

and sale of labor power. By substituting labor power, the value-producing property, for labor, he solved with one stroke one of the difficulties upon which the Ricardian school was wrecked, *viz.*, the impossibility of harmonizing the mutual exchange of capital and labor with the Ricardian law of value determination by labor. By establishing the distinction between constant and variable capital, he was first enabled to trace the real course of the process of surplus value formation in the utmost detail, and thus to explain it, which none of his predecessors had accomplished. Thus he established a distinction within capital itself with which neither Rodbertus nor the capitalist economists had been able to do anything, but

which, nevertheless, furnished a key for the solution of the most complicated economic problems, as is most strikingly proved once again by this Volume II, and still more by Volume III as will be shown. He analyzed surplus value itself further, finding its two forms, absolute and relative surplus value. And he showed the different but in each case decisive role, that they had played in the historical development of capitalist production. On the basis of surplus value he developed the first rational theory we have of wages, and gave for the first time the basic features of the history of capitalist accumulation and a portrayal of its historical trend.

## BOOK REVIEW

### TOWARD THE UNMASKING OF ANTI-SEMITISM\*

By MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

Anti-Semitism has become a major issue for the American people, and for all democratic mankind. In the pattern of imperialist reaction, anti-Semitism today looms ever larger, not only alongside of anti-Communism, anti-Sovietism, anti-unionism, anti-alienism, and anti-Negroism, but in a kind of special relationship to these other elements: Negroes, aliens, union men, the Soviets, and Communists are all in some degree tarred by reaction as Jewish or as the dupes of the Jews. Every reactionary movement today is itself anti-Semitic, or is allied with anti-Semites; on the other hand, the more consistent a progressive movement is, the more it makes the fight against anti-Semitism a prominent part of its program of action. No anti-Semite can be in any sense progressive now; no progressive can for any reason compromise with anti-Semitism.

Books on the subject of anti-Semitism are not uncommon, but those that can be effective in the struggle against it are rare. As Carey McWilliams discovered when he came to study anti-Semitism, "the inadequacy of social theory in relation to this crucial problem is a scandal for which every social scientist in the United States should

feel ashamed." In such a context, his own book makes a valuable pioneering contribution. It is the work of a fighting progressive with extensive experience in elucidating the forms, methods, and purposes of discriminatory practices directed against a variety of national groups. Hailed by liberals, and treated respectfully in that conservative press which boasts of "respectability," the book is already being widely read and will be widely felt. Of course, it has also already drawn the fire, not only of the anti-Semites, but also of those groups, some of them Jewish, that resent a major element in McWilliams' analysis. To such forces, and to the Jewish agencies that reflect Big Business interests, it is dangerous to have it cogently argued, as McWilliams does, that anti-Semitism is a device by which "privileged groups . . . mask their attempted monopoly of social, economic, and political power." Yet, as the first book by an American in which this is the central thesis, it is precisely in this that McWilliams makes his contribution. Moreover, McWilliams also perceives that it "may well be that the last great struggle against anti-Semitism will center in the United States." Apparently, the United States is the arena in which the last great struggles against many basic evils will center!

McWilliams offers us an excellent guide to his book in the description of the nature of anti-Semitism:

. . . it is today a weapon of reac-

\* Carey McWilliams, *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1948, \$2.75.

tion—part of the mechanism of fascism—used for many interrelated purposes: to confuse the people; to obscure the basic causes of unrest; to divert attention from these causes; to cloak the real purposes and objectives of reaction; to arrest social progress; to fight democracy. Throughout its long and devious history, through all its various and changing manifestations, the pertinent questions, in relation to anti-Semitism, have always been: Who uses it? For what purposes? Under what circumstances? Against whom? And to these queries the answers are crystal-clear: anti-Semitism has always been used by the enemies of the people; for the purpose of arresting progress; in periods of social upheaval and social stress; and against the interests of the people. (P. 88.)

McWilliams properly looks to the nature of our American economy and its ruling classes for the answers to the "pertinent questions" listed above. He chooses to begin his analysis, however, in the post-Civil War period of the 1870's, "when Big Business occupied the country like an alien armed force" (p. 11). "To trick a freedom-loving people into accepting industrial regimentation in the name of democracy, the tycoons of the period needed a diversionary issue. Hence the alien, the foreigner, the Jew, the Negro, and the yellow peril" (pp. 68-69). As "the first overt manifestation of anti-Semitism" in the United States (p. 13), McWilliams selects the exclusion of Joseph Seligman, a New York banker, from the gaudy Grand Union Hotel at Saratoga Springs in the summer of 1877. From this point on, McWilliams

sketches the rising specific gravity of anti-Semitism in the pattern of reaction down to the contemporary scene.

Exclusion he shows to be a system. "It is therefore absurd to regard social discrimination as an individual and unorganized phenomenon. . . . A private prejudice is one thing; a policy of discrimination is another. . . . Group discrimination cannot be effective unless exclusion is adopted as a policy, and this implies a consensus or agreement which in turn implies organization" (pp. 124-125). Such exclusion techniques extend into the colleges and professions, and McWilliams observes keenly that "the pressure of Jewish students to enter the 'free professions,' notably law and medicine, has always reflected the bias against them in those professions having a direct, functional relation to the key American industries" (p. 133). And he closes this fine chapter with the reaffirmation that "the real basis for the quota system . . . is to be found in the structure of the dominant American industries."

McWilliams is at his best in the chapter, "In the Middle of the Middle Class," in which he convincingly and with shrewd insight describes "the anomalous position that Jews occupy in the American economy." Jews are "a minor influence in banking and finance," and "virtually nonexistent in heavy industry." As for the light industries, their participation "is largely restricted to the distribution end," except in the clothing industry. Insignificant in the magazine and advertising fields, the Jews are "important" in book publishing and "the job-and-trade printing industry in the larger cities" and "significant" only in radio and motion pictures, but declining in the latter. He

concludes that Jews are a marginal factor in the economy:

Generally speaking, the businesses in which Jews are concentrated are those in which a large risk-factor is involved; businesses peripheral to the economy; businesses originally regarded as unimportant; new industries and businesses; and businesses which have traditionally carried a certain element of social stigma, such, for example, as the amusement industry and the liquor industry. Not being able to penetrate the key control industries, Jews have been compelled to occupy the interstitial, the marginal, positions in the American economy. . . .

. . . that Jews appear to wield more economic power than they do is the result of an illusion created by their concentration in businesses which make them conspicuous and which place them in a direct relation to the consuming public. Thus by and large the traditional European pattern of Jewish-Gentile economic relations has been repeated in America. (Pp. 147-149.)

These generalizations are buttressed by facts, and illuminated by insight into the process of capitalist economics. Consider an illuminating instance such as the following:

In the city of Los Angeles, for example, the credit end of the retail jewelry business is largely controlled by Jews, while the "cash" stores are just as exclusively non-Jewish. Since both risk and losses are greater in the credit stores, these stores must emphasize volume of sales and to increase volume they are driven to cut prices. On the other hand, the con-

centration of Jews in the credit end of the business operates to the indirect profit and advantage of the non-Jewish cash stores. In fact, some of these stores use anti-Semitism as a form of advertising. . . . By emphasizing their non-Jewishness, these stores create a premium value for their merchandise. That the Jews are forced to operate the marginal stores, the stores that are compelled to offer credit in order to exist, also means that they are forced to fight harder to maintain their position and that, in doing so, they are often accused of sharp practices and high-pressure methods, accusations which are in turn used against them by their non-Jewish competitors. The non-Jewish stores are naturally delighted with an arrangement which enables them to monopolize the cream of the business and to escape, in effect, from the necessity of direct competition with their Jewish colleagues who have been relegated to the outer fringes of the trade. It is in relationships of this sort, seldom apparent on the face of things, that much of the economic reality of anti-Semitism is to be found. (Pp. 157-158.)

It is this relation in the American economy, into which they have been fitted by monopoly capital, that places the Jews in an exposed position so that Big Business can divert mass antipathy from itself onto the heads of the Jewish masses. In the early stages, Big Business operates indirectly, using the crackpot anti-Semitic agitator, whose function it is "to encourage the open expression of anti-Semitism on the part of the latent anti-Semite." McWilliams notes, of course, that "the reality upon

which crackpot anti-Semitism is predicated" is "the anti-Semitic bias in the structure of the American economy." Very recently, moreover, the most reactionary sections of Big Business have begun to identify themselves more and more openly with the Gerald L. K. Smith type of "crackpot" as they move more directly onto the road to fascism.\*

Almost equally telling and original is McWilliams' chapter on "The Jewish Stereotype." He is more intent on explaining how this particular prejudiced stereotype came into being than in describing it at length or in contributing defensive refutations of the falsehoods in the stereotype.

Although immigrant Jews will, like other immigrants, begin in "lower bracket employments," McWilliams remarks that they do not stay there. "Schooled in facing prejudice, they have learned to seek out the crevices, the marginal businesses, in which it has been possible to secure an economic foothold." In this respect, he brilliantly demonstrates, the Jews are much like the Quakers and Huguenots, who also have a history of persecution. Nevertheless, the Jews have become a special target because of the economic position into which they have been squeezed in the middle of the middle class. Moreover, "while concentrated in the intermediate socio-economic positions, Jews function to some extent in all levels of society. In a time of *general* crisis, therefore, when social unrest has begun to permeate the middle as well as the lower classes, Jews usually make a more vulnerable and a more plausible

target than other minority groups. If a minority is confined to the lower levels of society, it can be baited for a variety of purposes; but it cannot serve as a general target against which the hatreds of all disaffected groups can be directed." (P. 179.) The Jews, however, being in all levels, can be attacked at all levels.

Such being the case, good-will programs, interfaith rituals, and other straws that middle-class Jewish and non-Jewish groups have seized upon to "combat" anti-Semitism, are seen to be not only ineffective but *irrelevant*. "Education," declares McWilliams, "will certainly help to expose the illusory nature of the stereotype, but as long as the relationships out of which it arises exist, the illusion itself will persist. For as long as Jews occupy a special niche in the economy, it will appear as though they were 'different' and the difference sensed will be rationalized. The source of this feeling, however, is to be found in social relationships, not in those outward manifestations of difference, real or imagined, which are seized upon to justify discrimination." (P. 182.)

By fixing attention concretely on the social relationships instead of on the anti-Semitic rationalizations and "arguments," McWilliams has rendered an important service.

What have been selected, of course, are some of the passages and sections that are an index to the highlights of McWilliams' positive achievement. They explain why the anti-Semites are up in arms, and why the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee are covertly seeking to discredit the book. The book is a

\* In the form in which this chapter, "The Function of the Crackpot," appeared in *Jewish Life*, October and November, 1947, it was fuller, sharper, bolder and truer.

weapon in the fight against anti-Semitism.

\* \* \*

There are serious shortcomings in *A Mask for Privilege* that need to be noted. McWilliams' chief difficulty is his failure *consistently* to ask and to answer the "pertinent questions" he ably defined: "Who uses it (anti-Semitism)? For what purposes? Under what circumstances? Against whom?"

At first, he is unsure as to who uses anti-Semitism against whom. In the 1870's, the older decaying groups, having lost their economic positions during the Civil War, confronted the new ruling class: "Faced with a growing competition for place and power, their security threatened by the forces of a rampant industrialism, the groups identifying themselves with the dominant cultural pattern sought to maintain that pattern at all costs" (pp. 12-13). Exclusion was their technique. Here, anti-Semitism is considered a weapon used by the old defeated classes against the new big industrialists. A few pages later, however, McWilliams explains that it is the new tycoons who use exclusion against successful German Jews in order to prevent "their further encroachment on the citadels of power" (p. 19). While it may be possible to reconcile these two differing statements of user, weapon, and opponent by redefining the elements, McWilliams makes no attempt to do so. Generally thereafter, however, he holds to the principle that anti-Semitism is used by the Big Business interests against competitors.

In doing so, however, he frequently wavers between the consideration of whom anti-Semitism is *used by* and a

description of whom it *appeals to*, and why. Thus, he tends to shift from analyzing the mask for privilege to depicting the mask for frustration. Those who are frustrated, economically, politically, socially, or intellectually by American life, we are told in many ways, turn to anti-Semitism. Such frustration, it is demonstrated, is common in the middle and lower middle classes. As Marxists, we stress the need of bringing the mask for privilege and the mask for frustration into their proper relationship. In this way the ruling class can be shown to be exploiting those it frustrates by diverting their resentment onto a scapegoat who is innocent of frustrating them and whose sacrificial slaughter, therefore, cannot release them from their frustration. But while the ingredients of such an analysis are present in McWilliams' treatment, the integration is lacking. His book culminates, therefore, not in a summation of his analysis of the mask for privilege, but in laudatory summary of an article by the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, "Portrait of the Anti-Semite." Although McWilliams asserts that "it has remained for Jean-Paul Sartre . . . to give us a really satisfactory portrait of the anti-Semite," an analysis of the portrait reveals it to be completely static and of no help in formulating a program to fight anti-Semitism.

McWilliams in places discounts the value of the psychoanalytic approach to anti-Semitism and briefly argues against it that "the genesis is primarily social in character" (pp. 107-108). But his eclectic method of finding something useful everywhere hinders him from disentangling himself from both the verbiage and the misleading concepts of

the psychological approach to the social phenomenon of anti-Semitism.\*

McWilliams' historical section is not well grounded. He accepts as historical fact that "the first overt manifestation of anti-Semitism" occurred in 1877, and that social discrimination came first, before other kinds. His shortcoming is attributable to the insufficient research by American historians into the history of anti-Semitism in this country.

Now, McWilliams wants to demonstrate what is easily demonstrable: that in the United States there is no history of feudalism and, since the revolution, no established church. The Jews here have never, as they did in Europe, lived in ghettos, or been compelled to wear the yellow badge. Therefore, "the main limitations imposed on Jews have been imposed by our 'private governments'—industry and trade, banks, and insurance companies, real estate boards and neighborhood associations, clubs and societies, colleges and universities."

It is necessary to point to the differences between European anti-Semitism and the American variety. But in underscoring the differences, McWilliams has omitted the common features based upon the capitalist system in both continents. In Europe, capitalism developed out of, and in struggle against, feudalism. To some extent, however, many feudal institutions, ideologies, habits and attitudes lived on in the framework of the new capitalist economy as the capitalist classes compromised with the big landowners and the church. Anti-Semitism developing in European capitalist countries, therefore, has certain feudal ties and connections.

\* For an incisive analysis of a book upon which McWilliams depends inordinately, *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease*, see the article by Dr. Walter S. Neff, "Psychoanalysis and Anti-Semitism," in *Jewish Life*, June, 1948.

In the United States, such was not the case. But capitalism does not begin in the United States in 1877, even though it is in that period that it undergoes certain qualitative changes and heads toward the monopoly, imperialist stage. McWilliams seems to see only the qualitative change but not the system that underwent change.

American history, right back to colonial days, is also a history of class struggles, in which, all too often, anti-Semitism was a weapon of reaction. It was, of course, not as weighty an instrument as it is today, but the modern qualitative changes must not obscure the fact that it existed continuously before. And how could it have been otherwise? For one thing, our country has been settled by those who came mostly from those European countries in which anti-Semitism, with its feudal history and capitalist present, was a factor. The immigrants brought with them certain attitudes to Jews, some favorable, some unfavorable, depending upon the political and social maturity of the immigrant. Native reaction methodically exploited and incited anti-Semitic attitudes both among immigrants and native born; native and immigrant progressives often had to fight back against the use of that weapon. Thus there was economic, political, social, religious and cultural discrimination against Jews long before 1877, for there were capitalism and class struggles in our country long before then. A full study of the relationship of the Jews and anti-Semitism to our country in the two centuries before the Civil War would undoubtedly cast new light upon U.S. history as a whole and modify fundamentally some of McWilliams' theses, which he bases upon the inadequate reading of history common at present.

Another point to be noted is that McWilliams underestimates superstructural factors. He neglects the role of religion, of certain reactionary priest-hoods, and of unhistorical church teachings which have to this day perpetuated feudal fables about the Jews. The cry of "Christ-killer" was used as a *political* instrument in this country at least two hundred years ago. Even the insufficient separation of church and state, which has led to the incorporating of Christian customs into our general civil life, has had its bearing upon anti-Semitism. He pays insufficient attention to anti-Semitic stereotypes embedded in old ideologies and cultural images such as the Shylock-goblin.

McWilliams also takes no note of the fact that certain anti-Semitic views and news were, during the past two centuries, continually reported and discussed in American newspapers and periodicals; reaction here assiduously sought to turn those reports to anti-Semitic ends, at the same time that labor and progressive forward-looking elements attempted to use such reports to scotch anti-Semitism.

The inclusion of such factors would add depth and complexity to the analysis of the problem, and would have saved the book from its tendency to economic determinism, which is very much different from historical materialism. Whereas economic determinism oversimplifies a problem, excludes significant and operative factors, and therefore impoverishes both the description and analysis, historical materialism takes all the factors into account. It makes its evaluation of the relative importance of the factors on the principle that the material relations of production determine the political,

social, psychological, ideological, and cultural life, and are in turn influenced by it.

\* \* \*

McWilliams' program of action to combat anti-Semitism, although not complete theoretically or practically, is one which all progressives, including Communists, can well support. "The campaign to eradicate anti-Semitism," McWilliams declares, "must be organized on two levels: a general attack on the socio-economic conditions which breed the disease; and a special campaign to eliminate all forms of discrimination based solely on race, color, or creed . . . what the task involves is the creation of a society in which production is organized on some basis other than individual self-aggrandizement. . ." (pp. 223-224).

McWilliams has gone far enough to cause the bourgeois-dominated Anti-Defamation League to sound the alarm against him on the ground that he favors "restructuring the economy of our country." But as Marxists we feel that the basic solution must go beyond McWilliams' vague formulation.

The contribution of this book would have been enhanced were the full conclusions from the statement of the problem presented scientifically and boldly—that the complete and irrevocable elimination of the evil of anti-Semitism from society will be achieved only under Socialism. In this connection as a major shortcoming in the book is the failure to discuss and draw examples from the role of the Soviet Union in evaluating anti-Semitism.

But this hesitation weakens his whole point. For to understand the real causes of fascism in 1948 is to understand the nature of American imperialism in 1948. And today, in the pattern

of imperialist reaction, anti-Semitism is inextricably interwoven with Red-baiting, Soviet-baiting, and labor-baiting, with the Taft-Hartley Law, the Mundt-Nixon Bill, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. How blunt was McWilliams' understanding of these links can be seen from the outdated preface, in which, failing to grasp American imperialist strategy in the Middle East, he reveals an exaggerated idea of the Administration's concern for a real solution of the Palestine problem, and an underestimation of the role of the Soviet Union both in relation to Palestine and as one of the main centers of Jewish life today.

In discussing his special campaign against major forms of discrimination, McWilliams is properly contemptuous of the results of the kind of programs of "intercultural understanding" that luxuriate in Brotherhood Weeks and "tolerance propaganda." (To add a crushing point to McWilliams' brief indictment, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, one of the main agencies of this type of "brotherhood," just gave an award for the promotion of brotherhood to *The Tablet*, a Brooklyn official diocesan organ that has achieved vast ill-repute for its Coughlinite preachings!—See *The Tablet*, May 15, 1948.) McWilliams also effectively criticizes the so-called "silent treatment" by which conservative Jewish "defense" agencies capitulate to the brawling anti-Semitic agitators.

He calls for a campaign for "functional equality" which would include:

... equal educational opportunities for all; equal economic opportunities regardless of race, creed, or color; equal access to good housing;

equal access to health and medical facilities; equal access to publicly supported recreational, cultural, and civic facilities of all kinds; equal access to common civic conveniences, such as hotels, restaurants, common carriers, and places of public accommodation; equal enforcement of the law; equal protection of civil and political rights; and, as a variant of the concept of religious freedom, a degree of equality in personal relations (for example, the right of individuals to marry regardless of racial differences). (Pp. 227-228.)

This campaign, he believes, requires "the formation of 'a great, special camp' of all the democratic forces in the United States." He does not become more specific. But it will be clear to most of his readers that while such a "special camp" will be a great non-partisan front, its center will have to be the Wallace movement.

"To be effective," says McWilliams, "education against racism should emphasize the real causes of fascism." Not only the causes, one would add, but the main techniques, including the fundamental lie that fascism and communism are alike, a lie imbedded in the report of Truman's Civil Rights Committee which McWilliams characterizes as "a document of great historic significance" without even defining its by no means minor "weaknesses."

Shortcomings are to be noted, however, only in order that one may have a true estimate of the value of a book such as McWilliams has produced. Taken as a pioneering effort in American theory on the subject of anti-Semitism, it represents a significant contribution which can be used effectively

# POLITICAL AFFAIRS

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