Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 368.

by *Zoltán Kékesi*

In his book *A Specter Haunting Europe*, Paul Hanebrink presents a sweeping history of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, covering one hundred years of history of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe. The author of the previous *In Defense of Christian Hungary* (2006), an excellent study on Christian nationalism in interwar Hungary, Hanebrink examines in his new book a central element of modern anti-Semitism in the region and beyond. While focusing primarily on Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania, Hanebrink describes "the belief that Communism was a Jewish plot" (p. 4) as a truly transnational phenomenon that extended to Western Europe and across the Atlantic as well. The book traces the emergence of the myth in post-revolutionary Europe, examines its dissemination during the interwar period and the Holocaust, follows its transformation during the Cold War, and analyzes its reemergence in today's "memory wars."

Impressive in its scope and depth, the book makes a strong case for an approach that goes beyond merely exposing and refuting the myth and asks, instead, "why it has been and remains so powerful" (p. 5). Such an approach, Hanebrink argues, "requires the historian to ask what the idea meant to those who used it and treated it as "real," not to investigate to what extent it was or not true" (p. 26). Hanebrink elaborates nuanced answers to questions such as "what did [the myth] mean in different political contexts? How did it circulate across borders and from one regime to another? How was it transformed over the course of the twentieth century?" (p. 7). Despite the vast scope of the subject, Hanebrink manages to reconstruct micro-contexts of anti-Jewish discourses in which the semantic and political potential of the myth can be fruitfully explored.

"A gang of young women, of dubious appearance, Jewish like all the rest of them," wrote the papal nuncio in Munich, the later Pope Pius XII, in 1919, in a report to Vatican officials on what he encountered as he visited the headquarters of Bavaria's new Soviet regime. At the residence of Ludwig III, the last king of Bavaria, he

found a "female rabble," led by "a young Russian woman, a Jew and a divorcée." For him, she could only be the "mistress" of a more powerful personality, Max Levien, a Russian-German communist whom he also described, falsely, as Jewish. In his eyes, the new occupants of the royal residence were all of Jewish decent and Eastern European origin, low social status, questionable moral standards, and criminal mindset. For him, the sight of a "female rabble" at the residence of a disposed monarch signaled what that combination of despicable characteristics could bring about. Some of the revolutionaries, indeed, were women: although the Bavarian Soviet Republic ultimately failed at subverting gender hierarchies, and all its leaders were men,[1] it did support female participation to an extent that shocked contemporaries, as it did the later Pope Pius XII.

This brilliantly chosen opening scene, right at the beginning of chapter one, allows Hanebrink to illustrate the profound social and political change that the revolutions of 1917, 1918, and 1919 introduced. At the same time, it allows him to explore patterns of perception that later merged into the mythical notion of "Judeo-Bolshevism." Finally, it helps him demonstrate how far these perceptions traveled: they emerged from and contributed to a cross-European—and transatlantic—consensus: "The letter reflected what many Europeans believed: Jews were the face of the revolution" (p. 13).

The papal ambassador is the first in a series of travelers and correspondents that Hanebrink introduces. Coming from Rome, Paris, London, and elsewhere, they commented on the revolutionary upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe and informed audiences in Western Europe and across the Atlantic. A British journalist traveling revolutionary Russia and two French writers, Jérôme and Jean Tharaud, traveling revolutionary Hungary, produced counter-revolutionary discourse and co-authored the emerging vision of Judeo-Bolshevism. Hanebrink weaves their voices masterfully together with those of their local counterparts in Germany, Hungary, Romania, and elsewhere, proving that the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism "took shape within [...] transnational networks of anti-Communist

[1] Andrea Kampf, "*Frauenpolitik und politisches Handeln von Frauen während der Bayerischen Revolution 1918/19*" (PhD diss., University of Hagen, 2016).

thought" (p. 9). His approach invites further studies of multi-directional transfer processes. Such studies could elaborate on how reports on the revolutions were received, echoed, and elaborated in Western societies and then re-circulated in Germany and Eastern Europe—as in the case of the travelogues of the Tharaud brothers or Henry Ford's *The International Jew*.

Hanebrink's account includes Jewish responses as well, outlining how Jewish leaders and communities protested the allegations that associated Jews with revolutionary politics, documented anti-Jewish atrocities, organized relief aid for the victims, and analyzed anti-Jewish discourse in order to refute it. As Hanebrink shows, early responses by Jewish liberals anticipated later scholarly efforts to explain Jewish political participation, questioned the "Jewishness" of the revolutions, and addressed the contradictions of modern Jewish identities. Some of them examined the "*political* rationale" (p. 51) behind the allegations and atrocities—the approach that Hanebrink himself pursues.

In the book, however, essentially no voice is given to Jewish Communists, nor is there any detailed account of Leftist responses (Jewish or not). One of the unnamed women in the report of the papal ambassador may very well have been Frida Rubiner, a communist militant, journalist, editor, and translator, who was born to a Jewish family in today's Lithuania. During the Soviet Republic in Munich, she probably served as the head of the propaganda committee. Subsequently, she edited *Die Rote Fahne* in Vienna and Berlin before she occupied press—and propaganda—related positions in Moscow. How did she address anti-Communism and anti-Semitism in her writings? Counter-revolutionary discourse constructed a distorted and racialized image of her and other like-minded radicals, used to demonize and denigrate Jews and (Jewish and non-Jewish) Communists.

Indeed, revolutionaries were not entirely silent about anti-Semitism. In Munich, for example, as anti-Jewish atrocities unfolded, the revolutionary Central Council condemned the acts and issued a proclamation signed by Ernst Toller, a German-

Jewish writer and one of the leaders of the Bavarian Soviet Republic.[2] Certainly, responses from Jewish Leftists were embedded in the complexities of modern Jewish history and, on the other hand, in the complicated relationship that Social Democracy and Communism had with the "Jewish Question." Although Hanebrink mentions some of these responses in passing (p. 73), the omission of a more detailed discussion reinforces the perception that the Left remained silent and disregards Leftist anti-racist traditions, as well as specifically Leftist traditions of anti-Jewish prejudices. A discussion of the latter would have provided the necessary context for chapter five as well, where Hanebrink turns to the transformation of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism "Under Communist Rule."

In the book's opening chapter, Hanebrink traces the origin of the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism to the three "pillars" of anti-Semitism: the association of Jews with subversion and social disorder, the assumption of an international Jewish conspiracy, and the allegation of Jewish fervor and fanaticism (pp. 28-30). This allows the author to provide the reader with some historical context without getting lost in the details of modern anti-Semitism, leaving it to later chapters to outline the necessary historical background in each geographical context.

A different way to contextualize the myth would have been to look into the prejudices that associated Jews with specific political ideas and socio-economic systems of the modern age such as Liberalism, Capitalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Socialism. Such associations persisted throughout the period that the book covers and generated, historically, a configuration of anti-Jewish notions in which anti-Communism formed one—sometimes crucial—component. Indeed, each of these associations "gave an international perspective to parochial anxieties about the nation and its enemies" (p. 32), as they offered a distorted representation of supra-national phenomena that threatened to undermine national sovereignty, social order, or local-ethnic culture. This wider semantics is somewhat missing from Hanebrink's account, despite the fact that notions such as the international *Finanzjudentum* were widely mobilized in the interwar period and were

[2] Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 102-103.

instrumental for policies of exclusion, expropriation, and extermination. They were pertinent to anti-Allied propaganda as well and lived on after the Second World War in new forms. A more thorough consideration of this wider set of associations would have been essential for a discussion of anti-Jewish sentiments during Communism, too.

Besides specifically anti-Jewish tropes, Judeo-Bolshevism conjures up monstrous images of the "East" as well. The Jewish Communist is commonly depicted as a "destructive border-crosser" (p. 8) who endangers the nation as well as the community that the nation is seen as being part of: Europe, Christianity, or Western civilization. The mythical image of Judeo-Bolshevism is thus inseparable from notions of Europe's Eastern Others, racially defined images of Asian (or Slavic) "barbarism," as well as a toxic sense of European superiority. The figure of the "Eastern Jew" had the potential to unify these discourses and embody an enemy that was at once outside in the "East" and inside the societies of Europe and those across the Atlantic.

Despite these general characteristics, the meaning of the myth varied according to time and place. In chapter two, "The Greater War," Hanebrink traces the emergence of the myth in Eastern Europe's "long World War I," investigating the "interrelated meanings" (p. 82) of the myth as it took shape in (today's) Poland, Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. In this chapter, Hanebrink zooms in on anti-Jewish atrocities as they unfolded in the wake of collapsing empires, border conflicts, civil wars, and (counter-)revolutions. Chapter three, "Refashioned by Nazism," takes the reader back to Munich, "a gathering place for counterrevolutionaries across east-central Europe" (p. 85), and the cradle of national socialism, examining how "Judeo-Bolshevism made Hitler" (p. 83) and how, as the title suggests, national socialism refashioned the myth. Hanebrink describes the shift after 1933-1934 that turned Judeo-Bolshevism from an image of internal threat into a symbol of an external enemy, making it an essential element of Hitler's vision of a new Europe. From Spain to Hungary, Fascist and pro-Fascist regimes that presented their countries as "defenders of Christian Europe" were challenged to commit themselves to the idea of "an international anti-Communist front" under national socialist leadership (pp. 120-121). If territories in Eastern

Europe appear as zones of (counter)-revolutionary unrest and anti-Jewish atrocities in chapter two, they re-appear as the epicenter of mass murder in chapter four, titled "A Barbarous Enemy." Here, Hanebrink focuses on the Eastern Front of World War II and explores how the idea of Judeo-Bolshevism influenced German genocidal practices and "forged a consensus between the Germans and their [local] helpers" (p. 143). This chapter closes with Hanebrink's insightful analysis of how the prospect of German defeat transformed the myth yet again into "the idea of the West under attack" that would "outlive the Nazi regime in remarkable and unexpected ways." Later, in chapter six, Hanebrink returns to (West-)Germany and explores the ways in which the Catholic-conservative elite reframed anti-Communism for the Cold War age by suppressing its earlier anti-Jewish components and drawing on the emerging transatlantic notion of a "Judeo-Christian civilization."

Chapter five, on the other hand, discusses—less convincingly—the reformulation of the myth in Communist Eastern Europe.[3] Especially in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, as Hanebrink explains, "deeply entrenched stereotypes that identified Communism with Jews profoundly shaped popular perceptions of Soviet occupying forces and the Communist parties that rose to power with their support" (p. 166). Indeed, during the decades to come, Communist parties manipulated popular sentiments in various ways and were, to different degrees, responsible for the persistence of anti-Jewish prejudices. Yet, the emerging image of the "cosmopolitan" and "Zionist" Jew, accused of "sabotaging" Communism and acting as an agent of "Western imperialism," cannot be taken as merely a coded version of the Judeo-Bolshevist myth. Rather, it used stereotypes that had long associated Jews with Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism, and Capitalism in order to link Jews with the enemies of Communism. For an understanding of how the identification of Jews with Communist rule did persist in the period we may need to look at discourses that were less public and therefore often difficult to trace.

[3] In this regard Hanebrink's approach is similar to André Gerrits's interpretation in *The Myth of Jewish Communism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).

Ultimately, chapter five and six leave the reader with the impression that the myth, at least in its clear-cut form, faded away from Cold War Europe before it resurfaced as memory in Post-Communism. In chapter seven, Hanebrink discusses the German *Historikerstreit* and post-Communist memory politics in Eastern Europe and beyond. In this context, far right discourses on "Jewish perpetrators" of Communist crimes re-enter the stage in response to new norms of transnational Holocaust memory. Surprisingly, however, there is no mention of Fascist and neo-Fascist currents that in post-1945 Europe (and beyond) channeled radical anti-Jewish ideas. There is thus a missing link in Hanebrink's account between pre-1945 anti-Semitism and today's far right discourses.

One place to start such a chapter could be, again, Munich, where many Eastern European radical nationalists, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Hungarians, and others, gathered after the collapse of the Fascist regimes. Although they would subsequently disperse throughout the "Free World" and create transnational networks of politically committed communities, Munich would remain an important center for radical nationalist exiles. In the former *Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, they established organizations that influenced émigré politics throughout the Cold War.

In spring 1949, the Ukrainian-led Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) organized a large protest against Communism in Königsplatz, the former monumental center of National Socialist Munich.[4] The ABN was established in 1943 by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists with an outspoken anti-Jewish agenda. After the war, under the leadership of Yaroslav Stetsko, the ABN became a significant Cold War anti-Communist organization, bringing together delegates from Eastern European exile communities and operating from Munich until its dissolution in the 1990s. How did their pre-1945 beliefs transform during the Cold War? Recent scholarship suggests that even where Fascist and overtly anti-Jewish references were suppressed—as was the case in the cult of Fascist leader Stepan Bandera in the Ukrainian diaspora—long-distance nationalism and anti-

[4] Ann Holian, "Anticommunism in the Streets: Refugee Politics in Cold War Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (2010): 134-161.

Communism created a potent cultural context for the return of the notion of the "Jewish perpetrators" of Soviet crimes. Communities in the Ukrainian diaspora played an important role in the ensuing "memory wars" from the 1980s onwards.[5]

Also working from Munich, journalist Lajos Marschalkó became the most prolific proponent of radical anti-Jewish ideas in the Hungarian diaspora. His book *The World Conquerors* (1958) portrayed the postwar world as an "uncanny materialization" of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and re-formulated the old myth for the age of Cold War hysteria. In his account, Jewish Capitalism and Jewish Communism conspired to take hold of the world. In the early 1960s, a report on "organized Anti-Semitism in the United States" published by the American Jewish Committee called attention to the book's "widespread circulation."[6] At the same time, a correspondent of The Wiener Library, a London-based documentation center of Nazi crimes, noted that the book had become "something like a bestseller."[7] Marschalkó's books circulated clandestinely in Hungary too, where they became respected classics in neo-Fascist circles after 1989. While overt forms of anti-Semitism were mostly relegated to the margins of the postwar world, it is precisely a look at these margins that can help us understand historical transfers and trajectories.

Similarly, the German national socialist exiles in Argentina organized platforms that helped re-formulate pre-1945 views. In their *refugio seguro*, they elaborated a national socialist memory of the war as well as an understanding of the postwar order. The journal *Der Weg*, published in the late 1940s and 1950s in Buenos Aires and distributed in West-Germany as well, perpetuated, among other things, the myth of a Jewish-Communist conspiracy.[8] Their take on the Cold War political order did not differ much from what Marschalkó propagated. To what extent did

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[5] See John-Paul Himka, "A Central European Diaspora under the Shadow of World War II: The Galician Ukrainians in North America," *Austrian History Yearbook* 37 (2006): 17-31; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, "Holocaust Amnesia: The Ukrainian Diaspora and the Genocide of the Jews," *German Yearbook of Contemporary History* 1 (2016): 107-144.

[6] American Jewish Committee, *Bigotry in Action* (New York: 1963), 19-20.

[7] Robert Major, "Hungarian «Martyrs»," *The Wiener Library Bulletin* (October 1963): 53.

[8] Holger M. Meding, *"Der Weg." Eine deutsche Emigrantenzeitschrift in Buenos Aires 1947-1957* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1997), for the myth of Jewish Communism, see especially 89-92.

these publications influence the emerging neo-Nazi scene in West-Germany or elsewhere? How did the German far right relate to the notion of Judäo-Bolschewismus before and after 1989? How did *Nation Europa* (1951-2009), for example, probably the longest standing far-right journal inside (West-)Germany, re-articulate national socialist notions of Europe and its enemies? In order to understand how anti-Jewish discourse resurfaced in competition with Holocaust memory in West-Germany and in post-Communist Eastern Europe, I think it is indispensable to look at (neo-)Fascist discourses and channels of transmission in the postwar era.

Finally, in an "Epilogue" Hanebrink hints at more recent anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourses that point to routes of transformation beyond modern and contemporary forms of anti-Jewish attitudes. By taking the reader to Budapest in the summer of 2015 and describing anti-immigrant sentiments and policies in the United States and Europe, Hanebrink points to the urgency and the wider political context of critical thought and historical understanding.

Zoltán Kékesi, Alexander von Humboldt Senior Research Fellow, Center for Research on Antisemitism, Berlin (While writing the review, the author was a Senior Core Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University, Budapest)

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