroic stand taken by the Danish monarchy against German anti-Jewish policies during the Second World War. But in reactionary and 'chauvinistic' circles in Germany in the 1880s these public demonstrations only fuelled the growing conviction that the Crown Prince and his liberal English wife were an alien, un-German force that must not be allowed to accede to the throne.

From 1879, when Wilhelm re-joined his Potsdam Guards Regiment, his parents looked on with trepidation as their eldest son became more and more '*ver-Potsdammt*'; they feared that, given his "lack of depth and spirit, the superficial, banal, petty opinions of the First Regiment of Guards will be pure poison for his mind'. 'I am afraid that he is turning into the archetypal Potsdam Lieutenant with that evil admixture of a very loud mouth and the chauvinist's hatred and ignorance of things foreign', his mother wrote in 1879. By the middle of 1880, she was complaining to her mother: 'Willy is *chauvinistic* and *ultra* Prussian to a degree & with a violence wh[ich] is often very painful to me.

In 1883, Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria noted with disgust that Wilhelm was a 'dyed-in-the-wool Junker and reactionary' who spoke of parliament invariably as 'this pig-sty [*Saubude*]' and of the members of the opposition as 'those *Hundekerle* who deserve to be whipped'. Rudolf was appalled by Wilhelm's intention of having the Liberal parliamentarian Eugen Richter beaten up by six NCOs. In his letters from this period, Wilhelm referred to the progressive Freisinnige Partei as 'die Blödsinnigen'; its leader Forckenbeck he called '*Ferckelbock*'. He declared that, as Kaiser, he would eliminate Jewish influence in the German press. In 1887, Wilhelm told two Austrian call-girls that in Austria 'the entire state was rotten' and about to collapse, its German provinces falling 'like ripe fruit' to Prussia, which alone was healthy and strong. Wilhelm likened Crown Prince Rudolf to his own father as being a spineless, characterless popularity-seeker totally under Jewish influence. As Colonel of the Hussars, Wilhelm mounted a crusade against the high society Union Club with the express aim, he said, of creating an 'old-Prussian, genuinely- Christian-German officer corps'. His real objection to the Club, as his friend and mentor Waldersee noted in his diary, was that it numbered among its members 'people, including Jews, with whom an officer could not associate'.

In 1885, Adolf Stoecker was found guilty in a libel case brought by a Jewish newspaper editor. The publicity surrounding the case had been highly damaging to the Court, and Kaiser Wilhelm 1, though himself an anti-semiter, decided that Stoecker must forfeit his position as Court Chaplain. Stoecker pleaded in vain that his enemies were. 'at the same time the enemies of Christendom and Monarchy': if he fell, 'atheists and democrats' would triumph and the 'Christian-monarchic revival' of Berlin would be jeopardised. The emperor persisted in demanding Stoecker's resignation - until, that is, the preacher was 'saved by Prince Wilhelm' . -

On 5 August 1885, Wilhelm wrote a letter to the old Kaiser, praising Stoecker as the Hohenzollern monarchy's most powerful pillar and bravest warrior against the 'ghastly and infamous slanders' of the 'damned' Jewish press and the Jewish law courts. 'You will have read and heard', the Prince wrote,

of the wholly irresponsible and reprehensible way in which the entire,7udentum of the Reich, with the support of its damned press,- has fallen upon poor Stöcker and ,covered him with insults, slanders and defamation and finally forced him into a monstrous legal case ... Now, after the judgment of the court, which is unfortunately far too much under Jewish control, a veritable storm of indignation and anger has broken out in all levels of the nation . . . One cannot believe that, in our time, such a heap of vileness.- lies and wickedness can be brought together in one place. From all sides, from far and near, I am receiving letters with the question 'Does the Kaiser know what is going on? Does he realise what the score is? How the Jews - and behind them the Socialists and the Progressives - are trying everything to get Stöcker sacked?' One even says the Jews have tried to secure friends in Court circles in order to work on you against Stöcker! ... Stöcker is ... the most powerful pillar, the bravest, most fearless fighter for Your Monarchy and Your Throne among the people! ... He has personally and alone won over 60,000 workers for you and your power from the Jewish Progressives and Social Democrats! in Berlin! ... O dear Grosspapa, it is disgusting to observe how in our Christian-German, good Prussian land the *Judentum*, twisting and corrupting everything, has the cheek to attack such men and in the most shameless, insolent way to seek their downfall.

It is not difficult to discern in this letter the influence of Wilhelm's *Ersatzvater* Count Waldersee. To read the original, unexpurgated diaries of this warmongering, pietistic general is to cross the border into the realm of abnormal psychology. Waldersee seems to have suffered from some form of paranoid megalomania. He believed in a world conspiracy of the 'entirety' of international Jewry in league with all democratic forces at home and the majority of foreign Powers abroad to destroy the heroic aristocratic warrior monarchy of Prussia. 'We have far too many enemies' he declared in 1885, 'the French, the Slavs, above all the Catholics, and then the entire little rabble of the dispossessed, with their supporters.' 'Everywhere the masses are on the move, everywhere there is rebellion against authority, the negation of all religion and the generation of

hatred and envy against those with wealth. We are probably facing major catastrophes.' 'The ghost of socialism is beginning to show a very earnest face', he warned in 1886. Equally dangerous was the Catholic Centre Party, which in Waldersee's words consisted of 'hypocritical blackguards without a Fatherland, intent on the collapse of Germany and the destruction of Prussia' .

Surrounding the Reich were countries in which parliamentarism had either already established itself, such as England, France and Italy, or countries whose internal affairs were so rotten that they would not be able to withstand the pressure from below much longer, such as Russia, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Only the Reich in the middle had the strength and the will to save the old order. The German Reich stood firm still, Waldersee declared in 1886, providing the 'mainstay for the whole of Europe; [but] if we become weak, the entire old world will fall apart'. He was convinced that Germany must fight some great apocalyptic battle against the modern world, a war against the future. The struggle at home and the struggle abroad were one and the same, two battlefronts in the same war. For if Liberal parliamentarism were to establish itself in the Reich, what would be the point of foreign conquest? The enemy would have won!

The gravest threat therefore came from the *laissez-faire*, parliamentary ideals of the Progressive Party, with which both the Crown Prince and, the Jewish community were identified. Permitting such ideals to establish themselves in Germany would be tantamount to capitulating to the enemy without a fight; it would be the end of the Christian-German monarchy, the end of the privileged position of the aristocracy and the end of the exclusion of the Prussian Army from State control. Waldersee would stop at nothing to prevent such a capitulation. He urged that universal manhood suffrage be abolished, that Germany should take out France, Russia or even Austria-Hungary in a lightning first strike. He plotted to separate the English Crown Princess from her weak husband and to have her expelled in disgrace from the country; he even plotted an Army coup to replace Kaiser Friedrich III with his son Wilhelm on the German throne.

But the most dangerous foes of all, in Waldersee's mind, were the Jews. In his correspondence with the young heir to the throne, he identified as the Prince's enemies

all the Progressive people with their supporters, the entire *Judenchaft* [and] most foreign countries, that is to say, taken together formidable foes ... In view of the colossal influence which the Jews [*die Judenschaft*] wield by virtue of their wealth, through which they have

secured the services of Christians in influential positions, even though they themselves are few in number, they are by far the most dangerous of our enemies.

Only days after receiving these lines in November 1887, Wilhelm created an international outcry by addressing a meeting in support of Stoecker's 'Christian-Social' Inner Mission at Waldersee's house. Anti-semites were jubilant; almost everyone else was aghast. Herbert Bismarck shook his head in disbelief when Wilhelm, with shining eyes, described Stoecker as 'second Luther'. Herbert was 'stormed' by influential Court officials urging him to beg his father to 'keep Prince Wilhelm away from the Stoeckerite path'. Wilhelm and Waldersee of course attributed the whole fuss to the Jews and the people in their pocket. As Waldersee noted, 'the entire row in the press comes from the Jews', whose 'attacks are aimed less at Stoecker than at the Prince'. 'Too many people are under the influence of the Jews', he noted as the protests mounted. The Jews were afraid of Prince Wilhelm, Waldersee wrote, as indeed were 'all our enemies - the French, the Russians, the Progressives and the Social Democrats'.

In 1888, when his father lay dying of throat cancer, Wilhelm came close to believing that there was an Anglo-Jewish plot, led by his mother, to take over Germany. In letters to his intimate friend Philipp Eulenburg he described the doctors in attendance on his father as '*Judenlümme*', 'dogs', 'scoundrels' and '*Satansknochen*' filled with 'racial hatred' and 'anti-Germanism to the very edge of the grave'. He would never be able to forget, he wrote, that 'the family shield had been besmirched and the Reich brought to the edge of destruction by an English princess who is my mother'. In time he came to believe not only that Jewish and English doctors had killed his father, but also that an English doctor had been responsible for crippling his left arm.

When Wilhelm acceded to the throne in 1888, anti-semites from Paris to Vienna crowded: 'All those who are truly Christian-German are devoted with their entire soul to Kaiser Wilhelm II and cheer him along the paths that he has chosen to go.' Wilhelm was 'the hope, the future, the shining star of the German people', cried the Austrian anti-semite von Schönerer. The Germans had only one hope of salvation from the Jewish yoke, he declared, and that hope was Kaiser Wilhelm II. The cartoon of 1894 (fig. 2) was part of this jubilation, though it also sounded a note of disappointment and defiance. For Wilhelm, having dismissed Bismarck - the Iron Chancellor's use of Bleichroeder, his banker, as intermediary to the Catholic Centre Party had been the last straw - appointed the relatively Liberal General von Caprivi to the Chancellorship. It was in opposition to Caprivi's progressive policies that the Conservative party in 1892 adopted anti-semitism as an integral part of its official programme. Wilhelm's anti-semitic convictions had not however, disappeared, they had only gone

underground, to surface again as his reign careered erratically towards the abyss.

By the mid-1880s, Kaiser Wilhelm II had adopted a thoroughgoing racism as a central element of his Weltanschauung and lost no chance of proclaiming the need for a pure and exclusive Germanic race. In 1895 he declared the North Sea to be a 'purely Germanic sea' whose partition ,between 'Britons' and 'Slavs' he would not tolerate. The excruciating ballad 'Der Sang an Agir' which he composed in 1895 was steeped in Nordic



Figure 5 Kaiser Wilhelm II's 1895 drawing 'Nations of Europe,

mythology. He regularly spoke of the French as 'Gauls' and 'Latins', of the English as 'Anglo-Saxons' and of the Russians as 'Slavs'. He warned repeatedly of the 'Pan-Slav Peril' . As the realisation dawned on him that in the coming racial 'Endkampf' of the Teutons against the Slavs and Gauls, Britain would side against Germany, the Kaiser was overwhelmed with incredulity and indignation: How could the 'Germanic English', he asked in bewilderment, side with the Russians and French against their racial Stammesgenossen?!

From now to the end of his life, he became obsessed with what he called the 'yellow peril' (fig. 5). His painting *Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter!*, sketched in 1895, shows the nations of Europe as pre-historic warrior-goddesses being led by the Archangel Michael against the 'yellow peril' (represented by a buddha) in the east. In 1900, he ordered German troops on

their way to China to behave like Huns, showing no mercy and taking no prisoners. With the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War Wilhelm predicted that the Japanese would soon be parading through the streets of Moscow and Poznan . In 1907 he announced that in the coming conflict between Japan and America, England would have to side with the latter since this was 'a question of Race, not of Politics, only Yellow versus White'. The British newspapers, he noted with satisfaction, had 'for the first time used the term of "Yellow Peril" from my picture, which is coming true'.

Wilhelm informed the Tsar that a German agent had 'counted 10,000 Japanese men in the plantations in South Mexico, all in Military jackets with brass buttons'. This secret Japanese army, he claimed, was intending to seize the Panama Canal. The Japanese, he said, were 'going in for the whole of Asia, carefully preparing their blows and against the white Race in general! Remember my picture, it's coming true!' Graciously he offered to send the Prussian Army to protect the Californian coast in the event of a war between the United States and Japan.

Inevitably with such a world-view, Wilhelm's visceral anti-semitism of the 1880s resurfaced, albeit somewhat uncertainly, at the turn of the century. From time to time he sought the company of intelligent, successful Jewish bankers and businessmen such as Ballin, Rathenau, Warburg, Simon and Carl Furstenberg whose intellectual horizons were more extensive than those he encountered at Court. In 1898, referring presumably to the Dreyfus case, he even spoke in horror of 'the hydra of the crudest, most 'ghastly anti-semitism' which everywhere was raising 'its horrible head'. But the ambivalence of his Attitude in the period is best captured in the curious episode of his meeting with Theodora Herzl. In an extraordinary letter to the Grand Duke of Baden, Wilhelm wrote in 1898 that he had always been interested in the 'basic idea' of a Jewish state in Palestine. Now he was 'convinced that the settlement of the Holy Land by the wealthy and hard-working nation of Israel would soon bring to the former unsuspected prosperity' - a blessing which could spread to produce a significant economic revival in Asia Minor. That in turn would restore the financial fortunes of Turkey, and so the sick man of Europe would be sick no more.

In addition, the energy, creativity and efficiency of the tribe of Sem would be diverted to worthier goals than the sucking dry [Aussaugen] of the Christians, and many an oppositional Semite now supporting the Social Democrats would go off to the East, where there is more rewarding work to be done ... Now I realise [the Kaiser explained] that nine-tenths of all Germans would recoil in horror if they were to discover that I sympathised with the Zionists or would even, as I intend to do if asked, place them under my protection.

But he, Wilhelm, had his defence ready: 'Our dear God knows even better than we do that the Jews killed Our Saviour, and he has punished them accordingly. But neither the anti-semites nor others, myself included, have been asked or empowered by Him to bully these people after our own fashion *in majorem Dei Gloriam!*' One must remember the Christian exhortation to love one's enemies, the Kaiser exclaimed. And besides, 'from an earthly, realistic political standpoint it should not be forgotten that, considering the-immense and extremely dangerous power which international Jewish capital represents, it would after all be of huge advantage to Germany if the world of the Hebrews looked up to it in gratitude?! The Sultan's unexpected objection put a quick end to Wilhelm's plan for a German Protectorate of a Jewish state in Palestine; the Kaiser (literally) took the road to Damascus and there proclaimed himself Protector Of 300 million Mohammedans instead.

On his return from Palestine, in a speech to his beloved Brandenburgers, he described how, standing on the Mount of Olives, he had looked upon the spot 'where the most powerful struggle that has ever been fought on earth, the struggle for the redemption of mankind, was fought out by the One', and how this had inspired him, Wilhelm, to swear anew an oath of allegiance to God to leave nothing undone 'to unite My Volk" and to eliminate (*beseitigen*) those elements making for discord and dissent. His God-given task was to ensure that the German oak tree, *die deutsche Reichseiche*, continued to flourish. 'The journey to the Promised Land and the Holy Places will help me to protect this tree' and 'to search out and. destroy [*auszurotten*] -the beasts that seek to gnaw at its roots.' This was, as we shall see, an image which was to recur.

In 1901, through Eulenburg's good offices, Kaiser Wilhelm met that 'Evangelist of Race' Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who was destined to have a more lasting influence on him than Theodor Herzl . In Chamberlain, Wilhelm found the philosopher who had put into words his own innermost thoughts. 'God sent your book to the German people, just as he sent you personally to me, that is my unshakeably firm conviction', he averred. The Kaiser recognised in Chamberlain his 'comrade-in-arms and ally in the struggle for Teutons against Rome, Jerusalem etc.', for the '*Urarisch-Germanische* that lay deeply buried and dormant within me' and was now fighting its way to the surface. To Chamberlain Wilhelm wrote in 1902: 'May you save our German Volk, our *Germanentum*, for God has sent you as our helper! In his letters to Wilhelm, Chamberlain demanded the creation of a 'racially aware, ... centrally organised Germany with a clear sense of purpose', a Germany which would 'rule the world'.

From around the turn of the century, under Chamberlain's influence, and unnerved by the rising tide of democracy and socialism at home and Germany's increasingly exposed position internationally, Wilhelm II gave voice ever more openly to anti-semitic convictions. Susan Townley records a conversation in which the Kaiser described the Jews as the 'curse' of his country. 'They keep my people poor and in their clutches', he complained. 'In every small village in Germany sits a dirty Jew, like a spider drawing the people into the web of usury. He lends money to the small farmers on the security of their land and so gradually acquires control of everything. The Jews are the parasites of my empire. The Jewish question is one of the great problems I have to deal with, and yet nothing can be done to cope with it!

On his visit to England in 1907 he 'declaimed vehemently against the Jews', telling Sir Edward Grey: 'There are far too many of them in my country. They want stamping out.' At the same time he boasted, wavering uncertainly between pogrom anti-semitism and extermination antisemitism, that there would be a 'Jew-baiting' in Germany if he, the Kaiser, did not keep his people in check. Even at a personal level, Wilhelm made no secret of his strong anti-Jewish prejudice, saying in disgust to his American dentist that if he walked through the Tiergarten he would 'have to greet all the fat Jewesses in the park! 159 (It is when I read passages like this that I think to myself- if the All-Highest had been any more high-minded, he would have struck the top of his head on the underside of a Stammtisch!)

To Nicholas Butler, the President of Columbia University, Wilhelm explained that the revolutionary threat in Europe came from international Jewry. 'If you take a Russian Jew and bring him to Berlin to learn theoretical anarchy and then send him to Paris to learn practical vice, he becomes a dough out of which no nation can bake a digestible bread. There were 18,000 such persons who went from Germany to Paris last year', the Kaiser believed. The 'leaders of the Revolt in Russia in 1905 were Jews, naturally. They worked hand in glove with 'their kinsmen in France who have the whole Press under their nefarious influence', Wilhelm declared in a letter to the Tsar.

Wilhelm's anti-semitism reached new heights of intensity in 1908, in the wake of the two greatest domestic crises of his reign - the trial of his best friend Philipp Eulenburg for homosexuality, and the Daily Telegraph crisis. His intimate circle of friends had been suddenly broken up by 'Jewish cheek, slander and lies', he complained to Chamberlain. Maximilian Harden, Eulenburg's tormentor, was in the Kaiser's words a 'loathsome, dirty Jewish fiend', 'a 'poisonous toad out of the slime of hell, a disgraceful stain on our Volk'. The journalists attacking him in the press were a *Schweinpack*, *Saubengels*, he

railed during the Daily Telegraph crisis, which was entirely the work of the 'lying press of European pan-Jewry' and the 'Jewish press carnival'. Early in 1909 he warned darkly of the fate in store for the Jews when the Germans finally 'awoke' from their long sleep. To his friend Max Egon Fürst zu Fürstenberg he wrote: 'The Golden International has our Fatherland in its grip and plays ball with our holiest possessions through the press which it controls! One is gradually turning into a convinced anti-semite. If the German Volk ever wakes from the torpor of the hypnosis induced by the Jewish press and becomes seeing, we could be in for a nice surprise!

However, there was still a major gap between Wilhelm's opinions and what he felt could be done in terms of practical policy. Not long before the outbreak of war, as Helmut Pogge has shown he found himself having to ward off demands for radical restrictions on German Jews made by ex Generals and other radicals in the Pan-German League and strongly supported by his own son. The young Crown Prince sent his father a copy of the anti-semitic brochure '*Wenn ich der Kaiser war*', by the Pan German leader Heinrich Class, which called for the exclusion of Jews from the civil service, the Army and teaching positions, and a removal of their right to vote. Wilhelm's reply to the Crown Prince was actually drafted by the head of the Civil Cabinet, Rudolf von Valentini, a close political ally of Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg. Valentini pointed out that, if the Jews left or were expelled from Germany, the German economy would be set back some hundred years. Not only that, but Germany would, with such a step, leave the ranks of the civilised nations of the world. He did concede, however, that Jewish influence on German culture had become too predominant and that measures were needed to thrust it back.

Not surprisingly, Wilhelm's brutality in general and anti-semitism in particular, like that of Chamberlain and many others, grew more intense still with the outbreak of war. In September 1914, after the German victory at Tannenberg, the Kaiser proposed that the 80,000 Russian prisoners of war be driven onto a barren spit of land in the Baltic and kept there till they died of thirst and hunger: it was left to one of his generals to point out that that would be 'genocide'. In conversations with the American ambassador, he made it clear that 'mere democracies like France and the United States' could never take part in a peace conference, since 'war was a royal sport, to be indulged in by hereditary monarchs and concluded at their will'. He said that 'he knew Germany was right, because God was on their side'. Woodrow Wilson's special envoy Colonel House, when he heard of these conversations, asked whether the Kaiser was 'crazy'." Chamberlain for his part extolled the German Kaiser as an 'Aryan soldier-king' and as a Siegfried who had taken up the 'struggle against the corroding poison of Jewry. He proclaimed that the war was a 'life-or-death

struggle ... between two human ideals: the German and the un-German'. Germany must therefore, 'for the next hundred years and more', pursue the strengthening of all things German and the 'determined extermination of the un-German [*die entschlossene Ausrottung des Undeutschen*]'. The 'pure, Germanic force' had to be protected from the 'disgusting worm', '*dem eklen Wurm*'. The central concern of the 'struggle' was 'salvation from the claws of the un-German and anti-German', he declared in 1915, and went on, quoting almost directly from the most offensive passages in Wagner's *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850): 'Against this devil's brood [*Teufelsgezücht*] stands Germany as God's champion: Siegfried against the worm'.

By 1917, Chamberlain unambiguously identified the Jews (and with them now the United States of America) as Germany's chief enemy. In his letters to Kaiser Wilhelm, he argued that England and Germany had been destined by 'the bonds of blood' to be friends and allies; if they had pursued the 'high mission of Germandom' together, they could effortlessly have dominated the world. But it was not to be, for England is completely in the hands of the Jews and the Americans. That is why no-one will understand this war unless he is quite clear that, at its most fundamental level, this is the war of the *Judentum* and the *Amerikanertum*, which is closely related to it, for the domination of the world - a war against Christendom, against spirituality [*Geistesbildung*], against moral strength, against pure art, against every Ideal life-philosophy, and in favour of a world consisting only of finance, factory and commerce - in short, an unbridled plutocracy.

'The Jew and the Yankee are the driving forces' behind the war, he declared. This was a war of 'modern mechanical "Civilisation" against the archaic, holy, eternally reborn "Kultur" of the chosen races of mankind.

Wilhelm shared these sentiments without reserve. In January 1917 he wrote to Chamberlain:

The war is a struggle between two *Weltanschauungen*, the Teutonic-German for morality, right, loyalty and faith, genuine humanity, truth and real freedom, against ... the worship of mammon, the power of money, pleasure, land-hunger, lies, betrayal, deceit and - last but not least - treacherous assassination! These two *Weltanschauungen* cannot be reconciled or tolerate one another, one must be victorious, the other go under!

After his flight to Holland on 9 November 1918 (and perhaps stung by assertions that he was Jewish himself!), the Kaiser thirsted for revenge. He demanded that the Army recall him as 'dictator' or 'Führer'; on another occasion he demanded that Ludendorff take over military power and Helfferich civilian

control pending his own return. When Hitler's and Ludendorff's beer-hall putsch failed on the fifth anniversary of his, Wilhelm's, fall from power, he declared that their failure showed that he alone was capable of restoring order at home. He warned that on his restoration 'blood must flow, much blood, [the blood] of the officers and civil servants, especially of the aristocracy, of all those who have deserted me'. He had heated discussions with his entourage about whether the enemy at home or, the enemy abroad should be dealt with first, declaring (as he had in 1905) that he intended to draw the sword 'first against the Sozis and then against the French'.

In the isolation of exile, Wilhelm evolved the most bizarre and harebrained conspiracy theories according to which the Jesuits, the Freemasons and the Jews were plotting together to take over the world." After visiting the Kaiser in Doorn in 1921, an ex-Minister of Education captured the atmosphere well when he noted that Wilhelm had a 'profound abhorrence for the Jews', and in particular for the Jewish press. 'He was convinced that the World War had been started by the Jewish masonic lodges in France, England and Italy and handed me literature of the most questionable kind on this topic.' Wilhelm also handed his visitor a silver brooch in the shape of a swastika with the words: 'Now you have been admitted into the order of the decent people', adding that his wife had also worn such a brooch.

In the mid-1920S, Wilhelm called for the formation of a 'Christian International' to launch the 'Kampf' against the *Verjudung* of Germany; after the 'purification' of the Fatherland, the struggle would have to be continued against 'das Judentum' in the whole world." He demanded that the Bible be re-written to eliminate most of the Old Testament, so leaving only genuinely Christian elements, which he claimed were Zoroastrian and therefore 'Aryan' in origin and 'not Semitic-Jewish' at all. 'Let us free ourselves from the *Judentum* with its Jawe!', he cried in one of his last letters to Chamberlain." And just as the Jews were not our religious forebears', so of course Jesus was 'not a Jew', but a Gallilean, a man, he liked to believe, 'of exceptional beauty, tall and slim, with a noble face inspiring respect and love; his hair blond shading into chestnut brown, his arms and hands noble and exquisitely formed'."

Wilhelm's earlier racism now went completely haywire. In an article he wrote in 1928 for the American Century Magazine on 'the Sex of Nations', he declared the French to be a feminine race with an inbred love of parliamentary government, whereas the Germans were racially masculine, biologically in need of leadership because they were at home only in primitive, 'purely vertical masculine, monarchical' structures which were the 'opposite of parliamentarism'. In 1923, after hearing a lecture by the anthropologist

Frobenius, the Kaiser had an almost religious revelation. Suddenly he realised, he said, that the French and the English were not whites at all but blacks. The future mission of the German people was now clear to him: 'We shall be the leaders of the Orient against the Occident! I shall have to change my picture "Völker Europas". For we belong on the other side!' The Germans were not part of the West, but the 'face of the East against the West'; the main thing was that England, France and America should 'go under'. The 'negroid nation of the French' were traitors to their own Continent, the Kaiser declared in his letters to his American friend George Sylvester Viereck. He was appalled to learn, he wrote, that the English had 'already begun to follow the French example and allow the Niggerboys to march shoulder to shoulder with the Lords son and the squireboy in the Boy-Scout companies', for to him this was the 'beginning of treason to their Race formerly only executed by the French Negroids!'

There was no doubt in Wilhelm's mind that the Jews, too, were of African negroid origin, only disguised for the moment, as he wrote in an essay of 1925 entitled 'The Jew Today', as Bolsheviks. Bolshevism, he declared, was but 'the outstretched arm' of international Jewry, out to destroy every government in the world. The 'Moscow Jews' controlled the yellow and black races and therefore presented a grave danger to the white races of Europe and America, he warned. Far from being terrified by Stalin's consolidation of power in the Soviet Union, Wilhelm was overjoyed, for he interpreted this as a famous victory over the 'Jewish-Bolshevik' leaders who had seized power in 1917. Now that Stalin was in control, he said in October 1926, the 'national Soviet Republic of the Russian worker' could be established.

In the bitterness of exile Kaiser Wilhelm II made the final dreadful leap to the anti-semitism of extermination. 'The Hebrew race', he wrote in English to an American friend,

are my most inveterate enemies at home and abroad; they remain what they are and always were: the forgers of lies and the masterminds governing unrest, revolution, upheaval by spreading infamy with the help of their poisoned, caustic, satirical [sic] spirit. If the world once wakes up it should mete out to them the punishment in store for them, which they deserve

On 2, December 1919, he wrote *manu proprio* to General August von Mackensen, referring to his own abdication:

The deepest, most disgusting shame ever perpetrated by a people in history, the Germans have done onto themselves. Egged on and misled by the tribe of Juda' whom they hated, who were guests among them! That was their thanks! Let no German ever forget this, nor rest

until these parasites have been destroyed and exterminated [*vertilgt und ausgerottet*] from German soil! This poisonous mushroom on the German oak-tree!

He called for a 'regular international all-worlds pogrom A la Russe' as 'the best cure'. 'Jews and Mosquitoes' were 'a nuisance that humanity must get rid of in some way or other', he proclaimed, and added, again in his own hand: 'I believe the best would be gas!'

It seems difficult to come to any other conclusion than that from the age of twenty to the age of eighty, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who ruled over Germany for thirty crucial years between Bismarck and Hitler, was a staunch antisemite, and that his anti-semitism formed a central element of his outlook on the world. The fact that, in November 1938, he privately expressed disgust at the 'gangsterism' of the *Kristallnacht* cannot outweigh the mass of evidence now available on his deeply held anti-Jewish attitudes, especially when it is remembered that even Himmler was outraged by the mindless violence of that dark night. Wilhelm II was a racist, an ideological autocrat and reactionary, the sworn enemy of Liberalism, Democracy, Catholicism and Socialism and of all foreign Powers that seemed to lend support to these forces, so limiting his own power at home and the expansion of German power in the world. With his forced abdication in November 1918, the last German Kaiser embraced world conspiracy theories of the bizarrest kind and, in what seems like a logical extension of his earlier anti-semitism, called for the extermination of the Jews.

Wilhelm died in June 1941, just three weeks before Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, which surely he would have welcomed as warmly as he had exulted over the Führer's victories in Poland, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium and France. In 1940, the Kaiser looked on in wonder as Hitler put into effect the goals for which he, Wilhelm, had striven in his own reign. This war was, he cried,

a succession of miracles! The old Prussian spirit of Frd. Rex, of Clausewitz, Blücher, Gneisenau etc. has again manifested itself, as in 1871 ... The brilliant leading Generals in this war came from My school, they fought under my command in the [First] Worlds War as lieutenants, captains or young majors. Educated by Schlieffen they put the plans he had worked out under me into practice along the same lines as we did in 1914.

By this stage in his long life, the Jews and England were so conjoined in his mind that he frequently hyphenated 'Juda-England' into one word. In a recently discovered series of letters written in his last year at Doom, he declared Germany to be the land of monarchy and therefore of Christ; England the land of Liberalism and therefore of Satan and Antichrist. Germany's real enemy was not the British people but the English ruling classes, who were 'Freemasons thoroughly infected [*durchseucht*] by Juda.' 'The British people must be

liberated from the *Antichrist Juda*', he wrote in 1940. 'We must drive [*vertreiben*] Juda out of England just as he has been chased [*verjagd*] out of the Continent.' It was the Jews and Freemasons who had twice - in 1914 and again in 1939 - unleashed a war of *Vernichtung* against Germany with the aim of establishing an international Jewish empire held together by British and American gold. But then 'God intervened and smashed their plan!' 'Juda's plan has been smashed to pieces and they themselves swept [*weggefegt*] out of the European Continent!' Now the Continent was 'consolidating and closing itself off from British influences after the elimination [*Entledigung*] of the British and the Jews!' The result would be a 'U.S. of Europe!', he cried in triumph.⁹ To his sister he wrote in jubilation: 'The hand of God is creating a new World & working miracles. ... We are becoming the U.S. of Europe under German leadership, a united European Continent, nobody ever hoped to see.' And he added, with undisguised satisfaction: 'The Jews [are] being [sic] thrust out of their nefarious positions in all countries, whom they have driven to hostility for centuries.'

Even at the last, in Europe's darkest hour, Kaiser Wilhelm II showed no hint of compassion, no sign of common human decency. Far from rising to the world-historical moral responsibilities of the 'Christian' monarch he so passionately claimed to be, he surveyed the death and destruction all around him and exulted. He gazed upon the greatest evil and declared it to be the work of God.