

Marx/Engels and Racism

By W. H. Chaloner & W. O. Henderson



WHILE SCHOLARS on the Continent have long been aware of the fact that Karl Marx held anti-Semitic views, the same cannot generally be said of their colleagues in England and America.

Marx was a Jew; and when he was growing up in Trier the Jews, though not perse-

cut, were treated as second-class citizens and excluded from certain professions. No Jew could hold a commission in the Prussian army or practise as a lawyer at the bar. To continue as a member of the legal profession Marx's father became a Christian and was baptised by a Lutheran army chaplain. As a boy Marx realised that he was different from his fellows. He had been baptised, but he was "a Jew by race" and suffered from the anti-Semitism prevalent in Germany in his day. His reaction to the situation was an extraordinary one. He ranged himself with the anti-Semites and denounced his own people in a most violent fashion.¹

His attitude towards the Jews was made clear in two articles which he wrote in 1843 at the age of 25. They were reviews of a book and an article by Bruno Bauer on the Jewish question, and they appeared in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (published in Paris in 1844).² Marx regarded capitalism, as operated by the middle classes, as inherently evil; and he argued that Jewish money-making activities lay at the very heart of the obnoxious capitalist system. The following extracts from Marx's articles indicate his point of view of the Jewish question in his day.

"What is the worldly *raison d'être* of Jewry [Judaism]? The practical necessity of Jewry is self-interest."

"What is the worldly religion of the Jews? It is the petty haggling of the hawker."

"What is his worldly God?" "It is money."

"So in Jewry we recognise a contemporary universal anti-social phenomenon, which has reached its present pitch through a process of historical development in which the Jews have zealously co-operated. And this evil anti-social aspect of Jewry has grown to a stage at which it must necessarily collapse."

"The Jews have emancipated themselves in a Jewish fashion. Not only have they mastered the power of money but—with or without the Jews—money has become a world power. The Jews have emancipated themselves by turning Christians into Jews."

"Money is the most zealous God of Israel and no other God can compete with him. Money debases all human Gods and turns them into goods. Money is the universal value of everything."

"The God of the Jews has become secularised and has become a World God. The bill of exchange is the real God of the Jews."

"Jewry reaches its climax in the consummation of bourgeois society—and bourgeois society has reached its highest point in the Christian world."

In 1845, in *The Holy Family*, Marx claimed that in his articles in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* he had "proved that the task of abolishing the essence of Jewry is in truth the task of abolishing Jewry in civil society, abolishing the inhumanity of today's practice of life, the summit of which is the money system."³ In 1849 an article in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (of which Marx was the editor) criticised the notion that Jews living in Prussia's Polish provinces should be regarded as Germans. The article declared that these Jews were "the filthiest of all races." "Neither by speech nor by descent—but only by their greed for profit—can they be looked upon as relatives of the Germans in Frankfurt." One of Marx's critical biographers has remarked: "this solution of the Jewish question was not very different from Adolf Hitler's, for it involved the liquidation of Judaism. . . ."⁴

THERE ARE NUMEROUS uncomplimentary references to Jews in Karl Marx's letters to his close

friend Friedrich Engels in the 1850s and 1860s. At that time Marx was living in London and his earnings as a free-lance journalist—he was a regular contributor to the *New York Daily Tribune*—were quite insufficient for his needs. Engels, then employed as a clerk by the firm of Ermen & Engels in Manchester, sent him small remittances whenever he could. Even so Marx failed to make ends meet and—when there was nothing more to pledge at the pawnbrokers—he borrowed money from anyone who would lend it. He had many dealings with Jewish financial agents in the City of London. The Bambergers (father and son),⁵ as well as Stiefel and Spielmann, were German Jews whose names frequently crop up in the Marx-Engels correspondence. Marx made use of the Jews to raise small loans and to discount bills of exchange received from Charles A. Dana (editor of the *New York Tribune*) in advance payment of articles which Marx had agreed to write. Marx complained bitterly that the Jews would not discount his bills until confirmation from Dana had been received;⁶ and he was furious when they pressed him to honour debts due for repayment. Marx showed his contempt by always referring to them as “Jew [or “little Jew”] Bamberger” and “Jew Spielmann”, or by imitating the nasal twang characteristic of the way in which some Jews from

Eastern Europe spoke German.⁷ Yet Marx had cause to regret the day when the Bambergers were not in business in London any more and were no longer available to discount his bills of exchange. In 1859 he wrote to Engels: “it is the devil of a nuisance that I have no Bamberger in London any more. . . .”⁸

MARX’S ANTI-SEMITISM may be illustrated by examining his attitude towards Ferdinand Lassalle, who was a Jew from Breslau in Silesia. As a young man Lassalle had led the workers of Düsseldorf during the revolution of 1848. But he had never been a member of the Communist League, since his application to join

the Cologne branch had been turned down; and he had taken no part in the risings in Germany in 1849 in support of the Frankfurt constitution, since he had been in jail at that time. Consequently in the 1850s, while nearly all the former supporters of the revolution were either in prison or in exile, Lassalle was able to live in Düsseldorf, without being unduly molested by the authorities. It was to Marx’s advantage to keep in touch with Lassalle, who gave him news of the underground workers’ movement in the Rhineland. And through his aristocratic connections—he was a close friend of the Countess of Hatzfeld—he was

sometimes able to provide Marx with useful political information which he could use in articles contributed to the *New York Tribune* and *Die Presse*. But while Marx regarded himself as the head of a great political movement who should be obeyed by his followers, Lassalle declined to be a mere disciple and was determined to be a leader of the German workers in his own right.

The correspondence between Marx and Lassalle⁹ suggests that the two men were colleagues who—despite certain differences of opinion—were collaborating to achieve a common aim. But the letters exchanged between Marx and Engels tell a very different story. Here Marx showed his contempt for the Jew who presumed

to have opinions and ambitions of his own. When Lassalle was Marx’s guest in London in 1862 Marx wrote to Engels:

“It is now perfectly clear to me that, as the shape of his head and the growth of his hair indicate, he is descended from the negroes who joined in the flight of Moses from Egypt (unless his mother or grandmother on the father’s side was crossed with a nigger). Now this union of Jewishness to Germanness on a negro basis was bound to produce an extraordinary hybrid. The importunity of the fellow is also niggerlike.”¹⁰

Marx referred to his guest as a “Jewish nigger” who was “completely deranged.” He frequently used derogatory epithets when writing about Lassalle, such as “Itzig” (Ikey), “Ephraim



CARICATURE OF KARL KAUTSKY AND EDUARD BERNSTEIN DRAWN BY KAUTSKY, 1884, ON A BIRTHDAY CARD SENT TO ENGELS.

Gescheit" and "Judel Braun." And Marx's wife, in a letter to Engels, called Lassalle "the little Berlin Jew."¹¹

AFTER LASSALLE'S DEATH in 1864 there are fewer uncomplimentary remarks about Jews in the Marx-Engels correspondence than before. In that year Engels became a partner in the firm of Ermen & Engels, and from 1867 onwards he paid Marx an annual allowance of £350. So, although Marx's financial problems were by no means solved, he had less need than formerly to try to borrow money from Jews—such as Ignaz Horn¹² and Leo Frankel.¹³ He wrote to Engels in 1875 that he had got into conversation with "a sly-looking Yid" on a journey from London to Rotterdam. He was clearly delighted to be able to report that his loquacious Jewish travelling companion had been the victim of some sharp practice in a business deal.¹⁴ And in his old age, when on holiday in Ramsgate, Marx declared that there were "many Jews and fleas" at the resort.¹⁵

IT WAS NOT ONLY in private letters to his closest friend that Marx indulged in anti-Semitic outbursts. In an article in the *New York Tribune* (4 January 1856), in which he discussed an international loan to be raised by the Russian government to finance the war in the Crimea, Marx savagely attacked the Jewish financiers who cooperated to place the loan.¹⁶ Marx wrote:

"This loan is brought out under the auspices of the house of Stieglitz at St Petersburg. Stieglitz is to Alexander what Rothschild is to Francis Joseph, what Fould is to Louis Napoleon. The late Czar Nicholas made Stieglitz a Russian baron, as the late Kaiser Franz made old Rothschild an Austrian baron, while Louis Napoleon has made a cabinet minister of Fould, with a free ticket to the Tuileries for the females of his family. Thus we find every tyrant backed by a Jew, as is every Pope by a Jesuit. In truth, the cravings of oppressors would be hopeless, and the practicability of war out of the question, if there were not an army of Jesuits to smother thought and a handful of Jews to ransack pockets."

Hope & Co. of Amsterdam played an important role in placing the Russian loan. This was not a Jewish firm, but Marx declared that

"the Hopes lend only the prestige of their name; the real work is done by Jews, and can only be done by them, as they monopolise the machinery of the loan-mongering mysteries by concentrating their energies upon the barter-trade in securities, and the changing of money and negotiating of bills in a great measure arising therefrom. Take Amsterdam, for instance, a city harbouring many of the worst descendants of the Jews whom Ferdinand and Isabella drove out of Spain, and who, after lingering a while in Portugal, were driven thence also, and eventually found a safe place of retreat in Holland. In Amsterdam alone they number not less than 35,000, many of whom are engaged in this gambling

and jobbing of securities. . . . Their business is to watch the monies available for investment and keenly observe where they lie. Here and there and everywhere that a little capital courts investment, there is ever one of these little Jews ready to make a little suggestion or place a little bit of a loan. The smartest highwayman in the Abruzzi is not better posted about the locale of the hard cash in a traveller's valise or pocket, than those Jews about any loose capital in the hands of a trader."

Marx went on to attack the Jewish finance houses of Königswarter, Raphael, Stern, Bischoffsheim, Rothschild, Mendelssohn, Bleichröder, Fould and many others. He declared that many of these families were linked by marriage and he observed that

"the loan-mongering Jews derive much of their strength from these family relations, as these, in addition to their lucre affinities, give a compactness and unity to their operations which ensure their success."

Marx concluded his article as follows:

"This Eastern war is destined at all events to throw some light upon this system of loan-mongering as well as other systems. Meanwhile the Czar will get his fifty millions, and let the English journals say what they please, if he wants five fifties more, the Jews will dig them up. Let us not be thought too severe upon these loan-mongering gentry. The fact that 1855 years ago Christ drove the Jewish money-changers out of the temple, and that the money-changers of our age enlisted on the side of tyranny happen again chiefly to be Jews, is perhaps no more than a historical coincidence. The loan-mongering Jews of Europe do only on a larger and more obnoxious scale what many others do on one smaller and less significant. But it is only because the Jews are so strong that it is timely and expedient to expose and stigmatise their organisation."

There was a kind of bitter justice in the fact that Marx, who detested his own race, should have suffered from the anti-Semitic views of others. There were those who attacked Marx because he was a Jew and who branded the political movement that he led as a Jewish conspiracy.^{16a}



ENGELS' ATTITUDE towards the Jews was quite different from that of Marx.¹⁷ He had never denounced the Jews as a race of petty traders and money-lenders and as Marx had done in his youthful article in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*.¹⁸ Indeed he

later declared that anti-Semitism was the mark of a backward culture and was confined to Russia, Austria and Prussia.¹⁹

In 1881 Eduard Bernstein sent Engels some examples of anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany. Engels replied that he had never seen anything so stupid or childish. He praised the *Sozial-Demokrat*—the leading socialist paper in Germany at the time of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law—for coming out firmly against anti-Semitism. Engels quoted with approval a passage from a letter which he had recently received from a Jewish correspondent (Carl Hirsch), who had just been to Berlin. Hirsch had written that "the official press which prints anti-Semitic articles has few readers."

"While it is true that the Germans have a natural antipathy towards the Jews, it is also a fact that the working class, the radical petty bourgeoisie, and the middle-class philistines hate the government far more than they hate the Jews."

Bernstein, however, disagreed with Hirsch and claimed that anti-Semitic propaganda was falling upon fertile soil in Germany as far as civil servants, teachers, craftsmen, and peasants were concerned.

Ten years later Engels wrote to August Bebel that he was glad to learn that new Jewish recruits were joining the German Social Democrat Party. But he warned Bebel that socialists would have to keep a watchful eye on these Jewish colleagues because they were cleverer than the average bourgeois socialist and were—owing to centuries of oppression—in the habit of pushing themselves forward!²⁰

ALTHOUGH ENGELS DISAPPROVED of anti-Semitism and welcomed Jews like Karl Kautsky and Alfred Adler as party colleagues, he did criticise particular Jews and groups of Jews. For example, in a comment on English politics in 1852 he contemptuously dismissed Disraeli as a "Jewish swindler."²¹ A few years later when he wished to express his disapproval of Lassalle's conduct, he referred to him as "a real Jew from the Slav frontier" and as "a greasy Jew disguised under brilliantine and flashy jewels."²² In 1862, in a letter to Carl Siebel, he attacked the Jewish members of a German club (the *Schiller Anstalt*) in Manchester. He declared that he seldom visited this veritable "Jerusalem Club" any more because the noisy behaviour of the Jews inconvenienced other members.

"What has happened is what always happens when Jews are about. At first they thank God that they had a Schiller Anstalt, but hardly had they got inside than they declared that it was not good enough for them and that they wanted to build a bigger club house—a true temple of Moses—to which the Schiller Anstalt could be moved. This would indeed be the quickest road to bankruptcy . . . Look out! In a year or two you will get a circular reading like this: 'In view of the bankruptcy of the late Schiller Anstalt' . . ."²³

A few years later, however, when he was President of the Schiller Anstalt, Engels played a leading part in securing the larger premises that the Jewish members desired.

In 1864, during the crisis in the Lancashire cotton industry at the time of the American Civil War, Engels complained of the vexations that he had to endure in the office of Ermen & Engels because of "Jewish chicaneries."²⁴ In October 1867, and again in May 1868, Engels complained that his time was being wasted by visits from "that damned old Jew" Leibel Choras, who was a refugee from Moldavia where the Jews were being persecuted.²⁵ Engels obviously had little sympathy for Leibel Choras. And in 1870 Engels dismissed Leo Frankel as "a real little Yid."²⁶

In 1892 in a letter to the French socialist leader Paul Lafargue—Marx's son-in-law—Engels even expressed a certain sympathy for the anti-Jewish movement in France. He wrote:

"I begin to understand French anti-Semitism when I see how many Jews of Polish origin with German names intrude themselves everywhere to the point of arousing public opinion in the *ville lumière*, of which the Parisian philistine is so proud and which he believes to be the supreme power in the universe."²⁷

Engels also expressed his contempt for the Polish Jews who were, in his view, "caricatures of Jews."²⁸ He wrote to Laura Lafargue:

Business principle of the Polish Jew to ask much so as to be able to rebate, as for instance:

"How much is a yard of this cloth?"

"15 groschen."

"He says 15, he means 12½, he would take 10, and the cloth is worth 7½. I am prepared to pay 5 so I will offer him 2½ groschen."²⁹

JUST AS ENGELS RARELY SHOWED any antipathy towards the Jews, so he had no prejudices against coloured peoples. He rejected the view commonly expressed by explorers and missionaries in his day that native peoples were "heathen savages" who were obviously inferior to white races. Indeed he argued that primitive peoples were superior to modern Europeans because they did not recognise private property, or capitalism, or the state. In 1884 in his book on *The Origin of the Family*—based upon the researches of the American anthropologist L. H. Morgan—Engels gave a lyrical account of the "wonderful child-like simplicity" of the way of life in the Iroquois Indian tribes.

"Everything runs smoothly without soldiers, gendarmes, or police; without nobles, kings, governors, prefects, or judges, without prisons, without trials. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole body of those concerned. . . . The household is run in common and communistically by a number of families, the land is tribal property,

only the small gardens being temporarily assigned to the households. . . . Not a bit of our extensive and complicated machinery of administration is required. . . . There can be no poor or needy—the communistic household and the gens know their obligations towards the aged, the sick, and those disabled in war. All are free and equal—including the women. There is, as yet, no room for slaves nor, as a rule, for the subjugation of alien tribes. . . .”²⁰

As an admirer of primitive races, Engels (like Marx) was strongly opposed to the exploitation of native peoples by white colonists. He denounced the expansion of the empires of European states in India, Java, Algiers and elsewhere. For Marx and Engels the rising in India in 1857 was no mere mutiny of Sepoy troops but a national revolt against the English oppressors. In a series of articles in the *New York Tribune* they analysed the causes and events of the Mutiny, which they regarded as an illustration of the “general disaffection exhibited against English supremacy on the part of the great Asiatic nations. . . .”²¹

In view of Engels’s attitude towards the Jews, the Iroquois, and the natives in colonial territories, his attitude towards some of the Slavs is difficult to understand. When a Pan-Slav movement developed with Russian support in central and eastern Europe during the revolution of 1848 Engels rejected the demands of the Czechs, Serbs, Croats, and Ruthenians for independence from Habsburg or Turkish rule. Early in 1849 (in two articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*²²) he argued that these peoples had no natural capacity for self-government and were for ever doomed to be ruled by more advanced nations. They were “peoples without any history.” Engels asserted that these peoples would always be subject races and would “never achieve national independence.” “They are peoples who were either already under foreign rule when they

entered into the first primitive phase of civilisation or who were actually *forced* into the earliest phase of civilisation by their foreign masters.” In the true spirit of Pan-Germanism, Marx and Engels considered the Czechoslovakian peoples and the South Slavs to be “ethnic trash.”

TWO THINGS EMERGE from this study. The first is the extent to which Marx’s anti-Semitism has been played down, or even ignored, in some popular socialist accounts of Marx’s career and doctrines published in the West and intended for radical and socialist consumption. Thus, readers of Franz Mehring’s *Karl Marx* (first published in English translation in 1936) will find little to enlighten them on Marx’s anti-Semitism. There may not be exactly a conspiracy of silence but attention may be drawn to the fact that there is a difference between telling the truth and telling the whole truth. Deception by omission is still deception. Western commentators, too, with a few honourable exceptions, have tended to dodge the issue or to gloss over unwelcome facts. Scholars unfamiliar with the German language, who rely only upon English translations of the writings of Marx and Engels, may be led astray if they use selections compiled by Marxists who are prepared to suppress evidence which might display their hero in a somewhat unfavourable light.

The second point is the striking contrast between Marx’s benevolent desire to liberate the toiling masses from the tyranny of their capitalist exploiters and his ferocious attacks upon those who appeared to stand in the way of his messianic hopes—the “idiotic” peasants and the “rapacious” Jews for example. Long after Marx’s death his followers in Soviet Russia were acting quite in accordance with their master’s views when they eliminated the kulaks and persecuted the Jews.

¹ Arnold Künzli has examined the psychological roots of Marx’s anti-Semitism in *Karl Marx: eine Psychographie* (Vienna, 1966), esp. pp. 33–169, 195–226, 289–93. See also Camillo Berneri, *Le Juif anti-Sémite* (Paris, 1935).

Yet even in West Germany an attempt is apparently being made to counter this realist view. There has recently been published in Hamburg a selection of Marxist pronouncements on the Jewish question (but omitting Marx’s “Zur Judenfrage” of 1844 on the grounds that it is “easily available” elsewhere)—see: *Marxisten gegen Antisemitismus* (Hoffmann & Campe, 1974), with heavily pro-Marxist introductions by Iring Fetscher and Ilse Yago-Jung. One wonders whether a more appropriate title for this volume might not have been *Marxisten gegen Judentum und Zionismus*.

² Karl Marx, “Zur Judenfrage” in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844), reprinted in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 1 (1964),

pp. 347–377; *A World without Jews* (tr. D. D. Runes, 1959). The first article reviewed Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (1843), the second Bruno Bauer’s article on “Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen frei zu werden” in *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (ed. Georg Herwegh, 1843, pp. 56–71). A reprint of the *D.-F. Jahrbücher* has recently been issued in Leipzig, Verlag Reclam (1973); Marx’s article appears on pp. 295–333.

The most recent discussion of Marx’s views is R. S. Wistrich, “Karl Marx and the Jewish Question”, *Soviet-Jewish Affairs*, vol. IV, No. 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 53–60, which contains copious documentation. See, especially, Arthur Prinz, “New Perspectives on Marx as a Jew”, *Leo Baeck Year Book* (1970), pp. 107–25; it includes the revealing text of a letter by Heinrich Graetz, the Jewish historian and a friend of Marx.

³ Marx/Engels, *The Holy Family* (1845; Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956), p.148.

**Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (No. 285, Sunday, 29 April 1849), p. 1, col. 1. Marx was probably the author of the article. *The Unknown Karl Marx: Documents concerning Karl Marx* (ed. R. Payne, 1972), pp. 14–15.

⁵ A small colony of Bambergers can be traced in the City of London during the mid-1850s, based on King Street, Snowhill. Zacharias Bamberger (of 19 King Street, ship and commission agents) was a partner in the firm of Prager & Bamberger, 84 Lower Thomas Street, while Louis Bamberger and Co., merchants, and Abraham Bamberger & Co., wholesale boot manufacturers, both operated from 20 King Street, Snowhill. See: Kelly & Co., *Post Office London Directory* (1855), p. 813. Of these Zacharias Bamberger seems most likely to have been Marx's money-lender.

⁶ See Marx to Engels, 31 July 1851, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. I, p. 224; and 21 January 1852, p. 444.

⁷ For example: "Spielmann always sends one away with the nasal Jewish remark 'Kaine Nootiz da' [i.e. *Keine Notiz da!*]: Marx to Engels, 18 August 1853 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 1, p. 492. The word Yiddish, used to describe this form of speech, is noted as first appearing in print in English in the mid-1880s (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

⁸ Marx to Engels, 21 September 1859, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 416.

⁹ Gustav Mayer, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Lassalle und Marx*, Vol. 3 of *Ferdinand Lassalle: Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften* (first edition 1922; new edition issued by the Historical Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Science, 1967).

¹⁰ Marx to Engels, 30 July 1862, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, pp. 82–84. On Marx as "at once a racialist himself and the cause of racialism in others", see George Watson, *The English Ideology* (1973), p. 211.

¹¹ Jenny Marx to Engels, 9 April 1858, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 314. See also the malicious and anti-Semitic gossip about Moses and Sybille Hess, in Marx to Engels, 22 September 1856, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 147.

¹² Marx to Engels, 10 February 1865 ("Jud Horn") and 14 November 1868 ("Rabbi A. Einhorn generally known by the name of A. E. Horn") in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 232; and Vol. 4, p. 124.

¹³ Marx to Engels, 14 April and 8 July 1870 ("little Jew Leo Frankel") in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, pp. 302, 338.

¹⁴ Marx to Engels, 21 August 1875, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, pp. 428–9.

¹⁵ Marx to Engels, 25 August 1879 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, p. 490.

¹⁶ Reprinted in Karl Marx, *The Eastern Question* (ed. by Eleanor Marx & Edward Aveling, 1897; new ed. 1969), pp. 600–606.

^{16a} See, for example, Edward von Müller-Telling, *Vorgeschnack in die künftige deutsche Diktatur von Marx und Engels* (1850).

¹⁷ For the attitude of socialists to the Jews, see E. Silberner, *Sozialisten zur Judenfrage* (1962) and George Lichtheim, "Socialism and the Jews", in *Dissent* (New York), July–August 1968.

¹⁸ Karl Marx, "Zur Judenfrage", in the *Deutsch-*

Französische Jahrbücher (1844), reprinted in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 347–77. See also, Marx/Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 149–150.

¹⁹ Engels to a correspondent in Vienna, 19 April 1890, in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. XXII, p. 49. See, however, Engels' 1892 preface to the London edition of his *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), where he refers to "the pettifogging business tricks of the Polish Jew, the representative in Europe of commerce at its lowest stage" (p. 360 in 1971 edition by Henderson & Chaloner).

²⁰ Engels to Bernstein, 17 August 1881, in *Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (ed. Hirsch, 1970), pp. 28–29. Bernstein to Engels, 9 September 1881: *Briefwechsel*, p. 37. Engels to Bebel, 1 December 1891, in *August Bebel's Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (ed. Blumenberg, 1965), p. 487.

²¹ Engels to Marx, 24 September 1852, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* Part iii, Vol. 1, p. 405.

²² Engels to Marx, 7 March 1856 in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 2, p. 122. English translation: *Engels: Selected Writings* (ed. Henderson, Penguin, 1967), pp. 129–30.

²³ Engels to Carl Siebel, 4 June 1862, in *Friedrich Engels Profile* (ed. Hirsch, 1970) p. 250.

²⁴ Engels to Marx, 2 November 1864, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 192.

²⁵ Engels to Marx, 11 October 1867 and 6 May 1868, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 3, p. 432 and Vol. 4, p. 52. It has not proved possible to identify Choras further.

²⁶ Engels to Marx, 15 April 1870, in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, Part iii, Vol. 4, p. 305.

²⁷ Engels to Paul Lafargue, 22 July 1892, in *F. Engels—Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence* (Moscow), Vol. iii, 1891–95, p. 184.

²⁸ Engels to Paul Ernst, 5 June 1890, in *Engels Profile*, p. 190.

²⁹ Engels to Laura Lafargue, 27 October 1893, in *Engels—Lafargue: Correspondence*, Vol. iii, 1891–95, p. 307.

³⁰ Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates* (1884; new ed., 1962), p. 96. English translation: Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Moscow), p. 159. Engels' book was based upon Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Line of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation* (1877). Engels also made use of the notes which Karl Marx had made (probably in the winter of 1880–1) on Morgan's book, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (ed. Lawrence Krader, 1972).

³¹ For selections of articles and letters written by Marx and Engels on colonisation, see Marx/Engels, *On Colonisation* (Moscow) and *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857–1859* (Moscow; London, 1960).

³² Engels, "Der magyarische Kampf" and "Der demokratische Panslavismus", in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 13 January and 15 February 1849; reprinted in Karl Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. VI, p. 165 ff. P. W. Blackstock and B. F. Hoselitz have translated and edited a useful anthology of these in Marx/Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe* (1952). Pages 56–9, and 247 are important for "peoples without a history."

THEATRE

Another Play for Pinterites

By John Weightman

NO *MAN'S LAND*, which seems to be the Old Vic's final offering of the present season, is very much a piece for Pinter devotees.¹ The title is misleading. The scene is not laid in no man's land; we are in Pinterland once again, with most of those old familiar features that the author may have culled eclectically from various areas of the Absurdist universe or that he may, on the other hand, have largely invented for himself.

They have often been listed by the critics: the Closed Room (as in Sartre's *Huis Clos*) where the characters confront each other in their subject/object tensions, and which is at once home and hell, womb and battleground, a collective area or an image of the splintered individual mind; the Menace (as in Ionesco, Albee, Kafka) which is the subject/object conflict left in suspension, as it were, like a haze of paranoia; Time, Memory, and Identity (as in Ionesco, Beckett, Genet), the uncertainties of which lead to endless fluctuation of personae; and the Inexplicable Oneiric Detail (as in Ionesco, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet) which the mind can only chew on unsuccessfully, since it has no means of telling whether the detail is genuinely random, or significantly phenomenological, or symbolic within some given system—Christian, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, etc. We can also mention the general paradox that, as in Robbe-Grillet, the language is always meticulously rhythmic and clear, while the overall effect is opaque.

The spectator can no more be clear about what is happening in Pinterland than the reader can be about the action in Robbe-Grillet's novels; and both authors have shown themselves quite expert at warding off interpretations. This is the Absurd, we might say, at one or more removes. The artist's response to the fundamental unintelligibility of the Absurd world is to create an artificially Absurd microcosm, in which our thirst for an explanation is at once stimulated

and frustrated. Pinter, like Robbe-Grillet, sets up to be as inscrutable as God; or as God would be, were He not, by definition, absent from the Absurd universe.

NOW IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT that the Absurd can provoke feelings of revolt in the breast of Promethean man, and this is as true of the microcosm as it is of the macrocosm. I get a little cross with Pinter, as I do with Robbe-Grillet, or with Ionesco when he relies too complacently on the aleatory promptings of the unconscious, or with Beckett when he retreats completely into the incomprehensible particular. Mind-teasing is surely as unrewarding a perversion in the intellectual register as the corresponding activity is in the sensual register. Where linguistic expression is concerned, only one form of obscurity is legitimate—the honest obscurity which comes from trying to say something so subtle or so complex that it defeats all attempts at clarity on the part of the writer, and can only be suggested by an interplay of ambiguities. Some poets and philosophers are ambiguous in this way but, as Alain says, you can thump on this kind of obscurity and it rings true.

Some Absurdist plays stand the test as well, but not, I think, *No Man's Land*. Its mysteries appear to be mostly *en trompe l'œil*; they do not seem to have been imposed upon the author himself by the ineffability of his perceptions. Either they have been carefully arranged for the benefit of those spectators who enjoy being tantalised, or they result—as in Ionesco's less successful works—from the conviction that the dream-like incomprehensible, with its inevitable margin of poetic doubt, is always a safer bet than the comprehensible, which may expose its own nakedness.

NO *MAN'S LAND* is another play in which the characterisation is entirely male. Hirst (Sir Ralph Richardson), an elderly prosperous writer, has brought back to his rather grand

¹*No Man's Land*. By HAROLD PINTER. Eyre Methuen, £2.