

# REHEARSAL FOR DESTRUCTION

*A Study of Political Anti-Semitism  
in Imperial Germany*

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by

PAUL W. MASSING



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## FOREWORD TO STUDIES IN PREJUDICE

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At this moment in world history anti-Semitism is not manifesting itself with the full and violent destructiveness of which we know it to be capable. Even a social disease has its periods of quiescence during which the social scientist, like the biologist or the physician, can study it in the search for more effective ways to prevent or reduce the virulence of the next outbreak.

Today the world scarcely remembers the mechanized persecution and extermination of millions of human beings only a short span of years away in what was once regarded as the citadel of Western civilization. Yet the conscience of many men was aroused. How could it be, they asked each other, that in a culture of law, order and reason, there should have survived the irrational remnants of ancient racial and religious hatreds? How could they explain the willingness of great masses of people to tolerate the mass extermination of their fellow citizens? What tissues in the life of our modern society remain cancerous, and despite our assumed enlightenment show the incongruous atavism of ancient peoples? And what within the individual organism responds to certain stimuli in our culture with attitudes and acts of destructive aggression?

But an aroused conscience is not enough if it does not stimulate a systematic search for an answer. Mankind has paid too dearly for its naive faith in the automatic effect of the mere passage of time: incantations have really never dispelled storms, disaster, pestilence, disease or other evils; nor does he who torments another cease his torture out of sheer boredom with his victim.

Prejudice is one of the problems of our times for which everyone has a theory but no one an answer. Every man, in a sense, believes that he is his own social scientist, for social science is the stuff of everyday living. The progress of science can perhaps be charted by the advances that scientists have made over commonsense notions of phenomena. In an effort to advance beyond mere commonsense approaches to problems of intergroup conflict, the American Jewish Committee in May, 1944, invited a group of American scholars of various backgrounds and disciplines to a two-day conference on religious and racial prejudice. At this meeting, a research program was outlined which would enlist scientific method in

the cause of seeking solutions to this crucial problem. Two levels of research were recommended. One was more limited in scope and geared to the recurring problems faced by educational agencies; e.g., the study of public reaction to selected current events, and the evaluation of various techniques and methods such as those involved in mass media of communication as they impinge upon intergroup relationships. The other level suggested was one of basic research, basic in that it should eventually result in additions to organized knowledge in this field. The first level frequently consists of a large number of small studies, limited in scope and focused sharply on a given issue. In practice, we have found that the "goodness" of our smaller studies was proportional to our ingenuity in so devising them that they, too, could contribute basically to knowledge. The chief difference between the two levels of research—sometimes loosely called "short-range" and "long-range" research—seems largely to be due to the immediacy of implementation of findings as program-related or unrelated, rather than to differences in methodology, skills and techniques. On both levels, it is necessary to pursue an interdisciplinary approach to research problems.

To further research on both levels, the American Jewish Committee established a Department of Scientific Research, headed in turn by each of us. The Department saw its responsibility not only in itself initiating fundamental studies in the phenomenon of prejudice, but also in helping to stimulate new studies.

The present series of volumes represents the first fruits of this effort. In a sense, the initial five volumes constitute one unit, an integrated whole, each part of which illuminates one or another facet of the phenomenon we call prejudice. Three of the books deal with those elements in the personality of modern man that predispose him to reactions of hostility to racial and religious groups. They attempt answers to the questions: What is there in the psychology of the individual that renders him "prejudiced" or "unprejudiced," that makes him more or less likely to respond favorably to the agitation of a Goebbels or a Gerald K. Smith? The volume on *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford, based upon a combination of research techniques, suggests one answer. It demonstrates that there is a close correlation between a number of deep-rooted personality traits, and overt prejudice. The study has also succeeded in producing an instrument for measuring these traits among various strata of the population.

Within a more limited range of inquiry, the same question was asked with respect to two specific groups. The study on *Dynamics of Prejudice*, by Bettelheim and Janowitz, considers the connection between personality traits and prejudice among war veterans. Here the investigators were

able to examine the impact of the war experience, with its complex anxieties and tensions, as an added factor of major significance affecting tens of millions of people. *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder*, by Ackerman and Jahoda, is based upon case histories of a number of individuals, from different walks of life, who have received intensive psychotherapy. The special significance of this study lies precisely in the analytical source of the material, in the availability of a body of evidence dealing with phenomena beneath the realm of the conscious and the rational, and illuminating the correlation established in more general terms in the basic investigation of the authoritarian personality.

The other important factor in prejudice is of course the social situation itself, i.e., the external stimuli to which the predispositions within the individual have reacted and continue to react. Nazi Germany is the vivid example of the effect of the social situation, and it is to the understanding of the roots of Nazi anti-Semitism and thence to the present task of democratic reorientation in Germany that *Rehearsal for Destruction* by Massing is directed. As mediator between the world and the individual psyche, the agitator molds already existing prejudices and tendencies into overt doctrines and ultimately into overt action.

In the *Prophets of Deceit*, by Lowenthal and Guterman, the role of the agitator is studied. The agitator's technique of persuasion, the mechanism of mediation that translates inchoate feeling into specific belief and action make up the theme of that volume.

It may strike the reader that we have placed undue stress upon the personal and the psychological rather than upon the social aspect of prejudice. This is not due to a personal preference for psychological analysis nor to a failure to see that the cause of irrational hostility is in the last instance to be found in social frustration and injustice. Our aim is not merely to describe prejudice but to explain it in order to help in its eradication. That is the challenge we would meet. Eradication means re-education, scientifically planned on the basis of understanding scientifically arrived at. And education in a strict sense is by its nature personal and psychological. Once we understand, for example, how the war experience may in some cases have strengthened personality traits predisposed to group hatred, the educational remedies may follow logically. Similarly, to expose the psychological tricks in the arsenal of the agitator may help to immunize his prospective victims against them.

Since the completion of these studies the Department of Scientific Research of the American Jewish Committee has moved ahead into areas of research in which the unit of study is the group, the institution, the community rather than the individual. Fortified by a better knowledge of *individual* dynamics, we are now concerned with achieving a better

understanding of *group* dynamics. For we recognize that the individual *in vacuo* is but an artifact; even in the present series of studies, although essentially psychological in nature, it has been necessary to explain individual behavior in terms of social antecedents and concomitants. The second stage of our research is thus focused upon problems of group pressures and the sociological determinants of roles in given social situations. We seek answers to such questions as: Why does an individual behave in a "tolerant" manner in one situation and in a "bigoted" manner in another situation? To what extent may certain forms of intergroup conflict, which appear on the surface to be based upon ethnic difference, be based upon other factors, using ethnic difference as content?

The authors of the volumes and the many colleagues upon whose experience and assistance they have been able to draw have widely differing professional interests. This is immediately reflected in the various techniques they have used, even in the way they write. Some of the books are more technical, others more "readable." We have not sought uniformity. A search for the truth conducted with the best techniques of the contemporary social sciences was our sole aim. Yet through all this diversity of method a significant measure of agreement has been achieved.

The problem requires a much more extensive and much more sustained effort than any single institution or any small group such as ours, could hope to put forth. It was our hope that whatever projects we could undertake would not only be contributions in themselves, but would also serve to stimulate active interest in continued study by other scholars. With deep satisfaction we have watched the steady increase in scientific publications in this field in the past few years. We believe that any study that bears upon this central theme, if carried out in a truly scientific spirit, cannot help but bring us closer to the theoretical, and ultimately to the practical, solution for reducing intergroup prejudice and hatred.

This foreword to *Studies in Prejudice* would not be complete without a tribute to the vision and leadership of Dr. John Slawson, Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Committee, who was responsible for calling the conference of scholars and for establishing the Department of Scientific Research. Both editors owe Dr. Slawson a debt of gratitude for the inspiration, guidance, and stimulation which he gave them.

MAX HORKHEIMER

SAMUEL H. FLOWERMAN

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Rehearsal for Destruction* is not another recital of Nazi horrors. I think the people of the Western democracies are surfeited with these horrible tales; the human organism seeks protection against such continued barrages of sadism and their hidden connotations of "collective" guilt. Paul Massing has eschewed the macabre aspects of Nazi anti-Semitism as well as individual-psychological interpretations of anti-Semitism; other volumes in this series deal with anti-Semitism as a psycho-cultural phenomenon. His book rests upon a social and political framework. It attempts to show how anti-Semitism, always lurking in the background of German social structure, could be conjured forth to serve those who understood its political potentialities. Wisely he points out that although in Germany a recrudescence of anti-Semitism accompanied economic distress it would be a mistake to assume that economic distress alone was responsible.

To me, perhaps the most startling revelation of Massing's work—startling because studies of anti-Semitism in America seem to point to different relationships between anti-Semitism and such background factors as education, geographical location, etc.—is the disclosure that the implacable enemies of Jews were more often urban than rural, and members of higher-educated rather than lower-educated classes. The most virulent anti-Semitism was spread by teachers, students, white collar workers, petty officials, the free professions and all kinds of "life-reform" movements. In contrast, conservative Junkers, peasants and other rural inhabitants had no special love for Jews but their dislike was circumscribed. Attacks on Jews were often linked with attacks on Junkers and on Christianity. Anti-Semitism was inextricably tied to German nineteenth-century nationalism; its destructive nature derived from the peculiar social and political crises through which Germany struggled.

What are the implications from the lessons of Germany for the problem of anti-Semitism in the United States today? Reasoning by analogy from one political-cultural setting to another is not without risk. Especially important is the difference in class structure of the United States from what it was—and seems still to be—in Germany. Class structure in Germany was relatively frozen and rigid, and upward mobility severely limited. Whereas the term "class" when used in the United States re-

fers largely to economic divisions, class—almost the synonym of *Stand*—in Germany connoted status and caste. American class structure has permitted considerable vertical mobility, although such mobility may become far more circumscribed as our economic frontiers become increasingly “stabilized.” The United States, despite the arguments of Marxist critics, does not have the solidified class structure—ruled by an old guard—as did pre-Hitler Germany, and hence does not afford the same opportunities for manipulation of masses as obtained in Germany. Nor do there appear to be signs that we are developing a *Mittelstand* ideology. Too, there is our long history of liberalism, of fair play, of championing the little man—despite our frequent and often severe lapses into mythology.

To Paul Massing the tragedy of Germany is personal as well as historical. A fighter against Nazism, he suffered—although a non-Jew—at its hands. Truly remarkable then is the objectivity and dispassion with which he has analyzed the political and social adumbrations of anti-Semitism and the undercurrents of which it was symptomatic; if anything his passion was his desire to be dispassionate. During the time he wrote the book I was close to Massing. I watched him labor, for labor it was, to distill the hundreds of manuscripts, documents, books, which provided the basis for an analysis that is both incisive and timely.

*Rehearsal for Destruction*, although a historical study, is of today. Surely it gives us a sounder basis for determining our policy toward Germany and the problem of its reeducation. This is not propaganda; it pleads no cause. It is an analysis of political and social movements, of a causative structure which we must understand if we are to deal intelligently with a nation which still cherishes an authoritarian way of life.

SAMUEL H. FLOWERMAN

## PREFACE

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This study deals with the historical forerunners of Nazi anti-Semitism in imperial Germany, during the period between the emancipation of the German Jews and the outbreak of the first World War. It is hoped that thereby a contribution may be made toward the comprehension of the political developments which eventually culminated in the mass murder of Jews as a national policy. By concentrating on the political aspects of anti-Semitism in Germany, on problems of power, group privileges, and group antagonisms, we also hope to further the understanding of modern anti-Semitism elsewhere.

Political anti-Semitism is not confined to national boundaries; nevertheless, it takes its specific features from a definite national environment. The area to be covered in this case history of political anti-Semitism in imperial Germany is, therefore, necessarily large. It includes political parties, religious and professional organizations, the government and the opposition, individuals and social groups. Treating the subject matter in such a broad setting involves considerable difficulties of selection and evaluation. There is the danger of giving too little and too much. The complex historical picture may easily become distorted if attention is focused on a single one of its features. There was not only anti-Semitism in Germany. Eminent and positive phases of Germany's intellectual, cultural, and even political life were neglected or entirely omitted if they seemed to have no bearing on the specific problem; no attempt has been made to give a comprehensive account of the times. On the other hand, the phenomenon is such that it cannot be detached from the sociopolitical fabric of German life. Understanding German anti-Semitism requires an understanding of German society.

Modern Germany never was able to develop a bourgeois society patterned after the models of Western liberalism. The fact that Germany never made a radical break with its feudal past was the most important single factor that determined the course its history was to take. Long after England and France had achieved national unity, a democratic government, and imperial possessions, long after the middle classes had become the centers of the cultural and economic life of these countries, Germany remained economically backward and politically undeveloped, with its middle classes too weak to take power and remake the nation,

as the French and English middle classes had done. Throughout the existence of imperial Germany, the old feudal groups remained at the wheel. In the struggle for the preservation of their position they obtained support from the large prebourgeois strata between the middle classes and labor, which German sociology usually refers to as the Old *Mittelstand*.<sup>1</sup> The old ruling powers and the *Mittelstand* shared an antipathy to the kind of liberalism sponsored by the middle classes, and all these strata combined shared the fear of rising labor. Anti-Semitism became part of the ensuing sociopolitical configuration.

In the history of anti-Semitism in Germany, therefore, elements of reaction, in the conventional sense of the word, are curiously intermingled with elements of social rebellion. The nationalistic glorification of the German past and the repudiation of "acquisitive" Western society,<sup>2</sup> often stigmatized as Jewish, are linked with anti-Semitism as a manifestation of social protest. As early as the period of the Prussian "Wars of Liberation" against Napoleon, hatred of the Jews was coupled with ideals of liberty and freedom. The democratic revolution of 1848 again witnessed a recrudescence of popular anti-Semitism.<sup>3</sup> A leaflet which circulated at that time in Baden proclaimed, as the goals of the revolution, the annihilation of the aristocracy; the expulsion of the Jews from Germany; the deposal of all kings, dukes, and princes; and the murder of all government officials. It declared that "Germany must become a free state like America."<sup>4</sup> Not infrequently, the leveling of castles and the looting of Jewish homes took place together. In the 1880's, a social reformer organized the Hessian peasants on the basis of anti-Semitism and rural cooperatives, and in the 1890's, anti-Semitic agitators carried the fight against the landed aristocracy into the *Junkers'* own territory.

The dual nature of anti-Semitism as a political tool and as a confused expression of social protest may account for some of the popular misconceptions about its role in modern German history. The ruling groups did not use the tool incessantly. There were periods when they, and with them the majority of the German people, looked upon Jew-baiting as irresponsible and uncouth and expressed their protest against the persecution of Jews in other European countries. In the two decades prior to World War I, organized anti-Semitism was on the decline in Germany. The memory of these years has favored the erroneous belief that German anti-Semitism was negligible prior to the rise of the Nazi movement. The fact is that there were movements in Germany which made the fight against Jews the mainstay of their activity long before Hitler rose to power. Measured in terms of the number of their adherents, organizational strength, or political representation, the pre-Hitler anti-Semites never achieved the status of major political parties. But their significance cannot be judged

by such criteria alone. They kept alive and disseminated anti-Semitism throughout German culture. They formulated the racist ideology long before the Nazis came into existence and helped pave the way for a political alliance of social forces that proved fatal to the German Republic and disastrous to the world.

That anti-Semitism was at times so unmistakably a manifestation of social protest, led to still another fallacious evaluation of its eventual function. As late as the first decade of the twentieth century, liberal historians and socialist writers were convinced that anti-Semitic agitation could not help but awaken the political interests of dormant social groups which, once they had been aroused to political thinking, would soon join the forces of progress. The impact of recent history should have dispelled the last remnants of such illusions.

However, the pendulum may again have swung too far. The events of the last decade have encouraged the belief that Germany was a unique case. It certainly was. But we would take Nazi theories of the German *Volksggeist* more seriously than the Nazis did themselves were we to attribute anti-Semitism to an innate German character. The Nazis found the "indigenous" product sufficiently exportable.

Just as an individual's anti-Semitism may have most complex psychological functions, political anti-Semitism can serve in a multitude of conflict situations. History shows how it was, at one time or other, used by clerical feudal interests against secular liberalism; by governments against the opposition; by reaction against labor; by imperialist forces against the peoples of coveted territories; by nationalistic resistance against foreign intervention. But history also shows the forces which resisted it and the circumstances which hindered its growth. Any fruitful analysis of the phenomenon, therefore, must be concrete and sensitive to its varied and often contradictory manifestations.

I wrote the present book as a member of the Institute of Social Research, New York, and I am deeply indebted to the Institute's director, Dr. Max Horkheimer, who first conceived of it and advised me throughout the period of writing. Other members of the Institute, Dr. Leo Lowenthal, Dr. Frederick Pollock, Dr. Felix J. Weil, and Dr. Karl A. Wittfogel, read the manuscript at various stages of completion, and I have freely drawn on their knowledge and experience. Dr. A. R. L. Gurland helped me greatly with his severe and constructive criticism. It is with a particular feeling of obligation that I thank Mr. George Fuchs for his untiring assistance. His knowledge of German society and politics and his passion for understanding the development of Germany's recent history have been a constant source of inspiration.

To Dr. John Slawson, Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Committee, and to Dr. Samuel H. Flowerman, Director of the Committee's Scientific Department, I am thankful for having shown much patience with an author's procrastination.

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Messrs. Herbert and William Poster edited the manuscript. Mr. John I. Shields made the Index. Mr. Heinz Norden translated Documents I-XI and Miss Florella Haas of the American Jewish Committee Document XII. I want to thank them all for their assistance.

PAUL W. MASSING

Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey  
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