

## THE CONSTRUCT *OSTJUDEN* IN GERMAN ANTI-SEMITIC DISCOURSE OF 1920–1932

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**Abstract:** The author of the following article analyses development of the construct *Ostjuden* in the language of German anti-Semites in 1920–1932. For this discourse analysis, two main primary sources were chosen: the daily newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* and archives of parliamentary debates of the Reichstag. Immigration and the presence of Eastern European Jews in Germany after the World War I played an important role in the anti-Semitic propaganda and speeches of right-wing politicians. Within the period of the Weimar Republic, the construct *Ostjuden* underwent certain semantic changes. Use of the term and its connotations in the anti-Semitic discourse were examined and are presented in this article.

Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany were among favorite targets of the anti-Semitic attacks at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The German term *Ostjude* (lit. “Eastern Jew”) started to be widely used in the German language around turn of the century. At the very beginning, this term was popularized by German and Austrian Jews, who had discovered the romanticized world of their Eastern European coreligionists. Therefore, once this word had entered the German language discourses, it had rather positive connotations. Nevertheless, the term quite soon gained other meanings as well. While some German-speaking Jews continued to load the word *Ostjude* with positive connotations, German anti-Semites and others of the German Jewry discovered the term for themselves and started to use it to describe “foreign” Jews from Eastern Europe in a pejorative way.<sup>1</sup> Numerous anti-Semitic texts, which dealt with the so-called *Ostjudenfrage* (question of *Ostjuden*) especially during and after the World War I, discredited such words as *Ostjuden*, *ostjüdisch*, *Ostjudentum* and others. The consequences of this discreditation can still be felt in the modern German language. Although both terms are

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<sup>1</sup> Staudinger 2015: 36–37.

still used by authors of numerous scientific and journalistic texts to refer to Eastern European Jews,<sup>2</sup> other historians criticize this approach, pointing out that these words are to be used exclusively as source terms (*Quellenbegriff*).<sup>3</sup>

Various aspects of the life of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany before 1933 have been well-researched and described in numerous articles and books. The fundamental studies of Steven Aschheim, Trude Maurer and Jack Wertheimer from the 1980s were continued and supplemented by other historians in the following years. Despite the diversity of the works on this topic, there is no comprehensive study of the emergence and development of the term *Ostjude* in German discourses. The aim of the present research is therefore to contribute to this outstanding conceptual history and to examine the role of the construct *Ostjuden* in the anti-Semitic discourse of the Weimar Republic. The following questions are to be answered: what were the dynamics of the usage of this term by German anti-Semites; how did the connotations of the term change within the researched period; which linguistic and rhetorical means were used in relation to this term; and how was this term instrumentalized by right-wing politicians for their political purposes?

For this research, two main primary sources were used: the newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* (January 1920–January 1933) and the archive of parliamentary debates of the German Reichstag (1917–1932). The newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* was chosen for various reasons, mainly because of its role for further developments in Germany. In December 1920, the young National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) bought the loss-making newspaper. Immediately afterwards, the newspaper became the official journalistic party organ. Although its circulation in the 1920s was relatively small even compared to some regional newspapers (under 10,000 copies before June 1922; over 100,000 after 1931), *Völkischer Beobachter* seems to be an important source for discourse analysis as the so-called “Hitler’s voice.”<sup>4</sup> The most important propaganda newspaper of the Nazi party was chosen to be the starting point of this research from among the whole variety of media: around 4,000 daily newspapers had appeared in Germany by the end of the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

The analysis of the newspaper articles is supplemented by research of the archive of parliamentary documents. In accordance with the practice of the German parliament, all speeches, including exclamations from places, are written down in the stenographs, which makes the verbatim reports of the parliamentary sessions a very important source of linguistic research and discourse analysis. Moreover, the documents of the Reichstag make it possible to analyze two layers of language at the same time: the official language (texts of laws, parliamentary requests and written answers to requests), as well as spoken and semi-formal language (verbatim reports). In the case of the parliamentary

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<sup>2</sup> See Eitz, Engelhardt 2015a; Haumann 1998; Maurer 1986.

<sup>3</sup> See: Pickhan 2015; Staudinger 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Mühlberger 2004: 21–22.

<sup>5</sup> Eitz, Engelhardt 2015b: 23.

speeches and documents, those concerning the right-wing politicians who represented parties with anti-Semitic political agendas were taken into account.<sup>6</sup>

The use of the term *Ostjuden* both in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and in parliamentary debates has not yet been systematically researched. Studies into the press of the Weimar Republic mostly ignore the topics connected with Eastern European Jews as marginal and unimportant. In Detlef Mühlberger's two-volume book on the *Völkischer Beobachter* the topic of *Ostjuden* is not mentioned at all. Some references to this aspect can be found in the second volume of the study *Diskursgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* by Thorsten Eitz and Isabelle Engelhardt – however, only in the context of discussions on the so-called *Ostjudenfrage* (lit. “question of Eastern Jews”) in the early 1920s. At the same time, research on Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany lacks a systematic and detailed conceptual analysis, even if an attempt at discourse analysis was made. Thus, for example, in her fundamental study *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918–1933* (1986) Trude Maurer evaluated several anti-Semitic journals (*Alldeutsche Blätter*, *Deutschlands Erneuerung* and *Hammer*) and convincingly described her results in the chapter “The portrait of *Ostjuden* in the mirror of the public opinion” (“*Das Portrait der Ostjuden im Spiegel der öffentlichen Meinung*”). The *Völkischer Beobachter*, which became a daily newspaper in 1923, is not one of the sources of this study. Some articles from the daily press of the Weimar Republic were included into the study, but none of the daily newspapers was systematically reviewed, as the author herself emphasized.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, for Trude Maurer, the word *Ostjude* means exclusively Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany, which was typical for historians in the 1980s. However, as most contemporary historians agree, in the use of German language in the 1920s, the construct *Ostjude* was more complex and went much further beyond these semantic boundaries.

The methodology that enabled this research to be carried out is historical discourse analysis. The texts were researched qualitatively and quantitatively by means of complex content analysis. Based on the quantitative analysis, an attempt was made to find out how often the corresponding terms appear in the texts, i.e. the dynamics of the use of terms. For the qualitative analysis, it was important to evaluate the following categories in the texts: self- and external designations, collocations, stigma vocabulary, titles, categorizations, generalizations, neologisms, and specific composites. Attention was also paid to special features of the reporting in the texts, as well as to the interdiscursive context and current political situation in Germany and abroad.

Throughout the period of the Weimar Republic, discussions on Eastern European Jews did not lose their relevance. Analysis of all issues of the *Völkischer Beobachter* for the period from January 1920 to January 1933 has shown that the term *Ostjude* never completely disappeared from the language use despite its relative rarity at some periods. *Ostjuden* were mentioned most intensively in the anti-Semitic press in the early 1920s: 30% of all the article titles containing the word *Ostjude* or its derivatives published

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<sup>6</sup> Representatives of the following parties and factions: Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP), Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP), Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), Nationalsozialistische Freipartei (NF), Völkische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (VA).

<sup>7</sup> Maurer 1986: 102.

in the *Völkischer Beobachter* during the analysed time period were found from January 1920 to February 1921. However even later there were periods in which articles on Eastern Jews appeared systematically, for example in October–November 1923 (in the context of the expulsions of Polish Jews from Bavaria) or in the second half of 1926 (at that time the articles were dealing mainly with financial crimes and court proceedings against Eastern European Jews living in Germany).

Similar observations can be made regarding the parliamentary discussions. The period of the most intense polemics on *Ostjuden* in the Weimar Republic is the early 1920s: half of all mentions of the word *Ostjude* and its derivatives in the stenographs appeared from 1920 to 1923. However, already during the World War I, some right-wing politicians tried to make the so-called *Ostjudenfrage* a subject of political discussion. This discussion intensified in the context of immigration of Eastern European Jews to Germany from the territories, which suffered from the war actions the most. In the last years of the war, the only (but quite active) opponent of the presence of Eastern European Jews in Germany among the members of the German Parliament was Ferdinand Werner (DVP, later DNVP), who repeatedly called for expulsion of Eastern European Jewish workers (“pseudoworkers” or *Pseudoarbeiter*, according to Werner) from Germany.<sup>8</sup> As a solution, he also proposed forced emigration of the Eastern European Jews to the USA or Palestine. He described *Ostjuden* in a highly pejorative way, pointing out their alleged links to the criminal world and Bolshevik revolutionaries, as well as their role in food smuggling and illegal enrichment. He was the first to use the term *Ostjudenfrage* in the Reichstag, trying to make this a subject of discussion in the context of suffering of German people in the last phase of the war. However, this topic did not become crucial in the parliamentary discussions in 1917–1918 (later, in 1919, the word *Ostjude* was not used at all).

In the following years, a more significant number of anti-Semitic oriented politicians brought up the issue in the German Parliament. In 1920, the most heated discussions took place in relation to the so-called *Ostjudenresolution* (“resolution on Eastern Jews”). Initiated and supported by the representatives of the nationalistic DNVP, the resolution was adopted on August 2, 1920. In its texts, the construct *Ostjuden* was not mentioned at all – expressions such as “elements of foreign origins” (*fremdstämmige Elemente*) were used instead.<sup>9</sup> However, as the stenographs of the parliamentary sessions prove, this resolution was directed exclusively against the Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany. Representatives of the DNVP, such as Dr. Reinhard Mumm, Dr. Käthe Schirmacher, and Wilhelm Koch used highly negative language to describe the *Ostjuden*, e.g. calling them “caftan statures” (*Kaftengestalten*), “unwanted foreigners” (*unerwünschte Ausländer*), “these elements” (*diese Elemente*), and appealing for their deportations to concentration camps.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly enough, the construct *Ostjude* was widely used at that time by representatives of all political parties, although still rather as a colloquial term. The usage of the term was so common that this word started to be used metaphorically as well. For

<sup>8</sup> *Verhandlungen des Reichstages* (hereafter: VdR) 1918, Bd. 313, 25.06.1918: 5677–5678.

<sup>9</sup> VdR 1924, Bd. 363, Aktenstück Nr. 88: 81.

<sup>10</sup> VdR 1920, Bd. 332, 26.02.1920: 4525; VdR 1921, Bd. 344, 3.08.1920: 630–633.

instance, one representative of the SPD once rhetorically compared one of his political opponents from the DNVP to the “company of loud *Ostjuden*.”<sup>11</sup>

In general, the rhetoric of right-wing politicians in the Reichstag in the early 1920s was not very much different from the language of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (although representatives of the NSDAP were not represented at that time in the parliament at all). The first articles on the topic appeared in the first issues of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.<sup>12</sup> The authors of the texts considered immigration as a major threat to Germany. *Ostjuden* were attributed exclusively with negative characteristics: trafficking, usury, lack of hygiene, pickpocketing, contagious diseases, trafficking of women, speculations in gold and currencies, and so on. Eastern European Jews were occasionally blamed for causing problems within Germany. When the housing and food shortages in the Weimar Republic were extremely high in 1920 and 1921, the *Völkischer Beobachter* constantly claimed that *Ostjuden* were significantly exacerbating the catastrophic situation. Another accusation was that *Ostjuden* were preparing a revolution in Germany. Since German anti-Semites regarded Jews as organizers of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants were constantly suspected of spreading Bolshevik ideology. In addition, the mass immigration of *Ostjuden* to Germany was regarded as a consequence of the revolutions in Russia and Germany.

During the World War, this immigration swelled like a stream. The immigrants have caused unpredictable damage to the German people through trafficking and proliferation, especially as carriers and mediators of gold and banknote proliferation and the resulting damage to our monetary value. Above all, however, through their leading role in the preparation and implementation of the crime of the revolution. The collapse of Germany and Austria caused the influx of the *Östlinge*.<sup>13</sup>

In order to convey the most negative image of Eastern European Jews to readers, authors of the *Völkischer Beobachter* used numerous pejorative terms. *Ostjuden* were extremely stigmatized – they stood for the anti-Semites at the very bottom of their racial hierarchy (lower than any other Jews). Therefore, numerous brutal words, expressions and collocations appeared in the texts, such as “brutal hordes”, “repulsive strangers”, “Galician vampires,” “bloodsuckers,” “invaders,” “plagues,” “annoying vermin,” “riff-raff” (*vertierte Horden, widerwärtige Fremdlinge, galizische Vampire, Blutsauger, Eindringlinge, Landplage, lästiger Geschmeiß, Ungeziefer, Gesindel*).

The construct *Ostjuden* became a popular linguistic device of anti-Semites right after the World War I for various reasons. Above all, the negative image of the European East played a very important role in German discourses of that time.<sup>14</sup> Eastern Europe was traditionally regarded as culturally backward and uncivilized. Two semantically negatively charged polysemic roots *Ost-* (East) and *Jude* (Jew) mutually reinforced each other, which led the word *Ostjude* in the language of German anti-Semites to connote more pejoratively than many other terms and constructions with the root *Jude*.

<sup>11</sup> VdR 1921, Bd. 344, 1.07.1920: 83.

<sup>12</sup> A letter to the editor entitled “On the immigration of *Ostjuden*” was published already in the third issue of the newspaper. See *Völkischer Beobachter* (hereafter: VB) 10.01.1920.

<sup>13</sup> VB 21.01.1920.

<sup>14</sup> See Liulevicius 2009.

The particular frequency of the word's use in the early postwar years was also related to the fresh memories of former German soldiers from the World War I, in which many of them had encountered masses of Eastern European Jews for the first time.<sup>15</sup> The construct *Ostjuden* became therefore one of the most practical rhetorical means helping the anti-Semites at that time to convince their supporters that Jews were generally responsible for the internal problems of Germany. The immigration of the allegedly dangerous Eastern European Jews was often contrasted in the texts with the suffering and plight of the German people:

The question of *Ostjuden* is not a Prussian question, but a question of the German people. Despite famine and unemployment, the Jewish crooks who immigrated in hundreds of thousands are not expelled and the gates of the Reich are opened wide for the influx of hundreds of thousands more. However: the border is also open to Germans – to emigrate! How long will the German people, will the German representatives tolerate this disgrace?<sup>16</sup>

Examples of this development of the anti-Semitic discourse are to be found in the parliamentary debates as well. Dr. Reinhard Mumm (DNVP) used the following expressions in order to draw attention to the *Ostjudenfrage* in just one of his speeches, in March 1921: “the worst trouble-makers,” “the worst profiteers,” “[*Ostjuden*] increase the housing shortage into the unbearable,” “they encourage the overload of our courts,” “they increase the risk of epidemic.”<sup>17</sup> His colleague Reinhold Wulle (also DNVP) submitted a special request to the government at the beginning of 1922, trying to compare the suffering of 4,000 Volga Germans, who had been “brought almost undressed in the bitterest cold to barracks near Frankfurt Oder, where they have to live in conditions that defy description,” with the situation of “200,000 *Ostjuden* [who came to Germany] and found here housing and maintenance.”<sup>18</sup> This request was actively promoted by Wulle and supported by his colleagues from DNVP, who repeatedly collocated the terms *Ostjuden* and “annoying foreigners” (*lästige Ausländer*), making these two terms synonymous.<sup>19</sup>

A significant number of similar requests in 1920–1922 led to the necessity for the German government to react. In March 1922, the “Memorandum on immigration and emigration to and from Germany in the years 1910 to 1920” was published by the Reich Minister of the Interior. The only non-German ethnic group to be given a special chapter in the document were *Ostjuden*.<sup>20</sup> All other foreigners were mentioned either in the chapters on “Others” or “Migrant workers.” Thus, unlike in the previous period, the term *Ostjude* started to be used not only in colloquial language, but also in the official language of the German parliament, which was prompted by the intensification of the use of the word by right-wing politicians.

<sup>15</sup> Kliymuk 2016: 15.

<sup>16</sup> VB 21.01.1920.

<sup>17</sup> VdR 1921, Bd. 348, 14.03.1921: 2937.

<sup>18</sup> VdR 1924, Bd. 370, Aktenstück Nr. 3302, Anfrage Nr. 1322: 3243.

<sup>19</sup> VdR 1922, Bd. 352, 14.02.1922: 5829; VdR 1924, Bd. 370, Aktenstück Nr. 3416, Anfrage Nr. 1374: 3336.

<sup>20</sup> VdR 1924, Bd. 372, Aktenstück Nr. 4084: 4385–4386.

The anti-Semites actively instrumentalized the problem of *Ostjuden* to accuse the Eastern European Jewish immigrants of profiteering, especially in the context of the economic crisis of 1923. As a solution to internal German problems, anti-Semitic politicians suggested taking advantage of properties of *Ostjuden*. A parliamentary proposal to expropriate living and business spaces in order to give them to Volga Germans was made by DNVP politicians (Wilhelm Bruhn, Oskar Hergt and others) on February 22, 1923.<sup>21</sup> This request was supported by speeches about “seven- to ten-room apartments” in West Berlin, which were apparently possessed by Jews,<sup>22</sup> and about *Ostjuden*, who came to Germany “like a cancer [...] after their revolution [...] to fill their pockets [...] through usury and profiteering.”<sup>23</sup> More or less intensively, speeches about the enormous wealth of *Ostjuden* and relevant requests appeared constantly in the Reichstag in the 1920s. In highly pejorative terms, representatives of nationalistic parties spoke about “hundreds of thousands of *Ostjuden* [...] who take apartments away from the Germans” (Arno Chwatal, NF, later NSDAP),<sup>24</sup> “*ostjüdischer* Galician riffraff, which came to Germany with a caftan full of lice, today living here on Kurfürstendamm and in the villas of the West” (Karl Fahrenhorst, NF, later NSDAP)<sup>25</sup> or “every newly-arrived *Ostjude* [who had received] his apartment in the first place” (Wilhelm Kube, NF, later NSDAP).<sup>26</sup>

In 1926, Dr. Wilhelm Frick (NF, later NSDAP) and Albrecht von Graefe (NF, later VA) proposed a “law on the expropriation of the property of bank and exchange princes and other of the nation’s parasites.”<sup>27</sup> The meaning of the epithet “nation’s parasites” from the title of the proposed law was explained in article 1: these were all *Ostjuden*, who immigrated to Germany since August 1, 1914, and other non-natives (*Fremdstämmige*), who profited during the World War I, German revolution or periods of inflation or deflation. Although the proposed law was declined,<sup>28</sup> discussions on this issue went on until 1930. Also in the later proposed laws, *Ostjuden* were mentioned among their main target groups.<sup>29</sup>

From the very beginning, the *Völkischer Beobachter* also expressed its views on the solution to the alleged question of *Ostjuden*. Political manifestation of the NSDAP was one of the newspaper’s most important tasks. The frequently used composites *Ostjudenfrage* (“Eastern Jewish question”), *Ostjudengefahr* (“Eastern Jewish danger”) and *Ostjudenproblem* (“Eastern Jewish problem”) pointed to the seriousness of the topic for the anti-Semites. The only solution they would accept was a policy of expropriation and expulsion of immigrant Jews from Germany. All Jews who had arrived in Germany since August 1, 1914 should be expelled without any exception – the numerous articles

<sup>21</sup> VdR 1924, Bd. 376, Aktenstück Nr. 5568: 6281.

<sup>22</sup> VdR 1923, Bd. 358, 16.02.1923: 9734.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.02.1923: 9861.

<sup>24</sup> VdR 1924, Bd. 381, 25.07.1924: 637.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.06.1924: 339.

<sup>26</sup> VdR 1925, Bd. 387, 6.08.1925: 4127.

<sup>27</sup> VdR 1926, Bd. 408, Aktenstück 2232: (unpaged).

<sup>28</sup> VdR 1926, Bd. 390, 6.05.1926: 7046.

<sup>29</sup> See VdR 1926, Bd. 409, Aktenstück 2486: (unpaged); VdR 1928, Bd. 436, Aktenstück 1034: (unpaged); VdR 1932, Bd. 448, Aktenstück 66: (unpaged).

in the *Völkischer Beobachter* propagandistically supported this point of the political program of the NSDAP. Cases of expulsions from German cities were welcomed and widely covered in the texts. In addition, reference was made to the history and experience of other countries – e.g. expulsions of Eastern European Jews from Germany in the Middle Ages or contemporary expulsions from France, Austria and the Netherlands.

In reality, there was no severe and real problem of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe at that time – the question of *Ostjuden* was rather created and blown way out of proportion by anti-Semitic propaganda.<sup>30</sup> Between 1922 and 1932 there were only about 40,000 Jews from Eastern Europe in the entire German Reich,<sup>31</sup> which was just a tiny fraction of the total population of about 65 million citizens. Most of the immigrants had arrived during the Great War and in the first post-war years and had no goal of staying in Germany. Germany was more of a transit country for them – for most of them the United States remained their actual destination.<sup>32</sup> However, this was ignored by the anti-Semites both in their publications and in speeches.

As the number of immigrants began to decline, the semantic charge of the term *Ostjude* also started to change, especially in the press. As late as 1920, the word *Ostjude* in the *Völkischer Beobachter* meant almost exclusively Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Germany. In 1921, the term had taken on a new meaning – such articles started to appear as “*Ostjude* is spreading” (“*Der Ostjude greift um sich*”),<sup>33</sup> “Preparations of *Ostjuden*” (“*Ostjüdische Vorbereitungen*”)<sup>34</sup> and “Military march of *Ostjuden*” (“*Der ostjüdische militärische Aufmarsch*”),<sup>35</sup> which reported about the events in and around Soviet Russia. These articles appeared predominantly in the chapter “Foreign policy review”. The term *Ostjude(n)* is to be understood here as “Soviet Russia.” Thus, the connotations “communist” (or “Bolshevik” or “Soviet”) and “(Eastern) Jewish” became to a certain degree interchangeable. Typical for this period were such articles as “Advance of *Ostjude*”: “Berlin, February 11. A Bolshevik newspaper called *Nowyj mir* is now published in Russian in Berlin. The paper describes it as its task to raise its voice abroad to protect Soviet Russia.”<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the term *Westjuden* (“Western Jews”) was used as an abusive euphemism for Western European countries or the USA whenever the authors of *Völkischer Beobachter* disagreed with their policies. Thus, two articles in 1925 were entitled “Eastern and Western Jews” (“*Ost- und Westjuden*”)<sup>37</sup> and “Unification of Western and Eastern Jews” (“*Einigung der West- und Ostjuden*”).<sup>38</sup> These two articles reported on negotiations and cooperation between the Soviet Union (“*Ostjuden*”) and France (“*Westjuden*”). However, no reference was made to Jews themselves in the texts.

<sup>30</sup> Eitz, Engelhardt 2015a: 60–61.

<sup>31</sup> Zimmermann 1997: 23.

<sup>32</sup> Maurer 1986: 62.

<sup>33</sup> VB 23.01.1921.

<sup>34</sup> VB 27.01.1921.

<sup>35</sup> VB 20.02.1921.

<sup>36</sup> VB 13.02.1921.

<sup>37</sup> VB 12.12.1925.

<sup>38</sup> VB 17.09.1925.



The constant emphasis on equating German Jews with their Eastern European coreligionists helped the anti-Semites to transfer the alleged characteristics of Polish, Galician, Russian or Hungarian Jews to Western European Jews. According to the traditions of the press in Weimar Republic, the *Völkischer Beobachter* often made reference to Jewish newspapers and magazines, as well as to speeches of political opponents (in this case, those of them who were Jews or were regarded as supporters of Jews). Citation of the opponents with subsequent commentary was customary for the press of this period:

In the Prussian parliament, a relative of *Ostjuden* has, of course, [...] worked hard for his fellow people. The man's name is Cohn and, of course, he has to have such a name, he is a doctor and, of course, he must be a representative of the German United Social Democratic Party.<sup>39</sup>

The “Jüdische Rundschau” reports the following [...].<sup>40</sup>

In the Zionist “Jüdische Rundschau” No. 82 we read [...].<sup>41</sup>

However, there are also enough articles in which authors emphasized differences and conflicts between *Ost-* and *Westjuden*. The aim of this distinction was to build a hierarchy in which the Eastern European Jews were at the very bottom among all other groups of Jews and allegedly were not always tolerated even by German Jews. Surprisingly, even positive characteristics of the German Jews were sometimes brought to light in such cases:

It should be noted that there are clear differences between *Westjuden* or noble Jews, as they are also called, and *Ostjuden*. *Westjuden* have no interest in the complete destruction of Germany, while *Ostjude* absolutely wants that.<sup>42</sup>

It is well known that there are cases, when *Ostjuden* and *Westjuden* do not get along well. The Berlin “long-established Jews” were not built by Barmat, Kutisker, Holzmann and Michael, nor were the Viennese “old” bankers by Bosel or Castiglioni.<sup>43</sup>

The names mentioned above (Barmat, Kutisker, etc.) relate to the major financial scandals in Germany<sup>44</sup> and Austria,<sup>45</sup> which were widely covered by the anti-Semitic press and actively discussed in the parliament. All these men were Jews who came from Eastern Europe and illegally enriched themselves in the 1920s, mainly in Berlin and Vienna. Crucial for intensification of discussions about *Ostjuden* was the trial of

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<sup>39</sup> VB 31.01.1923.

<sup>40</sup> VB 17.06.1925.

<sup>41</sup> VB 23.10.1926.

<sup>42</sup> VB 22.07.1920.

<sup>43</sup> VB 24.11.1926.

<sup>44</sup> See Maurer 1986: 140–144.

<sup>45</sup> Reiter 2008: 19.

Julius Barmat (born 1887 in Uman) and his brother Henry (born 1892 in Lodz), which in 1925 triggered a new wave of accusations of economic crimes of *Ostjuden* against Germany. In the Reichstag, such right-wing politicians as Wilhelm Henning (NF, later VA),<sup>46</sup> Franz Behrens and Wilhelm Bruhn (DNVP)<sup>47</sup> used the term *Ostjuden* as a synonym for “Barmat(s)”. Later on, other trials against profiteers of Eastern European Jewish origins (Kutisker, Holzmann, Michael, Litwin) were used for renewed popularization of the construct *Ostjude* in the anti-Semitic discourse.<sup>48</sup> However, unlike the period of 1920–1921, usage of this term was not that common. New situational synonyms were often used instead, e.g. Sklareks, Barmats, Kutiskers (names in plural form) or similar (Barmatgenossen,<sup>49</sup> Barmätzen,<sup>50</sup> etc.).

Neither did the anti-Semites ignore fierce internal Jewish discussions about Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Both attempts of German Jews to protect their coreligionists from anti-Semitic attacks and the dissatisfaction of many German Jews with the presence of *Ostjuden* in Germany were criticized:

[...] it is clear [...] that the “German citizens of the Mosaic faith” get the constant influx of racial comrades from the East hard on their nerves. First, with their unadulterated Jewish appearance, they are an involuntary walking propaganda tool to promote anti-Semitism, and second, they are a nasty business competitor to their tribesmen.<sup>51</sup>

The anti-Semites used numerous rhetorical means in their writing to build up a negative image of *Ostjuden*. This includes above all the aforementioned reporting of criminal offences committed by individuals and further transmission of the accusations to the entire Jewish population. The allegedly negative consequences of the Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe to Germany, as well as the extent of this immigration, were greatly exaggerated linguistically. For example, an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* entitled “*Ostjüdische* [Eastern Jewish] mass immigration to Prussia” in July 1929 reported on the alleged problem. The article is – in contrast to the font size of its title – very short and tells about the naturalization of “thirteen Jews and Galicians” in Prussia.<sup>52</sup>

Other purely linguistic means that contributed to the negative semantic charge of the term *Ostjude* in anti-Semitic discourse included stigmatizing collocations with the attribution *ostjüdisch* (*ostjüdische Überschwemmung* – Eastern Jewish flooding, *ostjüdische Gefahr* – Eastern Jewish danger, *ostjüdische Galiziergesindel* – East Jewish Galician riffraff) and stigmatizing composites with the element *Ostjuden-* (*Ostjudengeschmeiß* – Eastern Jewish smut, *Ostjudenplage* – Eastern Jewish plague, *Ostjudenpest* – Eastern Jewish plague). These linguistic means show no clear difference in the period from 1920 to 1932, although only in the second half of this period – since 1926 – the term started to be used also as a kind of swearword to refer to political

<sup>46</sup> VdR 1925, Bd. 384, 9.01.1925: 37; VdR 1925, Bd. 385, 6.05.1925: 1594.

<sup>47</sup> VdR 1925, Bd. 384, 22.01.1925: 186 and 224.

<sup>48</sup> VdR 1926, Bd. 389, 17.02.1926: 5654; VdR 1926, Bd. 390, 28.04.1926: 6923 and 30.04.1926: 6951.

<sup>49</sup> VB 29.01.1931.

<sup>50</sup> VdR 1925, Bd. 385, 29.04.1925: 1456.

<sup>51</sup> VB 5.04.1928.

<sup>52</sup> VB 4.07.1929.

opponents who were not necessarily Jews. An example of this is an article on the statements of the French Prime Minister Aristide Briand in the League of Nations, which had the following title: “Briand haggles like an *Ostjude*.”<sup>53</sup> The phrase “like an *Ostjude*” was used here to reinforce the pejorative verb “to haggle” (*schachern*).<sup>54</sup> However, the text of the article does not refer to any topics related to *Ostjuden* at all. Another example of this swearword-like usage of the term *Ostjude* is the speech of Dr. Joseph Goebbels (NSDAP) in the Reichstag on February 25, 1932. Dr. Goebbels spoke about the case of Adolf Hitler, who as an Austrian fought on the German side during the World War I and received his German citizenship “by blood and by risking his life” and not “in the same way [...] as any lousy *Ostjude*.”<sup>55</sup>

The immigration of Eastern European Jews and their presence in Germany thus played an important role in the development and radicalization of anti-Semitic discourse in the Weimar Republic. Stigmatization of *Ostjuden* intensified in the early 1920s and to a certain extent determined slogans and the way of thinking of the anti-Semitic movement. The rapidly changing situation in the young German Republic, however, led to some changes in the semantics of the term. As a result, depending on the context, German anti-Semites added new negative connotations to the term *Ostjude*, transforming it to a polysemous construct and instrumentalizing it for their political purposes. The development of this term in the Weimar Republic had its impact on the German language – negative connotations still dominate in the modern perception of the word *Ostjude*.

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<sup>53</sup> VB 14–15.03.1926.

<sup>54</sup> The German verb *schachern* has strong pejorative connotations and originates from Yiddish *sachern* or *sochern* (“to trade”, “to bargain”), which probably derived from the Hebrew *sāḥar* (“to travel on commercial business”) or *saḥar* (“acquisition, profit”). See: *Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, URL: <https://www.dwds.de/wb/schachern> (access: 15.08.2018).

<sup>55</sup> VdR 1932, Bd. 446, 25.02.1932: 2352.

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