

Conservatives and Antisemites in Baden and Saxony

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I: Introduction

‘There are two words that cannot be uttered without causing a Saxon to become greatly agitated: Jesuit and Jew.’ This observation by the arch-reactionary Saxon minister Count Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust¹ provides an intriguing definition of Saxon identity. It is especially remarkable that Saxons should have become ‘greatly agitated’ on either score, because so few Catholics and Jews actually lived in the kingdom. Did Beust put his finger on the so-called ‘anti-semitism-without-Jews’ syndrome and its less well-known corollary, ‘anti-ultramontanism-without-Catholics’? If so, how did different regional environments condition the search on the German Right for a popular leader, a ‘great agitator’ capable of rousing the masses? Did Conservative antagonism towards the Jews condition the Conservatives’ strategies for political success as they (also) defined themselves in opposition to liberals, democrats, and socialists? These questions provide a starting point for the following reflections on the interpenetration of Conservatism and antisemitism in Germany between the 1860s and 1914.

Charges of demagoguery were hurled back and forth between antisemites and Conservatives in almost all German states. Yet ‘authoritarian’ and ‘demagogic’ solutions to the ‘Jewish question’ were not defined the same way everywhere. Certainly much work remains to be done on the micro- and macro planes before the *Alltag* of German antisemitism in the countryside or the role of political violence in shaping Imperial Germany’s electoral culture will come into focus.² However, these desiderata hint at the usefulness of reconsidering evidence on the meso-level, that is, drawn from the region. We now have some excellent studies of regional antisemitic movements. Building on this body of work, the following analysis attempts to demonstrate that the lines between Conservatism and antisemitism became—for a time—so indistinct as to virtually disappear

¹ Friedrich Ferdinand Graf von Beust, *Aus drei Viertel-Jahrhunderten*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1887), vol. 1, p. 178.

² See further references in Till van Rahden, ‘Ideologie und Gewalt. Neuerscheinungen über den Antisemitismus in der deutschen Geschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert’, *Neue Politische Literatur*, 41 (1996), 11–29. Cf. Helmut Walser Smith, ‘Alltag und politischer Antisemitismus in Baden, 1890–1900’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* (hereafter *ZGO*), 141 (1993), 280–303.

in Imperial Germany's third and fifth largest federal states: the Kingdom of Saxony and the Grand Duchy of Baden.

As the second section of this paper explains more fully, qualifying arguments must be introduced to make such a claim viable even as a working hypothesis. The evidence presented here suggests that antisemitic ideas infiltrated German Conservatism more thoroughly, and at an earlier date, than historians have generally believed. This hypothesis fits into a larger argument, elaborated elsewhere, about the difficulty of distinguishing between antisemitic 'populists' and Conservative 'patricians' on the pre-1918 German Right.³ Yet one troubling issue arises immediately: is it appropriate to speak of relations between Conservatives and antisemites at all, or should we speak directly of Conservatives who were also antisemites (or antisemites who were also Conservatives)? Is it possible to say whether Conservatives at a particular time and place were 'sincere' antisemites or not? These thorny questions permit no easy answer. It would be equally unwise to extrapolate from the manifestos, speeches, and correspondence of selected regional leaders to make undifferentiated claims about the political views of all those who joined, supported, or voted for the German Conservative Party (DKP) nationally. But how many regional case studies must be gathered before we revise the prevailing image of German Conservatives as aloof aristocrats unwilling to dirty their hands by taking up the 'Jewish question'? In what follows, the goal is only to suggest the *range* of issues on which a clearer understanding of regional political cultures might illuminate continuities in Conservative–antisemitic relations. The third section charts the divergent fortunes of Conservatives in Baden and Saxony to suggest why Conservative leaders may have felt particularly beleaguered by a 'liberal establishment' during the formative period of their party movements. The fourth section examines Conservatives' proclaimed attachment to religious principle, while the fifth to eighth sections examine selected individuals and issues that reinforced affinities between Conservatives and antisemites.

II: Conservatives and Antisemites

German historians have long been preoccupied with categorizing different sorts of antisemites. Even the most insightful scholars in the field, including Peter Pulzer and Richard Levy, have fallen into this trap. By distinguishing between 'parliamentary' and 'revolutionary' antisemitic movements, Levy made historians aware that radicals and moderates could be found in each camp.⁴ Never-

³ See David Blackbourn, *Populists and Patricians* (London, 1987); cf. James Retallack, 'Anti-Semitism, Conservative Propaganda, and Regional Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany', *German Studies Review*, 11 (1988), 377–403; Retallack, 'Conservatives *contra* Chancellor: Official Responses to the Spectre of Conservative Demagoguery from Bismarck to Bülow', *Canadian Journal of History*, 20 (1985), 203–36.

⁴ Richard S. Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven, Conn., 1975).

theless, Levy's distinction between such 'democratic' antisemites as Max Liebermann von Sonnenberg and such 'revolutionary' antisemites as Theodor Fritsch does not adequately explain Conservative antisemitism.⁵ First, Conservatives were as resolutely anti-parliamentary and anti-democratic as they were anti-revolutionary. Second, Conservatives of remarkably similar political inclinations were able to work as closely with Liebermann as with Fritsch. Using alternative categories, Pulzer differentiated between 'Christian-Conservative' and 'racialist' strains in antisemitic thought.⁶ According to this view, the majority of Conservatives who remained attached to Christian principles had little in common with German racists who contributed more conspicuously to the radicalization of antisemitism—except, that is, when they embraced anti-Jewish politics for 'demagogic' purposes. Such demagoguery in turn is equated with Conservative insincerity or even half-heartedness on the 'Jewish question'.

Artificial distinctions between Conservatives and antisemites have also been perpetuated by overly rigid attempts to use the public statements of leading Conservatives to chart their changing attitudes towards the Jews and their alleged shifts between more or less demagogic practices. Thus Conservatives are generally said to have resisted the siren-call of German antisemites until about 1890. Subsequently Conservatives allegedly 'flirted with' and tried to 'co-opt' radical antisemitism to their own advantage. In the Reichstag election campaign of June 1893—the orthodox account continues—Conservatives were trumped by radical antisemites and suffered major defeats at the polls. Immediately thereafter they rejected antisemitic 'excesses' with special vehemence, not least by drawing their own distinctions between 'conservative' members of the German Social Party and 'radical' German Reformers. Finally, as the independent antisemitic parties fell into disarray around 1900, Conservatives supposedly incorporated antisemitic demands on a subterranean level, though now subordinated to their own agrarian, anti-socialist, and anti-parliamentary goals.

Three elements of this view deserve to be retained, with modification. The first is the conclusion that antisemites and Conservatives *together* bear responsibility for bringing antisemitism into the mainstream of German political discourse before 1914. What nonetheless remains to be demonstrated is the relative contribution of each group to what has been called, on the one hand, a 'cultural code' embracing myriad resentments under the rubric of anti-

⁵ Fritsch remains a shadowy figure; see the short studies by Andreas Herzog, 'Das schwärzeste Kapitel der Buchstadt vor 1933. Theodor Fritsch der "Altmeister der Bewegung" wirkte in Leipzig', *Leipziger Blätter*, 30 (1997), 56–9; Reginald H. Phelps, 'Theodor Fritsch und der Antisemitismus', *Deutsche Rundschau*, 87 (1961), 442–9; and Moshe Zimmermann, 'Two Generations in the History of German Antisemitism: The Letters of Theodor Fritsch to Wilhelm Marr', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (hereafter *LBI YB*), 23 (1978), 89–99.

⁶ Peter G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, 2nd edn (London, 1988); cf. the critique in Stefan Lehr, *Antisemitismus—religiöse Motive im sozialen Vorurteil* (Munich, 1974), p. 4 and ch. 7.

liberalism, and on the other hand, a system of ‘post-liberal apartheid’.⁷ Second, historians are correct to note that even the most extreme antisemites of the pre-1918 period were still restrained, in contrast to the Nazis, by ‘the morality of traditional Western civilization, whether Christian or secular’. However, extreme Christian and extreme antisemitic sentiments may have been more compatible than is generally believed. Third, the rise and fall of German antisemitism, like the fate of Jews themselves, was inextricably linked to the fortunes of German liberalism. Yet German liberals (and their opponents) appear in a new light when we focus on regional struggles for power. This suggests that our understanding of Conservatism and antisemitism as national phenomena will necessarily be revised when both movements are considered in tandem in their local and regional environments.

Readers will not be startled by the claim that antisemitism pervaded mainstream Conservative thought before 1914. Historians are also well aware that when antisemitic leaders strayed from the ‘Jewish question’ and chose to champion tangential political issues that threatened Conservative interests directly, Conservatives publicly disavowed ‘illegitimate’ and ‘excessive’ brands of antisemitism. What is too often forgotten, however, is that Conservatives were engaged in the same acts of distancing long before and long after the decade of the 1890s. This decade continues to be cited as a critical founding period when German politics was reconstituted and when Conservatives rethought their entire approach to politics. But this conclusion rests in part on a false hierarchy of words over deeds (or perhaps even the reverse). Insofar as German Conservatives ruminated *and* acted upon their convictions about the usefulness of antisemitism, there was less linear development in their calculations than historians have generally supposed. Indeed, Conservatives were conspicuously unoriginal in their take on the ‘Jewish question’ in the 1890s.

These reflections also call into question the appropriateness of claims that Conservatives or antisemites paved the way for, or funnelled off support from, each other during any particular period of German history. Instead of delineating a series of episodes in which one of these players is categorized as the challenger and the other as the (real or potential) victim, might it not be more fruitful to identify terrain on which they found lasting consensus? Far from entering a flirtatious phase or even a marriage of convenience, Conservatives and antisemites came very close to fusing in an unheralded but effective political union around 1875. After 1900 too, they co-operated more fully than most accounts suggest. In both periods, close attention to regional developments can help to set the record straight.

Lastly, we should be alert to the danger of conceiving antisemitism as a carefully thought-out political strategy—that is, as a blueprint for political suc-

⁷ Shulamit Volkov, ‘Antisemitism as a Cultural Code. Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany’, *LBI YB*, 23 (1978), 25–46; Werner E. Mosse, cited in Pulzer, *Rise*, p. xiv; for the following quotation, Pulzer in *ibid.*, p. xv.

cess devised in a more or less rational manner, not one springing from personal emotion or experience. Just as the policies devised by antisemites were not always fashioned from deep-seated prejudice against the Jews, Conservatives' reluctance to endorse those policies cannot be taken as evidence that such prejudice was lacking. Hellmut von Gerlach wrote in his memoirs that antisemites he came to know in Saxony, Berlin, and elsewhere almost never found their calling as a result of careful calculation: 'Among the anti-Semitic leaders, I got to know only a few really decent people, and those whose character was spotless were so ignorant and uneducated that I was appalled when I had the opportunity of observing them at close range. They were demagogues one and all, some against their better judgement, others for lack of judgement.'⁸

III: Baden and Saxony: Model Lands of Liberalism and Reaction?

Baden has long attracted the attention of historians of German liberalism. Only in recent years have historians begun to examine the fortunes of Conservatives and antisemites in the Grand Duchy, so that a stock-taking is now possible.⁹ Research on the Kingdom of Saxony has experienced an even more dramatic upswing since German unification in 1990, and here too Conservative elites are now coming under investigation.¹⁰ This scholarship has modified our image of Baden and Saxony as the model lands of liberalism and reaction in Imperial Germany. National Liberals in Saxony and Conservatives in Baden are now seen to have played more important roles than we once thought in coalition-building at election time and in parliament. Still, it would be fair to characterize Conservatism as nearly ascendant in Saxony until after the turn of the century. In Baden Conservatism was an *also-ran*.

Conservatives in Baden were initially thrown on the defensive during the 'liberal era' from 1860 to 1866. From this era date many of the resentments that still percolated within Conservative ranks in the 1870s and 1880s. Even in the 1890s, the antisemitic editor of the Conservative *Badische Landpost* complained that National Liberalism in his state was a 'hothouse plant' for which the Baden government had provided all the manure it needed.¹¹ Such grievances gave Baden Conservatives their characteristic tendency to oscillate

⁸ Cited in Pulzer, *Rise*, p. 100 n.

⁹ Hans-Jürgen Kremer, 'Die Konservative Partei im Großherzogtum Baden 1876–1914' (unpublished MS); Stefan Ph. Wolf, *Konservatismus im liberalen Baden* (Karlsruhe, 1990); Renate Ehrismann, *Der regierende Liberalismus in der Defensive* (Frankfurt/Main, 1993); Stefan Scheil, 'Aktivitäten antisemitischer Parteien im Großherzogtum Baden zwischen 1890 und 1914', *ZGO*, 141 (1993), 304–36.

¹⁰ Further references in James Retallack, 'Society and Politics in Saxony in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Reflections on Recent Research', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 38 (1998), 396–457.

¹¹ Adam Röder, editor of the *Badische Landpost*, quoted in the *Badische Landeszeitung*, no. 225, 24 Sept. 1893, and cited in Wolf, *Konservatismus*, p. 381.

between resentment and resignation on the one hand and arrogance and attack on the other. Considerable flux also characterized the general orientation of state governance in Saxony. For ten years after 1866 Saxon Conservatives had good reason to complain that their state government capitulated too easily to liberal demands. Many Saxon Conservatives considered this 'liberal era' to be disastrous to their cause. One such Conservative was Baron Heinrich von Friesen-Rötha (1831–1910), a member of the Reichstag from 1887 to 1893 with sufficient rank to host week-long visits from Saxon royal princes on his prosperous estate south of Leipzig.¹² Friesen confided to his diary in 1876 that Conservatives in Saxony lacked the courage to stand up to the more confident liberals. 'How could things be different', Friesen asked himself, 'considering the official support that [the liberals] receive from the government?'¹³ Saxon Conservatives had everything to gain, therefore, from the renaissance of Conservatism at the national level which Friesen helped engineer with the founding of the DKP in 1876. Soon the ties binding Saxon Conservatives and the Saxon government were as close as they were extensive. State officials considered it natural that they should belong to the Conservative Party, appear at its rallies, and support it financially.

There is no clear correlation between Conservatives' proximity or access to regional state government and their stance on the 'Jewish question'. Over the long term, the Baden state is rightly seen to have defended Jewish rights vigorously,¹⁴ whereas Saxony is rightly numbered among those states demonstrating the least official tolerance of the Jews.¹⁵ This contrast, however, begs other questions about how government policy from the top down bumped against political challenges posed by antisemites from the bottom up. More often than not, Conservatives were caught squarely in the middle—or not so squarely, for their attachment to monarchical principles was as ambivalent as their quest for popularity among the people. What remains to be determined is how the Conservatives managed to balance their own authoritarian and monarchical traditions against the search for new means to combat the Jews. For example, it is unclear whether Conservative lobbyists were responsible for legislation that from 1892 to 1910 banned kosher slaughtering in Saxony. It appears that Conservative supporters of this legislation drew on arguments advanced locally by Dresden's guild leaders, regionally by other *Mittelständler*, and nationally by animal-rights activists and ritual slaughter myth-makers.¹⁶ Conservatives also

¹² Heinrich von Friesen, *Röthaer Kinder-Erinnerungen* (n.p., n.d.), p. 14.

¹³ Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (hereafter SächsStA Leipzig), Rittergut Rötha und Trahenau (hereafter RG Rötha), Nr. 1575, pp. 140–1, diary entry of 30 Oct. 1876.

¹⁴ See Michael Anthony Riff, 'The Government of Baden against Antisemitism. Political Expediency or Principle?', *LBI YB*, 32 (1987), 119–34.

¹⁵ See Simone Lässig, 'Emancipation and Embourgeoisement: The Jews, the State, and the Middle Class in Saxony and Anhalt-Dessau', in James Retallack (ed.), *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830–1933* (Ann Arbor, Mich., forthcoming).

¹⁶ Adolf Diamant, *Chronik der Juden in Dresden* (Darmstadt, 1973), p. 42; Lehr, *Antisemitismus*, ch. 4.

employed political cartoonists like Max Bewer, who lived near Dresden and whose quasi-pornographic *Politische Bilderbogen* depicted a future Germany overrun by Jews.¹⁷

Neither Saxon nor Baden Conservatives could rely on a strong landed aristocracy to provide the backbone of their party, as Prussian Conservatives clearly could. One member of the Baden Conservative Party was forthright enough to suggest that his party stood perennially on the verge of bankruptcy because its non-noble functionaries sought at all costs to avoid the personally and socially embarrassing situation of asking their 'betters' to hand over party dues. Nor could Conservatives in Baden and Saxony rely on the Agrarian League to do the hard work of political agitation for them, because relations between them were often strained to the breaking point. What do we make of these circumstances? It would be wrong to suppose simply that bourgeois Conservatives were more receptive to antisemitism than noble Conservatives. If anything, one ought to emphasize that antisemitic Conservatives were drawn from *both* non-noble and noble ranks. During the 1880s Friesen and other prominent Conservatives aired their antisemitic views freely in the *Deutsches Adelsblatt*. The larger point is that the relative social heterogeneity characterizing these two Conservative organizations appears to have contributed to Conservative leaders' willingness to regard antisemitism as a key weapon in their political arsenal: they hoped it would bring diverse social groups into close enough proximity that a foundation could be built for future political success.

IV: The Defence of Christian Conservative Principles

The defence of religious principle in confessionally mixed Baden played a larger role in providing a rallying point for a nascent Conservative movement than it did in Saxony. Especially in the 1860s, Protestantism imbued every facet of Conservative politics in Baden. The leading figure in the party at this time was *Oberkirchenrat* Karl August Mühlhäußer (1825–81), a member of the General Synod in the 1860s and co-founder of the Baden Conservative Party. Mühlhäußer and his closest ally, Baron Ernst August Göler von Ravensburg (1837–1912), who chaired the party from 1881 to 1885, believed that the Conservatives' main enemy was the pervasive spirit of anti-Protestant rationalism in the Baden bureaucracy.¹⁸ These Conservatives argued that whereas a person could be devoted to religious principle without engaging in politics, the

¹⁷ *Juden in Deutschland, Juden-A-B-C, and Die Juden im Reichstag* (Politischer Bilderbogen nos. 2, 8, 16, Dresden, 1892–5). On Bewer, see Barbara Suchy, 'Antisemitismus in den Jahren vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in *Köln und das rheinische Judentum* (Cologne, 1984), pp. 252–85.

¹⁸ See Johannes Reinmuth, *Karl August Mühlhäußer* (Heilbronn, n.d.); Ernst August Göler von Ravensburg, 'Die liberale Ära in Baden', *Allgemeine Konservative Monatsschrift*, 40 (1883), 117–34; Wolf, *Konservatismus*; and Otto von Stockhorner's memoir, 'Der Konservatismus in Baden bis 1916' (MS), and other materials in the Generallandesarchiv (hereafter GLA) Karlsruhe, Hinterlegung Freiherrn von Stockhorn [*sic*] (hereafter cited as Nachlaß, or NL, Stockhorner), Fasc. 146 and *passim*.

reverse held true only for a liberal politician. Without true religiosity, Conservatism became 'powerless and insipid'; it was reduced either to 'laughable Junkerdom' or to bureaucratic 'despotism'.¹⁹ Such views were propagated in countless Protestant newspapers, journals, and pamphlet series in the state. There Conservatives could not avoid reading polemics that linked a general defence of Christian principles to specific attacks against the Jews' negative influence on German literature and the press, theatre and music, youth and education, the army, political parties, parliament, family morals, and city life (this list is not exhaustive).²⁰

Despite their very different strengths regionally, the Conservative parties in Baden and Saxony were both eventually forced—one sooner, one later—to abandon ideological purity and tactical consistency. In Baden, a resurgence of liberalism, combined with the rise of the SPD after 1900, convinced more and more Conservatives that their party had to ally with the Centre Party or face extinction. Because Conservatives still viewed the campaign against the Jews as central to their struggle against the liberal state (the same state that Catholics opposed during the *Kulturkampf*), antisemitism resonated most loudly in the arguments of Baden Conservatives who favoured an alliance with the Centre. In this respect Baden Conservatives were merely following the example of the strongly antisemitic Conservative publicist, Baron Wilhelm von Hammerstein, who in the 1880s edited the *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*. Hammerstein had attracted Bismarck's bitter rebukes for advocating an alliance of Catholics and Protestants, built on the common ground of antisemitism.²¹ Unlike Hammerstein, however, whose governmental rivals succeeded in marginalizing him within the national party, pro-Centre Conservatives in Baden actually gained control of their state organization in the 1890s. Also unlike Hammerstein, who never dispelled the deep suspicion of Catholics felt by many of his antisemitic fellow-travellers (including Court Preacher Adolf Stöcker), Saxon Conservative leaders managed to combine starkly antisemitic views with a struggle against ultramontane influences at the Wettin court.

This strategy of identifying the Jew with the broadest possible threat to the Christian state was pursued during the Reichstag election campaign of 1878 by *Kreisgerichtsrat* Baron Otto Stockhorner von Starein (1840–1925), who like Friesen in Saxony imprinted the regional Conservative Party with his antisemitic views for more than two decades. Campaigning for the Conservatives in the untested Catholic regions bordering Lake Constance, Stockhorner's electoral manifesto combined attacks on usurers and Social Democrats, and later referred

¹⁹ *Warte* no. 198, 27 Aug. 1869, cited in Wolf, *Konservatismus*, p. 77.

²⁰ For example, Martin von Nathusius, *Die Unsittlichkeit von Ludwig XIV. bis zur Gegenwart (Zeitfragen des christlichen Volkslebens, Bd 24, Heft 3)* (Stuttgart, 1899), linked the Jews with everything from French drama and Viennese immorality to press abuses and the white slave trade. See also the *Zeit- und Streit-Fragen, Sammlung von Vorträgen für das deutsche Volk*, and similar series.

²¹ *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, no. 279, 31 Jul. 1888; cf. Helmut Fiedler, *Geschichte der 'Dresdner Nachrichten' von 1856–1936* (Olbernhau, 1939), esp. pp. 96–123.

to the 'religion of our Father, Christianity'. Although the word 'Jew' never appeared, Stockhorner's manifesto drew attention to 'the increasing brutalization and licentiousness that have fed mainly on the widespread lack of principle and detachment from God'.²² The linkage between un-Christian morality and economic exploitation persisted in Stockhorner's own thinking. In 1898 he supported an antisemitic campaign in the Baden Landtag against Jews who were allegedly using state funds to support the 'immoral and unethical' teachings of the Talmud. He arranged for the distribution of Father Josef Deckert's pamphlet, *Kann ein Katholik Antisemit sein?* And in his private correspondence of 1903 Stockhorner was still intent on contrasting the 'materialist' and 'Christian' *Weltanschauungen*.²³

A notebook Stockhorner used to deliver his standard stump speech during the 1898 Reichstag campaign, containing detailed notes and reminders ('speak slowly'), is particularly revealing. Stockhorner listed in sequence the points he wanted to stress each time he spoke: Christianity, monarchy, marriage, family, Fatherland, peace, army, and the struggle against Social Democracy. Under the heading of Christianity, marked in the margin as particularly important and underlined in both red and blue ink, Stockhorner's notes expanded on the initial prompt: 'The more a people is imbued with the Christian spirit, the higher its morality, its power, its energy, its welfare, its intelligence.' He added later in his notes: 'Christianity, in the church, but also in the life of the people and in legislation. *Healthy Christianity*.'²⁴ And as though he were holding his best ammunition in reserve, Stockhorner carried with him a copy of the Conservatives' 1892 party programme with its celebrated antisemitic plank. Stockhorner had highlighted the relevant passage in red ink: 'We oppose the intrusive and destructive Jewish influence on our national life. We demand Christian authorities for a Christian people and Christian teachers for Christian students.'²⁵

V: *Herrenmenschen* and Demagogues?

That the Conservative movements in Saxony and Baden after 1875 produced more than their share of antisemitic leaders, functionaries, and propagandists is inexplicable without knowing that the Conservatives' national leadership shared the same profile. From the time he edited the leading Conservative newspaper at mid-century, Hermann Wagener's antisemitism coloured articles and cartoons in the *Kreuzzeitung*, the *Berliner Revue*, and the *Kalender* of the Prussian People's Association. By the mid-1870s, the early activities of the German Conservative Party and its associated agrarian lobby groups relied heavily on

²² GLA Karlsruhe, NL Stockhorner, Fasc. 133.

²³ Kremer, 'Konservative Partei'; Riff, 'Government'; Fred Sepaintner, *Die Reichstagswahlen im Großherzogtum Baden* (Frankfurt/Main, 1983), pp. 72–80.

²⁴ GLA Karlsruhe, NL Stockhorner, Fasc. 136.

²⁵ Cf. Heinrich von Friesen-Rötha, *Ueber die Notwendigkeit des Zusammenwirkens der kirchlichen und der staatlichen Factoren auf dem ethisch-socialen Gebiete* (Rötha, n.d. [1886]).

well-known antisemites of the day. These included Franz Perrot,²⁶ the author of the so-called ‘Era Articles’ which had contributed to poisoning relations with Bismarck in 1875, and Carl Wilmanns, author of *Die ‘goldene’ Internationale und die Nothwendigkeit einer socialen Reformpartei* (1877). In these publications, attacks on Bismarck’s Jewish banker Gerson von Bleichröder as well as on the Jewish liberal parliamentarian Eduard Lasker frequently served as the focus of sweeping denunciations of ‘Manchester’ liberalism. Just as common was the call for ‘Christian reforms’ in economic, religious, judicial, and religious matters. For those Conservatives who preferred to avoid Perrot’s explicit attacks on Bismarck’s ‘*Judenpolitik*’, the demand for Christian authorities in state and society needed no elaboration.

The ideological and organizational links between these journalistic enterprises and the nascent Conservative movements in Saxony and Baden are numerous. After gaining notoriety in 1875, two years later Perrot was the economic editor of the Conservatives’ *Neue Reichszeitung* in Dresden. There he worked with two antisemites who would later gain national renown as members of Stöcker’s Christian Social Party (CSP): Dietrich von Oertzen and Baron Eduard von Ungern-Sternberg.²⁷ A year later Perrot moved to Frankfurt am Main, where he edited the *Deutsche Reichspost*. Meanwhile Ungern-Sternberg moved in the opposite direction, having been recruited by Dresden Conservatives to edit the *Neue Reichszeitung* after helping establish the *Badische Landpost* in the mid-1870s. The *Neue Reichszeitung* and its successor, the *Sächsischer Volksfreund*, were open and direct in their antisemitic attacks.

It would be wrong to imagine that publicists were the only convinced antisemites within Conservative ranks in this founding period. In Saxony, Friesen rejuvenated the regional party apparatus in 1875–6 by expanding into western Saxony. Friesen was particularly determined to combat the local influence of National Liberals in Leipzig and of Jewish traders who travelled to its triennial fairs. And whereas many antisemitic Conservatives were unwilling to take action on strongly held but unpopular beliefs, Friesen pinned his flag to the antisemitic mast openly. In 1891–2, he grabbed national headlines by suggesting that a revised Conservative Party programme should include a statement against all ‘un-Christian’ influences in German life.²⁸ In a keynote speech delivered to a congress of Saxon Conservatives at the height of antisemitic agitation

²⁶ See Franz Perrot, *Ein parlamentarisches Votum über das Aktienwesen* (Heidelberg, n.d.), and other works cited in James F. Harris, ‘Franz Perrot. A Study in the Development of German Lower Middle Class Social and Political Thought in the 1870s’, *Studies in Modern European History and Culture*, 2 (1976), 73–106.

²⁷ See esp. Eduard von Ungern-Sternberg, *Zur Judenfrage* (Zeitfragen, Bd 17, Heft 7) (Stuttgart, 1892).

²⁸ ‘Gesichtspunkte für ein revidiertes konservatives Program’ (MS), BA Koblenz, Sammlung Fechenbach, Bd XIX. Friesen-Rötha’s speech was reprinted as *Conservativ! Ein Mahnruf in letzter Stunde* (Leipzig, 1892), esp. p. 23; cf. Konservativer Landesverein im Königreich Sachsen (ed.), *Die Konservativen im Kampfe gegen die Übermacht des Judentums und für die Erhaltung des Mittelstandes* (Leipzig, 1892).

in June 1892, Friesen proved willing to identify those passages in the Conservative Party's 1876 programme that had used coded language to defend Christian principles but, he admitted, were intended to address the 'Jewish question' directly. 'I take it as commonly known', declared Friesen, 'that the Conservative Party has always taken a stand on the Jewish question'. 'The so-called "political emancipation of the Jews" by legislative means', he continued, 'has been energetically opposed by the Conservatives in all German states'. That Conservatives had failed to prevent Jewish emancipation, Friesen added, demonstrated 'that the Jewish-liberal influence was greater than their own.' At this point, Friesen trumpeted the success of Saxon Conservatives in holding back the 'Jewish tide'. He did so in a way carefully calculated to render rival antisemitic parties redundant, but the forthrightness of his antisemitism is striking nevertheless:

In the defence of Christianity, monarchy, and *Deutschtum*—as they were clearly identified in the programme of 1876—the Conservative Party has demonstrated its antisemitism since its founding. Today it stands as the oldest, most vigorous, most powerful, and most influential of all antisemitic parties.

It is thanks to the Saxon Conservatives that the Jews have been able to become naturalized [*einbürgern*] in Saxony less than in any other state. Our judiciary has remained untainted, Jews are rarely found among our teachers, and our parliamentary chambers have remained as insulated from the Jews as has the state bureaucracy. The founding of solid credit institutions has safeguarded our landed proprietors from exploitation by the Jews, while the establishment of municipal savings banks has created favourable circumstances for depositors and credit-seekers alike, thus contributing to the welfare of the lower classes. The vast majority of our public financial institutions enjoy a reputation for solidity and fair-dealing. These are all circumstances which the Conservative Party in Saxony can look upon with satisfaction.

Because by 1892 Friesen had already been outflanked by other antisemites in Saxony, historians have failed to appreciate that the Conservatives' second most powerful regional party was shaped and directed for almost two decades by a convinced antisemite. From the mid-1870s until his resignation as Saxon party chairman under a cloud of scandal in 1894, Friesen's personal diaries and correspondence abound with references to the 'Jewish press', to the 'Semitic leaders' of German liberal parties, and other antisemitic remarks. The same terms are found in the letters Saxon Conservative colleagues sent to Friesen applauding his June 1892 speech.²⁹

In his public statements Friesen was typical of many Conservatives in distancing himself from 'unscrupulous' elements within the antisemitic movement.³⁰ In his candid moments, however, Friesen conceded that antisemitism animated his entire belief system. As he wrote privately to the editors of *Der Kulturkämpfer* in 1888:³¹

²⁹ See materials in SächsStA Leipzig, RG Rötha, Nr. 1577.

³⁰ See e.g. Arnold Frege-Abtinaudorf to Friesen, 19 Oct. 1887, in SächsStA Leipzig, RG Rötha, Nr. 273.

³¹ Friesen to Redaktion, *Der Kulturkämpfer* (draft), 24 Sept. 1888, in *ibid.*, Nr. 275.

I am a Conservative, and as such [!] I regard the battle against the Jews and their destructive influence on our national development as the most important task of my party. But for that reason I must object when a line of attack is adopted which merely puts weapons into the hands of the Jews and casts a shadow on the higher moral goals of antisemitism.

In retirement more than a decade later, Friesen still clung to familiar Conservative priorities when he wrote that the Catholic ‘threat’ could not be allowed to distract Saxons from a much more immediate danger: Jewish immigration from eastern Europe. ‘The Jews’, he wrote, ‘appear to have mistaken our smaller fatherland of Saxony for the promised land of Canaan, and the Elbe for the Red Sea’.³² This fear of Jewish immigration had animated Friesen two decades earlier when he drafted an unpublished Conservative manifesto that professed unwavering loyalty to ‘German faith, German love, German loyalty, German essence, German song and German word, [and] German morality’.³³ Completing his memoirs shortly before his death in 1910, Friesen had little energy left for attacks on liberalism, but he returned to the themes of German identity, racial purity, and nobility of spirit as key elements of his *Weltanschauung*, citing with approval the writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain.³⁴ His second son carried on the tradition after 1918.³⁵

Similarly strong evidence suggests that the breakthrough of antisemitism in Baden after 1890 met with more than just the tacit approval of Conservatives.³⁶ Such Conservatives were drawn from many different levels of the party: from prominent parliamentarians to newspaper editors, from travelling speakers to ordinary members of local Conservative clubs. One government report cited a Conservative Party member who lost his job as a postal clerk because he offended customers at his window by dispensing antisemitic remarks along with postage stamps. The Conservative mayor of Hugsweier is credited with opening the field for antisemites to organize in the Lahr region, while Conservative school-teachers were particularly likely to support the increased agitation of Baden antisemites in the early 1890s. Just as Conservatives were typically the first to believe rumours (some of which may have been true) that Jews paid Social Democratic agitators to disrupt public rallies organized by antisemites, they also complained loudly when Jews launched boycotts against cattle-markets that fell under antisemitic influence. To be sure, when violence erupted Conservatives were prone to editorialize—usually in one of their local

³² Heinrich von Friesen-Rötha, *Antwort an den evangelischen Bund in Sachsen* (Rötha, [1900]), pp. 4–6.

³³ ‘Die sittliche Aufgaben der Conservativen [sic]’ (MS), SächsStA Leipzig, RG Rötha, Nr. 1577. These elements of *Deutschtum*, Friesen added, ‘must never be taken away by the liberals’ ability to devise false, foreign, and demagogic [*volksbeglückenden*] theories!’ ‘Our forefathers settled on free German soil’, he concluded: ‘We want to *be German*, we want to *remain German!*’

³⁴ Heinrich Freiherr von Friesen auf Rötha, *Schwert und Pflug*, pt 1 (Berlin, 1907), esp. p. 24.

³⁵ Dr Heinrich Freiherr von Friesen, *Bebel und Bibel* (Dresden, [1919]), pp. 39–42.

³⁶ See Scheil, ‘Aktivitäten’; Smith, ‘Alltag’; Kremer, ‘Konservative Partei’; and Wolf, *Konservatismus*.

Protestant *Sonntagsblätter*—about the need for ‘non-partisanship’ and ‘Christian love’ as principles higher than antisemitism. Soon thereafter, however, antisemitic appeals to Baden farmers, artisans, and small businessmen were ringing out again in the Conservative press, in club meetings, and on the hustings. The Prussian envoy stationed in Karlsruhe reported in early 1893 that Christian love and other traditional Conservative concerns were conspicuous in the Baden Conservative press only by their absence. ‘In the Conservative press’, he wrote, ‘a fanatical Jew-baiting is under way’.³⁷ Baden voters in a number of constituencies were kept in the dark until election day as to whether the antisemitic candidate would join the German Social Party or the DKP. On more than one occasion, official Conservative flyers adopted antisemitic programme points word for word. And despite opposing candidacies in some constituencies, Conservatives and German Socials supported each others’ candidates in many run-off ballots.³⁸

VI: Issues and Identities

Exploring the regional power bases and ideological preoccupations of individual Conservatives is only one way to address the questions raised at the outset of this essay. One might also examine specific economic issues on which Conservatives and antisemites saw eye to eye. One such issue is the scarcity of credit in late nineteenth-century Germany. Historians have identified myriad ways in which everyday concerns about the availability of credit dovetailed with a discourse on usury.³⁹ What has been less often acknowledged is that this process provided an ideological link not only between anti-capitalism and antisemitism, but also between Conservatives and antisemites.

The availability of credit was vitally important to Conservative supporters in both rural and urban areas. Such groups included heavily indebted holders of landed estates, small-scale grain farmers and livestock handlers, artisans, small businessmen, shopkeepers, and others eager to maintain their distance from a proletarian existence. It was in order to rally some of these groups to the Conservative flag that Paul Mehnert Sr founded the Saxon Agricultural Credit Association in 1866. Mehnert exemplifies the faceless party organizer who worked behind the scenes to exploit the acute scarcity of credit to provide a foundation for political Conservatism at an early stage.⁴⁰ But in the mid-

³⁷ Carl von Eisendecker’s reports of 5 Jan. and 2 Mar. 1893, in Hans-Jürgen Kremer (ed.), *Das Großherzogtum Baden in der politischen Berichterstattung der preußischen Gesandten 1871–1918* (Stuttgart, 1990), pt 1, pp. 533–6.

³⁸ GLA Karlsruhe, NL Stockhorner, Fasc. 135.

³⁹ David Peal, ‘Antisemitism by Other Means? The Rural Cooperative Movement in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany’, *LBI YB*, 32 (1987), 135–53.

⁴⁰ See Carl Paul Mehnert, ‘Der landwirthschaftliche Creditverein im Königreich Sachsen’, *Jahrbücher für Volks- und Landwirthschaft*, 9 (1868), 51–72; Mehnert, *Wesen und Bedeutung der Hypothek und deren Mobilisirung* (Dippoldiswalde, [1879]). Mehnert drew frequently on the work of Wilmanns and Perrot. By 1905 the Saxon Agricultural Credit Association had 15,393 members.

1870s, just when the (national) Conservative movement was getting off the ground, questions about what we might today call 'financial propriety' became explosive. In this environment Conservative 'theorists' like Perrot, who lived on 'published governmental statistics and an infrequent scholarly tome', were assured a hearing. As the growth of the rural co-operative movement demonstrated around the same time, credit was an issue that could be folded into larger contemporary debates about commodity exchanges, the value of human labour, free trade, stock-market crashes, railway scandals, the protection of 'national work' and, most broadly of all, the 'moral economy' of capitalism itself. Credit issues steered popular resentments towards that group in society which could most easily be accused of conspiring to render Germany's economic system dysfunctional by exploiting the little man in society: the Jews. In this way Conservative arguments about the deficiencies of liberal capitalism could be combined with their gloomy prognosis for religious morals to address the concerns of ordinary Germans whose existential struggle centred on the here-and-now. Hence usury was reinterpreted to include the exploitation of 'need, inexperience, and frivolity'.⁴¹

Such reinterpretation was all the more attractive to Conservatives and antisemites because it made the struggle against alleged Jewish usurers morally incontestable. The Jew as *Landwucher* became less important as an objective issue of actual hardship or unfair practices than as a caricature whose threatening guise took on almost physical attributes. Polemics levelled against Jewish *Güterschlächter* conjured up images of rapacious Jews 'who bought up peasant holdings, parcelled them, and resold them at profit to the land-hungry'. These 'heartless' Jewish 'vampires' were made to appear more alarming than Shylocks of the past, not least because the combination of sham scholarship, moral authority, and cynical calculation promised a rich political payoff with little risk.⁴²

Conservatives did not have to behave like the 'extreme' antisemites when they used such arguments to establish a power base in the villages of Baden and Saxony. They could target liberals and Jews together, as when the *Neue Reichszeitung* combined the discourses of economic and political exploitation during the Reichstag election campaign of 1877: 'In the guise of Jewish businessmen', one contributor to this newspaper wrote, 'the National Liberals have sent their agents into the most isolated corners of our land; everywhere these people are working with their characteristic doggedness and energy on behalf of the unitary state'.⁴³ The British consul stationed in Dresden reported in 1884 that the Conservatives' equally antisemitic *Dresdner Nachrichten* commonly referred to Saxon left liberals by 'ridiculing them as pedants, professors, and

⁴¹ See Peal, 'Antisemitism', p. 138.

⁴² Otto Böckel, *Die Güterschlächtereie in Hessen* (Leipzig, 1886), cited in *ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴³ *Neue Reichszeitung*, no. 6, 10 Jan. 1877, p. 1.

Manchesterians, & reviling them as the representatives of the International Gold League, of Jewry, and of usury'.⁴⁴

These aspects of antisemitism, held together with the glue of conspiracy theories and alleged exploitation, were used over and over again to target the (real and potential) victims of liberal economics. Yet to sample such writing is to illustrate the increasingly direct tone used by contributors to this genre when they targeted the Jews as the source of all industrial and agricultural distress. Early in the 1870s, Perrot's studies advocating railway reform contained the usual dark allegations of unseen manipulation without mentioning the Jews by name: 'The game in railroad stocks is not only a hazardous one, but one played with marked cards. Some know the cards and play only when they can win, while the rest who don't know the cards generally lose.'⁴⁵ Near the end of the decade, a Saxon Conservative suggested that '[t]hings have been so Judaized here that this tendency to jobbery [*Schachern*] is no longer a specific characteristic of the Hebraic race.'⁴⁶ By 1880, however, the *Badische Landpost* left no doubt about who was dealing the 'marked cards':

The Jews have our *finances* in their hands, the Jews have our *newspapers* in their hands, the Jews have our *trade* in their hands, the Jews have our *farmers*—in their pockets. In a word, the Jews have won superiority in our whole political and social life. That is the situation. How are we once again to escape it? That is the question, that is the Jewish question.⁴⁷

Now, Helmut Walser Smith has provided a salutary reminder that we should not take at face value antisemitic polemics about exploitative relations between Jewish traders and Gentile farmers in the German countryside.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the private views of Conservatives in Baden and Saxony reveal a striking similarity of tone and an unexpected radicalism in their assessment of Jewish influence in the rural economy. In 1883 the Baden Conservative leader Göler von Ravensburg was convinced that the Jews were to blame for the Conservatives' failure to make headway against their liberal rivals in Baden:⁴⁹

And how are things with the farmers? The experience of the last Landtag elections shows that . . . [p]etty quarrels with their neighbours etc. are the only things that drive

⁴⁴ British Minister Resident George Strachey to British Foreign Office, no. 24 (draft), 19 Mar. 1884, in Public Record Office, London (Kew) (hereafter cited as PRO Kew), FO 215, no. 37.

⁴⁵ Franz Perrot, *Die deutschen Eisenbahnen* (Rostock, 1870), and other works, cited in Harris, 'Perrot', p. 81.

⁴⁶ *Die sozialen Fragen. Beiblatt zum Conservativen Flugblatt für Sachsen*, no. 10, 31 Oct. 1878, pp. 79–80.

⁴⁷ *Badische Landpost* (Wochenausgabe), no. 24, 24 Feb. 1880.

⁴⁸ 'The Discourse of Usury: Relations between Christians and Jews in the German Countryside, 1880–1914', *Central European History*, 32 (1999), 255–76; 'Alltag'; 'Religion and Conflict: Protestants, Catholics, and Anti-Semitism in the State of Baden in the Era of Wilhelm II', *Central European History*, 27 (1994), 283–314; 'The Learned and the Popular Discourse of Anti-Semitism in the Catholic Milieu of the Kaiserreich', *Central European History*, 27 (1994), 315–28.

⁴⁹ Göler to Otto von Stockhorner, 18 Feb. 1884, in GLA Karlsruhe, NL Stockhorner, Fasc. Pfälzer Bauernverein.

them on. If things were otherwise they would not have become the victims of the Jews . . . [T]hey vote and they act exactly as the Jews demand and wherever private enmity and suspicion impel them. We cannot gain the least influence over them because they have no understanding for principled ideas . . . Everything is rotten in the land of Baden.

Almost a decade later, Conservative organizers in Baden still felt powerless in the face of Jewish traders. 'In Hockenheim we can't take up the Jewish question at all', came one report from the countryside; 'so much tobacco is grown here that one cannot risk alienating the Jews; otherwise one would not be able to sell it at all, since they have the whole business in their hands'.⁵⁰ Such declarations, penned in private and thus serving no propaganda purpose, reflected the Conservatives' conviction that a wholesale reform of Germany's economic and social life could best be achieved by isolating, disenfranchising, or otherwise curtailing the rights of the Jews.

VII: Christian Social Reform

Taken together with other evidence, it is difficult not to conclude that antisemitism was a central ingredient in the arguments of most party members who sought to 'update' the Conservative Party and, in so doing, to make it successful in non-Prussian territories. When we examine the language of those arguments we discover that three words resonated particularly loudly: 'Christian', 'social', and 'reform'. Political strategies associated with each of these terms permitted Conservatives to embrace elements of antisemitism consistent with their (divergent) images of a rejuvenated party. 'Christian Conservatism', subsuming a defence of the Christian state, Christian authorities, and a Christian press, held the widest appeal. But 'Christian-social' provided a means to combine attacks on liberal capitalism with arguments targeting the Jews as those responsible for the present economic 'disorder'. This allusive pairing of terms also allowed Conservatives to proclaim their abhorrence of Marxist socialism and their determination to help the little man in society. It was no accident that Stöcker's vehicle for transforming 'Christian' and 'social' goals into practice was named the Christian Social Party. Until Stöcker's definitive break with the national Conservative Party in 1896, the CSP served as a beacon for Conservative antisemites seeking to overcome the narrowness of Prussian Junkerdom and create a mass basis for the Conservative movement.

Here the third element of the triad, 'reform', became important. As the challenge of Social Democracy and the threat of revolution loomed larger, advocates of 'Christian' and 'Christian-social' Conservatism inaugurated a debate in the 1890s that revolved around the question, 'Revolution or Reform?' As it happened, traditional Conservatives used this issue as a means to marginalize Stöcker and other 'reformist' Conservatives within the party, who then retreated

⁵⁰ Herr Bühler to Otto von Stockhorner, Mar. 1893, in Kremer, 'Konservative Partei', pp. 35–9.

to the Evangelical Social Congress and the rump CSP. But the term ‘reform’ was associated long before the 1890s with the activities of some of Germany’s most dedicated antisemites. From the time Alexander Pinkert founded the first Reform Association (*Reformverein*) in Dresden in 1879 until the establishment of the German Reform Party fifteen years later, the discourses of political reform and practical antisemitism dovetailed in ways that allowed Conservatives to work in tandem with antisemitic leaders. How many Conservatives, after all, could have taken issue with the goals announced in the subtitle of the Saxon antisemites’ leading newspaper, the *Deutsche Reform*: ‘Organ of the German Reform Movement. Protector of Working People against International Manchesterism and Stock-Exchange Liberalism. Daily Newspaper for Politics, Honourable Business Practices, and Conversation’. As early as the 1860s, the German Reform Association had served *großdeutsch* Conservatives (including Beust) who fashioned themselves as sentinels protecting Germany from Prussia and the liberals. Subsequently Conservatives rarely tried to disassociate themselves from other reformers standing ‘on watch’ for the German people against the Jewish threat.⁵¹

VIII: Environments of Enmity

Standard works on German antisemitism tell us that the German Reform and the German Social parties were hamstrung by personal rivalries among their leaders, financial insolvency, and programmatic inconsistency (among other things). That Christian, Christian–social, and Christian–social reformist Conservatives were no less susceptible to these difficulties is demonstrated by the strange case of Gustav Emil Leberecht Hartwig, an obscure Dresden *Baumeister* who in the early 1880s fashioned an alliance of Conservatives and antisemitic Reformers in the lower house of Dresden’s municipal parliament.⁵² Although many details of Hartwig’s chequered career remain cloaked in obscurity, the methods Hartwig used to gain initial prominence, his ability to galvanize Dresden’s disaffected lower middle classes, and his frequent run-ins with Conservative leaders are illustrative of the complexity of Conservative–antisemitic relations when viewed in the context of their local political cultures.

Partly as a consequence of Saxony’s income- and property tax introduced in 1879, Hartwig burst on the scene during municipal and Landtag election campaigns in 1881 and 1882 to lead a local tax revolt. In fact, Hartwig’s ‘revolt’ actually amounted to little more than the same ‘reforms’ Conservative antisemites had been advocating since the mid-1870s. Nonetheless, Hartwig

⁵¹ The *Sächsischer Volksfreund*, no. 82, 12 Oct. 1881, pp. 514–15, claimed that the Saxon Conservative Party had every right to call itself a ‘*Reformpartei*’. Conservatives subsidized the *Deutsche Reform* with 2,000 Marks per annum.

⁵² See Otto Richter, *Geschichte der Stadt Dresden in den Jahren 1871 bis 1902*, 2nd edn (Dresden, 1904), ch. 7; *Die Stadtverordneten zu Dresden 1837–1887* (Dresden, 1887); and other materials in the Stadtarchiv Dresden.

made his reputation by stressing the need to transcend bankrupt liberal economics, overcome Jewish ‘domination’ of the press, and, not least, root out misdemeanour in high places. Dresden’s powerful Home-Owners’ Association, together with the local Reform and Christian Social Associations, provided the organizational backing Hartwig needed to penetrate the conservative atmosphere of municipal council meetings. Armed with an insider’s knowledge of the construction trade and copious statistics, Hartwig accused Dresden’s council and its mayor of financial mismanagement. The improper allocation of city contracts, the unfair assessment of property taxes, the unnecessary expropriation of lands needed for expansion at inflated prices, the deleterious stewardship of annual budgets through debate: these issues served Hartwig well in his campaign to put an end to ‘business as usual’. His charges resonated in the halls of parliament itself, but their echo was louder still in the streets of Dresden. There, strict legality and accepted parliamentary practice mattered little to citizens eagerly awaiting sensational charges of graft and bribery.

Hartwig’s accusations did not always prove groundless, and Conservative leaders in Dresden were hardly blameless in fanning the flames of controversy. But after political decorum returned to municipal politics in the 1890s, few could deny that Hartwig and his ‘social reformist’ backers had secured a power base for themselves that was unequalled in other German cities. Dresden’s Home-Owners’ Association grew so powerful that it served as the model for regional and national organizations whose political influence was still manifest in the Weimar Republic.⁵³ Hartwig’s activities also resulted in the last Jewish member of Dresden’s city council, Emil Lehmann, losing his seat in 1883.⁵⁴ The lack of any significant outcry at the time—except from Jews themselves and from a few left liberals—demonstrated to Saxon Conservatives that there was little political risk in unfurling a campaign to deny Jews political representation in their own city. Subsequently a coalition of Conservatives and Reformers dominated Dresden politics until the end of the Imperial era. Their voice was always heard when the Saxon king, his ministers, or Landtag deputies debated Jewish policy.⁵⁵

Were Hartwig and the Conservative–Reform coalition he created in Dresden successful because the city’s political culture was amenable to their style of politics even before 1880? Or did they play a role in preparing the ground for other initiatives that achieved greater national prominence in subsequent years? Such cause-and-effect questions can be posed on other fronts too. For example, did antisemitic publishing enterprises set up shop in Leipzig, Dresden, and Chemnitz because publishers recognized that Saxony’s political environment

⁵³ See K. Häberlin, *Das sogenannte Hausbesitzerprivileg in den Städten Sachsens* (Leipzig, 1913); Martin Schumacher, *Mittelstandsfrent und Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 101–3.

⁵⁴ For the outrage of Dresden’s Jews, and his own, see Emil Lehmann, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1899).

⁵⁵ See Karl Heinrich Pohl, ‘Power in the City: Liberalism and Local Politics in Dresden and Munich’, in Retallack (ed.), *Saxony in German History*, forthcoming.

assured them a local readership? Or did the establishment of such enterprises over time make that environment measurably more receptive to antisemitic propaganda? The latter conclusion seems plausible when one considers how little attention these antisemitic publications actually paid to local affairs: many of them, including Ernst Schmeitzner's *Internationale Monatsschrift* and Theodor Fritsch's *Hammer*, consciously addressed their antisemitic message to a national audience. Nor did the antisemitic congresses held in Dresden in 1882 and Chemnitz in 1883 take much account of local political affairs.⁵⁶ On the other hand, when the *Dresdner Nachrichten* declared in 1890 that grain prices were threatened 'by "rings" of radical Jews', Great Britain's representative in Dresden noted: 'As far as I can judge, this political economy is generally accepted as sound.'⁵⁷

Similarly: what are we to make of Conservatives' willingness to allow Fritsch to spearhead virtually all aspects of Saxon *Mittelstandspolitik* after 1895, leading first to the founding of the Saxon *Mittelstand* Union and then the Imperial German *Mittelstand* Association?⁵⁸ Although Fritsch is frequently cited as an extreme racial antisemite standing on the margins of the German Right, over many years he worked seamlessly with Saxon Conservatives to assemble Imperial Germany's most powerful regional *Mittelstand* movement. Against this background, the pervasive acceptance within Saxon Conservatism of goals espoused by the Navy League, the Pan-German League, and other radical nationalist organizations comes as no surprise.⁵⁹ Authoritarian strains in Saxon political culture were a constant object of comment in the reports of foreign observers. But it is noteworthy that when the German adventurer Carl Peters was invited to Dresden in 1890, the British envoy in Dresden reported that the chairman of the Dresden Conservative Association trumped the imperialist's chauvinism willingly: 'Where the traveller [Peters] was facetious and satirical, the politician [Paul Mehnert, Jr] was acrimonious and malignant.'⁶⁰

IX: Conclusions

This analysis has suggested that historians should scrutinize the actions of Conservatives and antisemites *together* and in the context of specific sub-national political cultures before they offer conclusions about how the 'old' and the 'new' Right responded to the challenge of mass politics. Only by penetrating to the local and regional levels can historians make sense of the web of relation-

⁵⁶ Anon., *Manifest an die Regierungen und Völker der durch das Judenthum gefährdeten christlichen Staaten* (Chemnitz, 1882); cf. materials in BA Koblenz, NL Fechenbach, Nr. 105.

⁵⁷ George Strachey to the British Foreign Office, no. 8, 7 Feb. 1890, PRO Kew, FO 68, no. 175.

⁵⁸ On the Saxon *Mittelstandsvereinigung* see SächsStA Leipzig, Polizeipräsidentiums-Vereinsakten, Nr. 2859.

⁵⁹ See Stadtarchiv Dresden, Bestand 231.01, Alldeutscher Verband, Ortsgruppe Dresden und Oberelbgau.

⁶⁰ George Strachey to the British Foreign Office, no. 51, 14 Nov. 1890, PRO Kew, FO 68, no. 175.

ships that enmeshed German Conservatives and antisemites in common aspirations and joint action against the Jews. Conservatives, no less than antisemites, moved in and out of authoritarian, anti-socialist, anti-liberal, nationalist, and imperialist communities of spirit, often in unpredictable fashion. In doing so, they engaged in essentially the same acts of probing and confessing, arguing and resigning, that undermined the political success of the antisemitic parties, without however suffering their dismal fate. This suggests that relations between insiders and outsiders on the German Right are important not only because of the central position Conservatives occupied there, but because of the political spaces Conservatism touched past its own edges.

Well before Bismarck's fall from power in 1890, Conservatives confronted the immense task of reconciling traditional attachments to authority with the search for political scapegoats. Most antisemites—except those who resided on the lunatic fringes of the movement, and there were some of these in Baden and Saxony too⁶¹—grappled with the same challenge. Hence it may be time to dispense with simple formulations about how the Conservatives 'discovered', 'co-opted', 'instrumentalized' or 'tamed' radical antisemitism. Instead historians should recognize the central role antisemitism played in Conservative ideology and Conservative *Praxis* at a crucial phase of the party's development. This insight in turn could cast new light on a later period of German history, when Conservatives, with more tragic consequences, continued to believe that by endorsing established authority they were also preserving Christian principles, promoting social reform, providing an alternative to a hated liberal regime, and defending *Deutschtum*.

⁶¹ Including Ottomar Beta, Max Brewer, Heinrich Pudor, and Richard Kunze; cf. Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds.), *Handbuch zur 'Völkischen Bewegung' 1871–1918* (Munich, 1996).