THE ABSENCE OF JEWS among the known figures of the great English and French revolutions can be attributed primarily to their small numbers in the population (which was especially the case in England) and the fact it was the French revolution which brought them emancipation from legal disabilities. For some time thereafter, the Jews in France remained rather concentrated in the culturally Germanic eastern provinces and strongly integrated into their religious communities and for this reason played little part in the unfolding of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. From the middle of the nineteenth century, however, they have been supplying a contingent of leaders, theorists, and members of the socialist and communist parties throughout Europe (and later America) many times larger than their ratio to the total population. Their inconspicuousness in the early British Labor Party (not to speak of the Chartists) or among the American Populists can be accounted for by the dates of the Jewish immigration to Britain and the United States.

It might be argued that we need no special explanation of this role, as it simply parallels the utterly disproportionate prominence of Jews in so many other fields, and may be regarded as a particular manifestation of their peculiar and many-directional dynamism, to explain which we would have to deal with factors which have molded the Jewish ways of living and thinking, and perhaps even their genetic make-up. Though not in my opinion entirely correct, this view has considerable validity as far as Western Europe and America are concerned, where prominent Jewish socialists and communists can be matched, not only by equally prominent Jewish financiers and leaders of business, but also by important Jewish figures in the opposite political camps. For example: the only Jewish prime minister which Britain has had was Disraeli—one of the staunchest stewards of the Empire; and the only presidential candidate in America of Jewish descent was Barry Goldwater. In Germany, notwithstanding the case of Walter Rathenau, there were many more Jewish figures among the socialists and the communists than in other parties. Further east practically all the Jews who have acquired political importance did so in the ranks of the

* As the factual information on which this analysis rests has been collated from personal observations, discussions, and oral accounts, a kind of informal "field work," no references are given in support of the thesis.
socialist and above all the communist parties. This is not surprising in view of their exclusion from the political elites and the heavy discrimination in state employment. True, most of the native capitalists (as distinct from the landowners) were Jews, but these were not predominantly capitalist countries; apart from a few exceptions, capitalists were small and their status was low. Even a rich Jew living in Russia before 1917, or in Poland, Rumania, or Hungary before 1939, encountered enough unpleasantness and humiliation to feel alienated from, if not antagonistic towards, the existing order. This circumstance is well known, but other aspects of the situation call for analysis.

The first point is that these countries had little room for liberal, tolerant, and detached agnostics, although such individuals did exist, especially in the higher classes. The bulk of the population was divided into clearly demarcated religious segments under the sway of their priests. A Jew who abandoned his community (or merely deviated from the creed) would be condemned or even persecuted by his former co-religionists without much chance of being accepted by Christians. Such a situation was difficult to bear unless one was a member of a tightly knit movement (or a secular sect, if you like) capable of providing moral support and mutual help.

The difficulties of an unattached apostate Jew grew after the First World War first because the economic distress and friction conjured up anti-Semitic political movements as distinct from the traditional static religious bar. To the factors mentioned in another article on this problem,1 I must add an emphasis on the overproduction of diploma-holders in relation to the opportunities of employment, which in the case of Hungary was coupled with the inflow of ethnically Hungarian functionaries and lawyers from the provinces lost in the Treaty of Trianon. Especially in Poland, the clerical squeeze on the religious no man’s land was reinforced by the Bolshevik revolution, for until then the chief national enemy was the caesaro-papist tsardom; therefore, until then Marxism and socialism were compatible with Polish nationalism. That the menacing foreign government became the chief exponent of the most widely known brand of Marxism undermined this compatibility and fostered a confluence between patriotism and religious fervor.

The bilateral barrier of distrust and avoidance, which was bound to accompany a religious chasm when the faiths were adamantine, was perennially reinforced by the friction between the peasant or the often profligate squire on one side and the trader or the moneylender on the other. The absence of fixed prices in primitive trading makes every transaction a game of bluff, commonly involving cheating. To function at all, a trader or moneylender in a village community bonded by kinship must remain outside the network of the obligations of mutual aid, and therefore be an outcast. In old Russia there was a saying, “If you don’t cheat, you won’t sell.” Commerce was regarded as dishonorable because it was a Jewish occupation, and Jews were despised be-