

Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects

*Rethinking the Political Culture
of Germany in the 1920s*



Edited by

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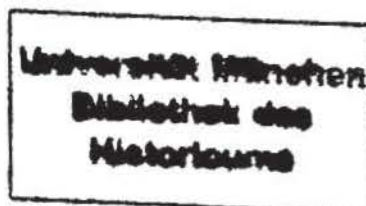
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~: CONTENTS ~:

List of Illustrations	vii
Preface	ix
List of Contributors	x
Introduction: Weimar Subjects/Weimar Publics: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s <i>Kathleen Canning</i>	1
 <i>Part I. Defeat and the Legacy of War</i>	
1. The Return of the Undead: Weimar Cinema and the Great War <i>Anton Kaes</i>	31
2. The Work of Art and the Problem of Politics in Berlin Dada <i>Brigid Doherty</i>	42
3. The Secret History of Photomontage: On the Origins of the Composite Form and the Weimar Photomontages of Marianne Brandt <i>Elizabeth Otto</i>	66
 <i>Part II. New Citizens/New Subjectivities</i>	
4. Mothers, Citizens, and Consumers: Female Readers in Weimar Germany <i>Kerstin Barndt</i>	95
5. Claiming Citizenship: Suffrage and Subjectivity in Germany after the First World War <i>Kathleen Canning</i>	116
6. Feminist Politics beyond the Reichstag: Helene Stöcker and Visions of Reform <i>Kristin McGuire</i>	138
7. Producing Jews: Maternity, Eugenics, and the Embodiment of the Jewish Subject <i>Sharon Gillerman</i>	153

Part III. Symbols, Rituals, and Discourses of Democracy

8. Reforming the Reich: Democratic Symbols and Rituals
in the Weimar Republic 175
Manuela Achilles
9. High Expectations—Deep Disappointment: Structures
of the Public Perception of Politics in the Weimar Republic 192
Thomas Mergel
10. Contested Narratives of the Weimar Republic: The Case of
the “Kutisker-Barmat Scandal” 211
Martin H. Geyer
11. Political Violence, Contested Public Space, and Reasserted
Masculinity in Weimar Germany 236
Dirk Schumann

Part IV. Publics, Publicity, and Mass Culture

12. “A Self-Representation of the Masses”: Siegfried Kracauer’s
Curious Americanism 257
Miriam Hansen
13. Neither Masses nor Individuals: Representations of
the Collective in Interwar German Culture 279
Stefan Jonsson
14. Cultural Capital in Decline: Inflation and the Distress
of Intellectuals 302
Bernd Widdig

Part V: Weimar Topographies

15. Defining the Nation in Crisis: Citizenship Policy in
the Early Weimar Republic 321
Annemarie Sammartino
16. Gender and Colonial Politics after the Versailles Treaty 339
Lora Wildenthal
17. The Economy of Experience in Weimar Germany 360
Peter Fritzsche

- Bibliography 383
- Index 402

CHAPTER 10



Contested Narratives of the Weimar Republic

The Case of the “Kutisker-Barmat Scandal”

MARTIN H. GEYER

The so-called Kutisker-Barmat scandal unfolded in the first half of 1925, when Reich President Friedrich Ebert, along with other leading Social Democrats and members of the Center Party, were accused of being corrupted by *Ostjuden* (Jews from Eastern Europe) who supposedly had used their political connections to procure by fraud and bribery large loans from the Prussian State Bank and the Postal Service. The prelude to the affair started at the end of 1924 when it became clear these loans could not be repaid. The arrest of the Lithuanian citizen Iwan Kutisker in mid-December 1924 and of Julius and Henry Barmat, Russian Jews living in Amsterdam and Berlin, on the very last day of the year prompted a highly anti-Semitic campaign in which members of the government were also attacked by an odd coalition of Communists, German Nationalists (DNVP), and members of the radical political Right. There was talk of this scandal being a “Panama” for the Weimar Republic, referring to the Panama Scandal that had rocked the French Republic in the 1890s, in which Jewish financiers were blamed for bribing parliamentarians to sink millions of government funds into the ill-fated canal project in Central America.¹

In the weeks that followed these initial arrests, the Weimar Republic was immersed in a form of sensationalist politics that appealed to a rather shocked mass audience. Anger mixed with frustration. The memory of the hardship brought about by the war, inflation, and the stabilization of the currency was still painfully vivid. The fact that Jewish foreigners could have received millions at a time when credit was extremely hard to get seemed outrageous, a point the political Right reiterated incessantly to the public, not the least by raising the question of “Jewish influence” in the republic. For their part, the Communists found proof that capitalism had corrupted the Social Democrats and the re-

public. The conservatives instigated the creation of parliamentary fact-finding committees in both the Reichstag and the Prussian Diet, which initiated hearings as early as January 1925.² These public hearings and detailed news reports on the state attorney's investigations, in addition to some leaked confidential information and many rumors, helped to make the Kutisker-Barmat scandal one of the main political events of the year. Indeed, the scandal overshadowed the debate on the complicated process of political coalition building, in the Reichstag, in the Prussia Diet, and in the election for the Reich presidency. In all these cases, efforts were made to discredit the Social Democrats in order to build *Bürgerblock* governments.³

The debate focused almost obsessively on the question whether leading Social Democrats—including Reich President Friedrich Ebert, whose son had been employed shortly by the Barmat enterprise—had wielded their influence on behalf of Jews.⁴ Derogatorily they were called the *Barmatokratie* or the *Barmatiden*.⁵ Such criticism paralleled the vicious attacks on Ebert's purportedly "treasonous" behavior in the January Strike of 1918, all of which was responsible for Ebert's death on 28 February 1925.⁶ Politics became a huge spectacle and a vicious struggle amidst the flourishing rumors about political corruption, the influence of *Ostjuden* in German economic and political life, and then, the fatal heart attack suffered by the highly incriminated Center Party member and Reich Post Minister Anton Höfle while he was in pretrial detention. Some contemporaries spoke of a "Barmat psychosis"⁷ and that a "pogrom atmosphere" pervaded the public mood.⁸

The case of Kutisker-Barmat is a good example of a modern type of "spectacular politics,"⁹ which enables us to analyze the Weimar Republic's contested political culture. The aim of this essay is not primarily to reconstruct and evaluate the case of fraud and bribery. Instead, it examines an almost excessive "surplus" of flourishing narratives and rumors, images and myths that surrounded the case. Embedded in this case were highly contested and politically charged narratives of the political and moral order of the republic, narratives that revolved around war and defeat, money and the decay of economic ethics. As in many other scandals, the multidimensionality of the Kutisker-Barmat affair is comparable to the many layers of an onion. However, these layers are not just trivial incidences to be peeled away in order to get to the "core." Instead they themselves constitute the crux of a modern type of "spectacular politics." Therefore, this essay will explore the stories that revolved around certain people and incidents and thereby blended fact and fiction from the very start. It will be shown how the names Barmat and Kutisker became political and cultural code words that were readily used in the contemporary discourse of both the Left and the Right.¹⁰ The essay starts out by asking how it was possible that these *Ostjuden* epitomized widely circulating images of the "profiteer," the so-called *Kriegs- und Inflationsgewinnler*. Then a closer look is offered of some of

the narratives of the Communist Left and the political Right that helped stage the events of 1925. All of these stories revolve around images of luxury and gift-giving, which are examined next. In a final section, it is illustrated how the successful management of the Kutisker-Barmat crisis also could provide a positive narrative for the Weimar Republic, contested as the republic was from the very beginning.

Constructing the Jewish Profiteer

Depending on who was telling the story in the interwar period, the Kutisker-Barmat scandal was either cynical, tragic, or even comical; but it always remained a story of victimization. From the very beginning, the biographies of Julius (or "Judko" as he was called by his friends and enemies alike) Barmat and Iwan Kutisker were lumped together, notwithstanding the fact that they had never known each other personally or professionally. What helped establish this connection was the accusation of credit fraud, the fact that the Kutisker case led to investigations into the business of the Barmats (as well as that of another player, Jacob Michel), and finally the political decision to have two parliamentary fact-finding committees investigate these cases. But there was more to it: from the very beginning, the two main protagonists signified almost archetypically the career of what was decried as the "Jewish profiteer,"¹¹ and their hyphenated names became a cultural code for exactly that stereotype on which anti-Semitism flourished.¹²

It was difficult to escape this stereotyping, a point exemplified well by Walter Mehring's play *Der Kaufmann von Berlin. Ein historisches Schauspiel aus der deutschen Inflation*, which premiered in September 1929 in an avant-garde but not very successful stage production by Erwin Piscator. The protagonist of this play was—*nomen est omen*—Benjamin Chaim Kaftan, a poor, somewhat naive Jew, who arrives in Berlin from the east with a Yiddish accent, goodwill, and one hundred dollars in his pocket during the inflation. Much to the despair of his dollar-crazy environment, this man does not want to spend his money, but eagerly tries to increase it. He eventually gets his chance when he becomes the puppet of others (one of them being a retired general and clever businessman) who enthrone him with his possession of a mere one hundred dollars as a bank director. In turn, he becomes rich by dealing in scrap metal acquired from the former army, which is, however, full of deployable weapons to be used for the purpose of civil war. With the reputation of a "Waffenschieber," an arms profiteer, our protagonist is given "unlimited credit." To make a long story short, the putsch fails, although angry swastika wearers do destroy the Jewish quarter in the Grenadierstraße (which epitomized Jewish immigration to Berlin from the east). Kaftan thus becomes a victim in a double sense. First he becomes the

target of the angry, pauperized masses, who blame him, as a profiteer, for their plight. Mehring refers here to the anti-Semitic riots that occurred in the Berliner Scheunenviertel in November 1923. Second, Kaftan is finally dropped by the very people who had pulled the strings behind the scenes, but only after they squeeze as much money as possible out of him for their military ventures. Once the currency is stabilized, he ends up as poor as he began. In Piscator's interpretation, Kaftan is captured by the police, fights the charges against him in court, has a breakdown, and ends up as a corpse on the autopsy table while students hold a funeral oration. In the original play, Kaftan decides to return to his village, but at the train station Alexanderplatz, he happens to overhear young men from his village who are eager to follow the path of their successful mentor Kaftan and therefore are searching for him in order to reclaim the money the villagers had entrusted to him before he left.

The play was the object of an array of criticisms. For one, Piscator's attempt to reenact the atmosphere of the inflation by fading in pictures, proclamations, and large, rotating telegraphic ticker printouts of dollar exchange rates led some to fault his "mechanical" staging. The play was also said to convey anti-Semitic messages, despite the efforts of both Piscator and Mehring to expose anti-Semitism. In the end, the play pleased no one and was quickly cancelled. Indeed, the stereotype of the profiteer was so powerful and laden with resentments that it was nearly impossible to depict a person like Kaftan as a victim; for anti-Semites this was an absurd proposition to begin with. Finally, the play appeared to exculpate those "pulling the strings" behind the "Kutisker-Barmat scandal."¹³

Others criticized Mehring for having written a "Barmat play without Barmat,"¹⁴ a good point given that Kutisker and Barmat were conflated in the play. Actually, Mehring's plot followed, albeit quite freely, the career of Iwan Kutisker, who allegedly could neither speak nor write German properly, although neither he nor the Barmats spoke Yiddish.¹⁵ After the war, the real Kutisker dealt in German army equipment, a business he continued after he arrived in Berlin in 1919 with several recommendations in his pocket, including some from military contacts. At the end of 1921, Kutisker bought the Stein Bank, which enabled him to enter into transactions with the Prussian State Bank. Later, the court came to the conclusion that he had deliberately deceived officials about the securities put up for the loans; others had been bribed. Among these securities was a huge army depot, the Hanauer Waffenlager, which upon closer inspection was not much more than a huge, highly overvalued pile of scrap metal. This depot had apparently kindled all sorts of fantasies and wishful thinking on the part of those involved in this business, including some officials from the army and the Prussian State Bank. By the time this fraud was finally discovered, the officials had made perfect fools out of themselves. Most everybody agreed that the manner in which the Hanauer depot had been handled "provided delightful material for a comical operetta of the best type,"¹⁶ in part

because the Soviet Union and Lithuania were supposed to have shown some interest in it, but even more so because of the appearance of a dubious Romanian "consul" with whom fictitious contracts were signed "in order to milk the state bank like a good dairy cow."¹⁷

Although there were many good reasons to interpret the Kutisker case as political, not the least because of the army's involvement, most contemporaries dismissed this aspect—it was a case of bribery, fraud, and corruption. The Kutisker case demonstrates that in order for a scandal to be political, it had to involve republican politicians, particularly their alleged connections with Jews. However, it did play an important role in reaffirming clichés of the Jewish profiteer. In almost all accounts of the scandal, Kutisker appeared as the greedy Jew: "In his thoroughly indescribable greed, Kutisker seeks nothing other than acquisition, and therefore he must be labeled as nothing other than an unscrupulous merchant," claimed the Center Party representative in the Prussian parliamentary fact-finding committee, an argument that was heard time and again.¹⁸ Kutisker's story was thus quintessentially one of a man obsessed with money, who acquired loans from the State Bank to rapaciously buy companies, villas, luxury cars, and all the accessories that typified the profiteer and Berlin's newly rich. This was the reason why Goebbels's propaganda ministry later was also interested in the case and commissioned the novelist Hans Fallada to write a novel on the case during the war.¹⁹ In what we know from Fallada's lost manuscript, Barmat und Kutisker were again merged into a single character (although Fallada was mostly interested in Kutisker). He did not want to write a "cheap anti-Semitic novel in the style of *Der Stürmer*" but wrote instead that it was to be about an "old Jew, a lunatic with a money complex." In Fallada's story there was to be no "skirt-chasing, little bribing, no luxurious intoxications—only money, money, money!"²⁰ In the end, the editor at the Heyne Verlag was amazed at Fallada's ability to write a "non-anti-Semitic anti-Semitic novel" that fit very well with the Propaganda Ministry's concept of a "belletristic work suitable for anti-Semitic propaganda abroad."²¹

Compared with Kutisker, the five Barmat brothers were far less colorful in both their business ventures and their lifestyles, but they operated on a far bigger scale. Although this scandal also had to do with money, it provided the essentially political twist to the larger story of scandal: in the Barmat story of the political Right, Jews were connected to Socialists, who gave the Jews the opportunity to settle in Germany and to become economically successful at the expense of the German people.

In order to emphasize Julius Barmat's exploitation of Germany, it was necessary to downplay his economic success as a self-made man in Holland before the war and to emphasize his poverty and his supposed Jewish Orthodox upbringing in Eastern Europe instead. Indeed, this was the most common theme in popular descriptions of both German nationalists and the *völkisch* groups.

Such descriptions alluded to resentful images of *Ostjuden* flooding Germany and other countries especially after the war.²² Within a short time after his arrival in Amsterdam in 1907, Barmat had married a Dutch woman and had worked his way up from his position as a business correspondent and translator for the police and the courts. He became a millionaire businessman with connections to Germany, Russia, and even Australia by dealing in musical instruments, foodstuffs, and tulip bulbs—the source of some ridicule in Germany—and by investing and speculating in the booming Amsterdam housing and real estate market.²³ Thoroughly ignored was the fact that the Allied powers blacklisted him in the beginning of the war because of his business transactions with Germany and the occupied territories in the East—a pro-German attitude did not fit into the image of a profiteer, just as Barmat's business in the immediate postwar years was not interpreted in the context of desperate efforts to supply foodstuffs to a starving Germany. Instead, it appeared as if the new ruling Social Democrats and the agencies of the Reich fostered Barmat's business with lucrative contracts for food deliveries, representing a boon to Barmat as well as to many others involved in this business.

After 1925, people were greatly obsessed with Barmat's connections to the SPD, specifically with the allegation that Barmat, who had joined the Dutch Social Democrats in 1908, had subsidized a pro-German Socialist newspaper during the war and housed for some time the office of the Second International, exiled from Belgium, in the Keizersgracht, one the most elegant streets of Amsterdam. Moreover, after the war he supposedly became acquainted with high-ranking members of the German Social Democratic Party, such as Friedrich Ebert, Otto Wels (head of the SPD–Reichstagsfraktion since 1919), Otto Gradnauer (minister president of Saxony in 1919 and, after a short interlude as minister of the interior in 1921, representative of Saxony in Berlin), Gustav Bauer (chancellor in 1919–20), the “red king of Prussia” Ernst Heilmann (head of the Prussian SPD fraction since 1921), and Wilhelm Richter (head of the Berlin police since 1920). The latter three were intimate friends of Julius Barmat, and Heilmann and Bauer were even tied loosely to his business.

No doubt the business deals with the agencies of the Reich and the *Länder* responsible for provisioning Germany made Barmat an even richer man than he had been before. Like Kutisker, he was a “profiteer.” There were indeed warnings that he was a seedy businessman, someone to be careful of.²⁴ Hundreds upon hundreds of pages of the fact-finding committee's report addressed the question whether Social Democrats had exerted their influence in securing contracts favorable to Barmat; there are numerous indications that this was the case. In this context, the committee pursued just as intensively the seemingly ridiculous question about who provided visa permits for the *Ostjuden*, namely, for Barmat's brothers Herschel (Henry), Solomon, and Isaac that allowed them not only to enter Germany but also to find housing in a market suffering from a shortage. Conservatives and members of the radical Right had

often raised these issues before, thereby invoking images of invading parasites and infectious diseases. The figures of Barmat and Kutisker not only helped personalize the phenomenon of *Ostjuden* "flooding" Germany, but eventually were also presumed to be those responsible for this influx.²⁵

During the hyperinflation, Barmat expanded his business, shifting in 1923 from the food trade to the acquisition of industrial enterprises. He acquired most of his eighty-odd enterprises—including machinery, shipping, mining, paper, textiles, and banks—during the winter and spring of 1923–24, that is, in a period of monetary stabilization well after the inflation had ended. Barmat's strategy of purchasing enterprises, most of which were no longer profitable, proved economically devastating, just as it was for Hugo Stinnes, who was bankrupt by April 1925 with debts of more than 150 million marks.²⁶ The rules of the game had changed: if it was lucrative to go into debt during the inflation, in its aftermath debt threatened to break one's neck.

The issue that excited the public in 1925 was Barmat's seemingly unlimited access to the credit he needed to finance these ventures—a total of 38 million "hard" marks within a year after December 1923²⁷—mainly from the Prussian state banks, and later, when that source had dried up, from the Reichspost (National Postal Service). How could men like Kutisker or Barmat obtain credit during an extreme credit crunch when interest rates soared to astronomical heights? Bribery and corruption seemed the answer, with Socialists providing the key to the public coffers. The first accusation was indeed correct. But Barmat pleaded innocent, although they argued that they had become a target of anti-Semitism and that their business was ruined as a result of his incarceration. True as the first argument was, the second was false, for their business failure was immanent by the time of their imprisonment.²⁸

Viewed as particularly scandalous was the fact that the Barmat enterprise, like Kutisker, lent the money to private persons as well as to businesses (including banks) during the winter and spring of 1924, and thereby cashed in on the difference between the "cheap" loans it procured and the exorbitant monetary market rate. This occurred at a time when businesses were going bankrupt by the thousands because they lacked credit and when the shortage of money in state coffers even led to layoffs of state officials. Time and again, farmers, artisans, and government officials returned to this image of the archetypical Jewish usurer, usurping the property of producers.²⁹ In fact, one might argue that the Kutisker-Barmat case perpetuated the tradition of the persecutions of mainly Jewish usurers in the prewar period.³⁰

The "Capitalist Corruption of Social Democrats"

Although the political Right thrived on the Kutisker-Barmat affair in 1925, the KPD's *Rote Fahne* had taken the most active role in initiating the political cam-

paign against Barmat and Kutisker in 1924, before the conservative newspapers followed suit.³¹ The case evoked vivid memories of war and revolution among the Left, but it also allowed the KPD to draw on earlier events, with anti-Semitic references also looming in the background. If cleavages remained among the old factions of the antiwar Independent Socialists and the Majority Social Democrats even after the two parties reunited in 1922, they were nothing like the unbridgeable gulf that emerged between Social Democrats and the KPD in 1925.

How did the Social Democrats come to work with Barmat, asked the German Comintern expert Karl Radek in his pamphlet, *Barmat und seine Freunde*, which summed up many of the arguments published in the *Rote Fahne*. The answer was clear and obvious: such cooperation was possible because the SPD had aligned itself with both Hindenburg and capitalism during the war, just as Eastern Jewry had done. According to the KPD, Barmat and the entire Kutisker-Barmat scandal were synonyms for the inevitable "capitalist corruption," not only of the SPD but also of the Second International.³² Barmat was an easy scapegoat because of his close ties to a group of primarily conservative Social Democrats who had enthusiastically supported the war effort, maintaining their allegiance to Imperial Germany until the very end, as was the case with many Social Democrats.³³ In Radek's words, they had misleadingly tried to convince the workers "that they would die for a great cause, that they would die not for the interests of German capital but for the fatherland, for the interests of the working class."³⁴

However, there was more to Radek's interpretation of the SPD's downfall than the highly contested responsibility for the war. He built on other stories that were readily available in 1925 among both the Left and the Right. One of these stories connected Barmat with Alexander Helphand, a Jewish Russian political émigré from the 1905 revolution known as Parvus and one of the most colorful figures associated with the German Left. A promising leftist theoretician before the war, Parvus—this "unbelievably fat Socrates" whose "intellect was as broad as his body"³⁵—had become a shrewd businessman during the war, artfully mixing money and politics. Parvus viewed a German victory as the precondition for the victory of socialism, so in his view Hindenburg und Ludendorff were nothing other than the executives of the future socialism, first in Germany and then in Europe. He forged links to those Scandinavian Socialists who were friendly to Germany, reaping significant economic benefits from these ties, like the famous coal deliveries to his Danish comrades that the Reich subsidized in order to oust cheaper English coal and influence.³⁶ Yet one of Parvus's biggest schemes was to bring revolution to Russia, which in 1916–17 would not only relieve Germany of its Eastern Front but also provide him with a new political role. This is in itself a long story that finds Parvus often boasting not only about his great connections to Russian Socialists via Scandinavia but also about his ability to participate actively in revolutionizing Russia.³⁷ He was

successful insofar as he convinced the Foreign Office (which had helped him become a German citizen in 1916) to spend tremendous sums of money to support his "Russian connections." The question whether this money ever arrived in Russia or ended instead in Parvus's pockets or in his Scandinavian ventures is quite another matter. He was also actively involved in arranging safe passage for Lenin from Switzerland to Russia through his clever business companion, Georg Sklarz. Parvus never left any doubt that he disliked the Bolsheviks, particularly Lenin. In fact, soon after the Soviets gained power, Parvus was again in contact with the Foreign Office, attempting to lure officials with his ideas about establishing an anti-Bolshevist organization. At the time of the armistice in late 1918, a fortune's worth of propaganda material, paid for by the Reich, remained stuck in the East. This incident, as well Parvus's earlier involvements in Russia and elsewhere, was first brought up in the fall of 1919 by Maximilian Harden in his journal, *Die Zukunft*: "All of these stories, and a hundred uglier ones have been circulating for months"; copies of official documents were also circulating. Harden compiled these dispersed bits of information into a plausible account, thereby exposing the dubious alliance of Parvus with the Foreign Office and prominent Social Democrats.³⁸ This in itself constituted a scandal in the view of many observers. Most aggravating for the radical Left was that Parvus's companion Sklarz had received a highly lucrative *carte blanche* for provisioning the government's troops during the revolutionary turmoil in January of 1918, specifically the Corps Lüttwitz, which had been responsible for killing Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and other revolutionaries.³⁹ This was a sore issue on the Left, even more so because everybody knew that Barmat and Parvus were close friends.

These connections also drew attention to the ethics of Social Democratic leaders associated with the worst types of profiteers. A good many functionaries drew additional incomes from the highly subsidized Parvus ventures, such as the Institut zur Erforschung der sozialen Folgen des Krieges (Institute for the Research of the Social Consequences of War) in Copenhagen, the Verlag für soziale Wissenschaft in Germany, and the journal *Die Glocke*. Many of them had written the ominous anti-Bolshevist propaganda material mentioned above that had sparked the "Sklarz scandal." By and large the same group of people, namely, right-wing Social Democrats, came under attack once more in 1925.

Back in 1919–20, the former Reich chancellor Philipp Scheidemann had taken the brunt of the political attacks from the far Left. The man who had warned just a short while before that "Der Feind steht rechts" (the enemy is on our right)⁴⁰ was viciously accused of collaborating with "capitalists" and "reactionaries." The issue involved food contracts and his (and his in-law's) personal and business relationships with Sklarz und Parvus, who gladly shared with him the amenities of life, including Parvus's villa in Switzerland and later in Berlin. In order to contain this conflict, a fact-finding committee of the SPD

held hearings in 1919–20 to investigate the behavior of Scheidemann and others, leaving Scheidemann with a tarnished reputation.⁴¹ Five years later, another former chancellor, Gustav Bauer, confronted charges very similar to those brought against Scheidemann. In February 1925, Bauer was forced by his party to resign from office as a member of the Reichstag, and a special commission of the SPD excluded him from the party, not the least because of the “incredibly infuriated mood in the factories.”⁴² For months, the involvement of Social Democrats like Bauer, Wels, and Heilmann in Barmat’s business shook the SPD, thereby raising the issues of ethics and politics and posing questions about the future of socialism and capitalism and the path the party had taken since the war and the revolution. All of these issues were debated at the SPD Party congress, held in Heidelberg in September 1925, where the party drafted a new program that represented a marked turn to the left.⁴³

The name of Julius Barmat and his dealings with the Reich and the state of Saxony were mentioned in German newspapers for the first time in connection with the controversial activities and business ventures of Sklarz and Parvus. Some of the information revealed then came up time and again in the years that followed.⁴⁴ Although no clear connection between Sklarz and Barmat could ever be established, conservative critics argued that the same mishandling of the case “on order from above” that had resulted in the withdrawal of an indictment against Sklarz in 1921 and the transfer of the Berlin state attorney responsible for the case to the Reich Court in Leipzig would repeat itself in the case of Barmat.⁴⁵ The activism of the state attorney’s office in 1924–25 and the conservatives’ outcry over political injustice were rooted in these events.

From Rathenau to Barmat: Telling the Story of the Jewish “*Rattenkönige*”

By 1920, the radical Right had also taken notice of the information being circulated on Sklarz. An important, widely circulated pamphlet, entitled *Der Rattenkönig und ihre Helfer. Die Wahrheit über den Fall Sklarz (The Rat King and his Helpers: The Truth about the Sklarz Case)*, appeared in 1920 under the pseudonym Sincton Upclair (a transposition of the name of the American writer Upton Sinclair). The cover of the pamphlet states that the “rat king” reigned over a “society of rats, who are so twisted together and tangled up in their own filth and smut in the nest that they can no longer be separated.”⁴⁶ Again, this was primarily the story of enrichment of Jewish profiteers and how they were entangled with each other. The pamphlet detailed the efforts to bring about Bolshevism in Russia by sending Lenin there, characterizing Sklarz as the “financier of the special guard of the Reichstag during the unrest” of early 1919—yet omitting the fact that the troops were fighting the Communist Left.⁴⁷ The radical Right thus drew a connection between Jews, profiteering,

and socialism on the one side, and between Jewish financing and republican combat leagues close to the SPD, on the other.

However, the brunt of the attacks of the political Right was directed against "Jewish war-profiteering" and the *Kriegswirtschaftsgesellschaften*, the semipublic bodies that had organized the war economy, which were depicted as a symbiosis between Jews running the war economy and Socialists. Since the early years of the war, vicious attacks had been made on the Jews, and Walther Rathenau, the head of the department for war supplies (*Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*) was a favorite target of such abuse until his murder in 1922.⁴⁸ The argument of the right was simple: the *Kriegswirtschaftsgesellschaften* had exploited the German population and corrupted economic life, thereby causing prices to explode and scarce resources, including food, to be wasted. Rathenau was thus decried as a "rat king of societies that have to mutually support and help each other, where one was always the vendor, customer, or moneylender of the other."⁴⁹ The consequences of the "Rathenau system," which had been "born of a Jewish mind," were depicted as the final seed of destruction that brought about Germany's downfall in the war.⁵⁰ The Sklarz case fit into this narrative of wartime corruption just as well as did the Kutisker-Barmat affair. Thus it was not far fetched to argue, as did the Zionist *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, that "the Barmat Affair ... represents the climax of agitation against Rathenau."⁵¹ After all, Barmat was vilified as the new "rat king," an image that also proliferated among agrarian groups.⁵²

This corresponded with narratives that viewed the "sphere of circulation," meaning the wartime system of trade and distribution, as the primary cause of the impoverishment and misery suffered by the German population. Juxtaposed to this was the sphere of production and men like Hugo Stinnes, an entrepreneur in the field of shipping, manufacturing, and heavy industry and a prominent member of the German Peoples Party (DVP). In 1924, Stinnes's business went bankrupt. In an open letter to Stinnes's widow in 1925, Alfred Rosenberg argued that Hugo Stinnes, like German artisans and farmers, had been financially ruined because he did not understand the "nature of a worldwide Jewish cooperation (*Zusammenspiels*) and had not prepared himself for the battle against ruination." He claimed that the Jewish "Weltkampf" (worldwide struggle) would continue until all German enterprises were in Jewish hands.⁵³ In the novel *Der Kaufmann von Mühlheim* published that same year, Stinnes was portrayed as a national hero—as a fighter against Versailles and for the working class but also as a defender of "productive capital" against the dark forces of finance.⁵⁴

Inspired by conspiracy theories on the "raffende Kapital" (hoarding capital), *völkisch* groups spun other stories that circulated widely in the mid-1920s. For example, the anti-Semitic journal *Der Hammer* referred to a "protocol" proving that leading Social Democrats had met with Parvus in Schwanenwerder in 1919, where they had allegedly decided to suspend their calls for socialization and to seek instead to bring about the "confiscation of all property" by way

of inflation: "This satanic plan has succeeded. People and princes have been robbed of their cash. Only the money belonging to the Jews has been spared because they rule the international monetary market."⁵⁵ In 1925, anti-Semitic radicals argued that "Barmat and Co." offered the best proof that the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were real. They especially referred to one passage in the "Protocols": "Just to be on the safe side, we will manipulate the presidential election toward such candidates whose past proves to have a certain situation, a 'Panama' known only to us. This person will then be the obedient executor of our orders, motivated by fear of disclosure and the understandable desire to continue enjoying all the privileges, income, and honors linked to presidential office." Legally, it was tricky to argue like this, especially to suggest concretely that "Ebert possesses a dark point from his past before his election and is therefore committed, come what may, to the Jewish parasites." Having proffered this legal caveat, it was further argued that "the Kutiskers and Barmats have obviously tried everywhere and among all leading personalities to create a 'Panama' in order to have them in their hands. ... So, as always, the Jewish plan matches—how could it be otherwise—Jewish instinct and its effects."⁵⁶

In this sense, the story of Parvus, Sklarz, Kutisker, and Barmat provided powerful clues in a conspiratorial narrative of the political Right and *völkisch* groups particularly in a time of war, revolution, and inflation. Parvus and Sklarz were linked with Lenin's Bolshevist revolution in Russia (an obituary on Parvus referred to him as the "Head of the Nordic Central Committee for Bolshevist Propaganda in Western Europe"),⁵⁷ and there was something to the rumor that Barmat sought to align himself with the Ukrainian Bolsheviks in 1917–18. All three of these men allegedly supported the new "Marxist" revolutionary governments in Germany. Not only were they depicted as bribing the new politicians but also as manipulating them so that Parvus, Sklarz, and Barmat—as representatives of "international Jewry"—could gain control of the Prussian State Bank at the expense of the broader German economy and the population at large. The ensuing trial was interpreted as just one more example of a "Gefesselte Justiz" (captive law) (Zarnow), a judicial system the hands of which were tied by the "Panama" that was allegedly buried in the résumé of every republican politician. It is the story of the republic in the hands of both Jews and Socialists. Thus it is not astonishing that the military organization of the Social Democrats, the Reichbanner Schwarz–Rot–Gold, was soon referred to as the "Barmat Boys" and the "special guard of the Jews."⁵⁸

Gifts, Luxury, and Schwanenwerder

What enraged the opposition as much as the public was the involvement of money and gifts and the suspicion of dependencies that were created by favors,

which made the Social Democrats particularly vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy. Their opponents pointed to an inconsistency between their lofty rhetoric of social justice, imbued with a more or less implicit critique of capitalism, and the behavior of many Social Democrats who seemed to have profited from a close relationship with Barmat. What might be acceptable among bourgeois parties, namely, that money and politics mingled all too easily, should not have been acceptable to Socialists.⁵⁹

The case of Barmat presented a special twist to the relationship between money and morals in 1925 because Barmat, like Kutisker, was not just any businessman or financier. As a profiteer, Barmat evoked memories of the recently experienced "world turned upside down"—the period of inflation in Germany, followed by the time of economic stabilization, when material deprivation, hunger, and the loss of a sense of "*Treu und Glauben*" (good faith) was evident everywhere, while a select but conspicuous few in society indulged themselves in luxurious excess. A dense web of stories and images of such excesses existed in the German collective memory, ready for immediate recall.⁶⁰ Indeed, one can interpret the vicious attacks of 1925 as retribution for those who appeared to have pushed the moral destabilization of German society to the extreme in their crazed pursuit for money. The fact that the offenders were Jews, in particular *Ostjuden* who had found their way into German society, implied a strategy of distancing, whereby the "others," strangers, were blamed.

The first chapter of Gottfried Zarnov's book *Gefesselte Justiz*, entitled "the New German Iliad," begins with a subchapter called "The Sybarite Island of Schwanenwerder" in which the rich society of western Berlin was epitomized more than anything else. In early 1923, Barmat moved to this exclusive and reclusive peninsula, with beautiful villas situated in a large park and boat-piers on the Havel River. Rumors had it that Julius Barmat was arrested in the villa of the "big-time profiteer" Parvus, who had settled there only a few years earlier and had died there a few days before Julius Barmat was arrested.⁶¹ Notwithstanding the fact that they lived in different homes, this enabled the personal fates and stories of these two figures to be mingled once again. For Barmat was an equally rich man, who had lived in 1919 in the elegant Hotel Kaiserhof (as did Parvus) and then regularly in the Hotel Bristol. No doubt he spent some of his money engaging in the social life of Berlin, like his brother Henry, who had a large flat on the Kurfürstendamm and was just returning from a hunting party when he was arrested. Since the days of Imperial Germany, Berlin's West Side had had the reputation of being "democratic." Especially to conservative observers, it was painful to see how men like the Barmats invaded the social and political life of Berlin with their contacts to politicians.⁶²

Julius Barmat seems to have been a hard-working businessman: a *homo economicus judaicus* (Penslar), yet one who spent his money freely.⁶³ When his friend Heilmann argued in the fact-finding committee that Barmat was satis-

fied to eat herring and tripe, he was widely ridiculed (as in a cartoon in the *Rote Fahne*). The public liked more juicy stories, such as the one first uncovered by the *Berliner Börsenzeitung* about an Austrian dancer by the name of Katharina Huber, also known under the pseudonyms of Marga Lundgreen or Kity von Hagen, with whom Barmat was said to have been linked romantically. Pictures of this good-looking showgirl popping out of a cake, dressed up as a barmaid, or dancing scantily clothed in the posh bar Nelson's near the Kurfürstendamm, where Julius Barmat apparently met her after the war, fueled the public's fantasy and the imagination of political conservatives. Such images were nearly primordial with respect to the Berlin of the early 1920s. For the conservative press, Katharina Huber was the Madame de Pompadour of the "Barmat circle" and allegedly bestowed sexual favors upon Heilmann and the head of the Berlin police Richter when Barmat was out of town, that is, until all three of them, as it was rumored, wished to rid themselves of her and forced her to leave Berlin in 1921. This story became confounded with long-standing rumors about Parvus, who was forced to leave Switzerland in 1919, due as much to his reputation as a Russian revolutionary as to his alleged sexual excesses, which were mentioned time and again with respect to his unconventional lifestyle and his utter rejection of "bourgeois mores."⁶⁴ These rumors added a risqué touch to the gatherings of leading republican politicians and party functionaries at the homes of both Parvus and Barmat. Indeed, Schwanenwerder had become a social place where conservative Social Democrats like Scheidemann, Otto Wels, Ernst Heilmann, the Prussian minister of education Haenisch, to name just a few, met and talked about politics and business.⁶⁵

It is difficult to say what enraged the general public more: the fact that the State Bank had lost millions to these men or the innumerable stories about little favors, small gifts, food packages, the so-called *Liebesgaben* or sexual favors, and the cash loans, large and small, that Barmat gave away freely—not only to his friends. The stories about Sklarz, Barmat, and Parvus were those imbued with gift giving and favor doing and were interpreted already at the time as illustrations of a strategy of "*Einschmeicheln*" (ingratiation), of securing their acceptance into society and of creating dependencies.⁶⁶ Under attack by the KPD for the favors he had bestowed on Social Democrats, Barmat revealed that a member of the KPD who had come to Amsterdam in 1919 during a dockworkers' strike had also received a small personal loan that he had never paid back fully.⁶⁷ In the case of Gustav Bauer, it seems that Barmat had indeed tried to foster his dependency or favoritism. One of the officials of the State Bank, who was in good part responsible for the mess, was depicted as victim of the slyness, superior rhetoric, and cosmopolitan appearance of Barmat and particularly Kutisker.⁶⁸

At any rate, contemporaries drew a connection between the favors Barmat dispensed and the favors he received. The fact that stories circulated about

"whole barrels of margarine"⁶⁹ that had perhaps been given to party officials says more about the deep-seated memories of hunger lingering in the minds of the population than it does about anything else (as does, in a side note, the story widely publicized and handled in the press during the winter of 1924–25 about a mass murderer named Haarmann who sold the human flesh of his victims). In the case of Berlin's police chief Richter, who had risen from the ranks of the metalworkers, such gifts proved to be his downfall. In tears, he admitted to the parliamentary fact-finding committee and also to the state attorney that he had not only received loans totaling 8,100 gold marks and some stocks and bonds, but also a tuxedo, pajamas, a hat, a pair of cufflinks, a lighter, cigars and cigar-clip, expense-paid trips to Holland and Vienna, and two or three free meals at the Hotel Bristol over a long period of time.⁷⁰

Containing the Barmat Affair: A Narrative for the Republic?

As we have seen, the Kutisker-Barmat affair started out as an attack on the Social Democratic political establishment of the Weimar Republic by both the radical Left and the Right, then turned rapidly into a vicious anti-Semitic assault. It ended in 1928 when the court finally handed down convictions in what seemed to defenders of the republic to be a success story for the republic and, not the least, its judicial system: reason had prevailed over emotions and fended off vicious attacks on the republic, thus ran one explanation.⁷¹ Indeed, in order to neutralize the attacks, it was necessary to take "politics" and "political excitement" out of the entire affair and to rationalize it as a case of white-collar crime and grave economic mismanagement. In light of the momentum the case had developed in the political and legal arenas and fueled by an escalating media campaign, this was not easy. By arresting businessmen and even placing the Reich's postal minister in pretrial detention, the state prosecutor's office and especially two young officials, Kußmann and Caspary, created a heightened atmosphere of crisis. Considering how much the DNVP had used the issue of the *Ostjuden* in previous elections, it is fairly impossible to untangle mere political calculations from anti-Semitic motives (although Caspary was Jewish). At any rate, in the eyes of conservatives, the two state attorneys became heroes who promised to expose, once and for all, the "*Barmatsumpf*" (Barmat morass). In fact, the prosecutors inquired into the personal life of Barmat's associates and sought to uncover all sorts of incriminating evidence that went far beyond the case, unraveling earlier cases like Sklarz and other allegations. This would have made perfect sense had they been able to uncover a larger conspiracy. But nothing of this sort materialized, especially no evidence of politically motivated fraud and bribery at the State Bank, despite the fact that the investigative efforts produced over a thousand files.⁷² Even weeks after the

accused had been arrested and placed in detention, they were not informed of the formal charges leveled against them.⁷³ Moreover, there was the case of Reich Post Minister Anton Höfle, whose death in police custody threatened to become a real “Panama” of the judicial system. This, together with the allegation that confidential material had been leaked from the prosecutor’s office to the press, was the reason that the two abovementioned prosecutors were dismissed from the case and later even subjected to a disciplinary investigation. By no means did the republic act like a cowardly lion; nor did it lack the means and guts to contain the conflict.

These were bold steps to take, but this was part of what one may call the republican success story. The well-known Berlin attorney Siegfried Löwenstein came to the conclusion in 1928 that deposing the two state attorneys was an effort, albeit belated, to “make amends for the damage done by excessive overzealousness.” Rather than turning the case over to “youthful, naïve, and overzealous department heads,” it was now “placed in the hands of judicious, carefully deliberating men” for further investigation.⁷⁴ That there was a need—in the heat of the political contest in 1925—to correct what had gone wrong was soon noted also in the Prussian Diet’s summary of its inquiry into the case. For example, the speaker of the German National Party, Deerberg, was astonishingly conciliatory in his summary report for the Prussian fact-finding committee. He argued that no “political influence” had been exerted upon authorities to remove the case from the docket of the two state prosecutors.⁷⁵ Despite repeated attacks by conservative groups and individual right-wing politicians on the handling of the case, a broad consensus emerged (excluding the KPD) by the end of the summer that the involvement and the responsibility of individual people had been greatly exaggerated in Barmat’s case, especially with respect to the credit policy of the State Bank. Reich President Ebert was taken out of the line of fire altogether, with the argument that he was not implicated in the case and that he had kept his distance from Barmat.⁷⁶ The loans granted by the National Post were far more dubious, but Höfle was dead, and it was apparently embarrassing to many conservatives that a member of the Center Party, a potential political ally, had been so deeply involved in the scandal. As the leftist journal *Die Weltbühne* commented sarcastically, the involvement of the Center Party only demonstrated who was really “running the show” in the republic.⁷⁷ With respect to the reconciliatory tone of the Prussian fact-finding committee, Communist committee member Bartel fretted that “now all that is missing is a general reconciliation celebration that even Mr. Barmat would be allowed to attend.”⁷⁸

There were many other good reasons why such obvious efforts were being made to deescalate the political conflict. The head of the DNVP, Graf Westarp, warned already in February 1925 that “black sheep” were to be found in all parties.⁷⁹ Indeed, throughout that entire year, many similar cases surfaced in

which industrial and agricultural businesses could no longer meet their credit payments. The case of Hugo Stinnes was merely the most spectacular of these cases. At the final session of the Prussian Diet's committee, the Social Democratic speaker hinted all too obviously at the log rolling taking place behind the scenes when he stressed that his party agreed to be more "accommodating" to agriculture by extending credit where necessary. Furthermore, he continued, the committee members had become "realistic"—he spoke of *Nüchternheit*—so, more than anything else, the scandals of 1924 and 1925 were viewed as part of the general phenomena accompanying stabilization. The president of the Reich Bank, Hjalmar Schacht, had completely supported this view, depicting quite cynically the internal organization and the incompetence of the Prussian officials in running the State Bank.⁸⁰

In 1926, Kutisker was harshly punished; his appeal against the verdict came to naught, and he died in prison a day before his verdict was to be confirmed.⁸¹ The case of Barmat, however, contained a special dimension. No other court trial in German history had ever been staged with such extraordinary effort: five state attorneys, four hundred witnesses, and fifty experts were involved. When the presiding judge fell seriously ill a year into the trial proceedings, his private bedroom was transformed into a courtroom until he could return to the formal courtroom. Both the indictment of the state attorney's office, published in two volumes, and the final verdict of the court were monumental in size.⁸² Observers emphasized that the exchanges between defense lawyers and state prosecutors may have been heated at times and that there were "fundamental differences of opinion regarding the actual and the legal assessment of the case," but that the proceedings were fair and had been fought "with chivalry."⁸³ Justice had prevailed. "Praise the Judges" was the headline of the *Berliner Börsenkurier*, one proudly quoted also in the *Richterzeitung*.⁸⁴

The court concentrated strictly on the issue of the loans of 1923–24, deflecting arguments that only Julius Barmat's arrest had caused the collapse of the Barmat enterprises.⁸⁵ The court considered it as proven that Julius and Henry Barmat had bribed officials of the State Bank, sentencing them to eleven and six months in prison, respectively, and slapping each with a heavy fine in addition. Only three people from the State Bank received prison terms and each of them were short. The indictment for fraud was dropped for lack of evidence in accordance with the juridical principle *in dubio pro reo*.

In terms of a narrative of the republic, the court's reasoning is quite interesting and was picked up by all commentators. The court argued that Barmat's business deals occurred during a time of general confusion of values and sentiments that followed the period of war, revolution, and inflation. As a result of the rate of devaluation, at first slow and then quite rapid, "of what had until then been revered as permanent values, individuals had lost their capability to think in terms of stable values." The latter only reemerged when the stabiliza-

tion of the currency made possible the reinstatement of new standards of value (*Wertbegriffe*). As it was argued, the court had to take into account the deep confusion that had prevailed at the time and had to consider that conditions in 1928 were markedly different from those of a few years earlier.⁸⁶ The more or less implicit argument was that the stabilization of the currency had also dispensed with dubious characters like Barmat and paved the way to internal stability of the republic.

National Socialists and the "Gefesselte Justiz"

The efforts to contain the scandals and finally the handing down of the sentences in both cases did not mark the end of the story. One man in particular refused to drop the matter. That man, an accountant named Philipp Lachmann, had been assigned by the state attorney's office the task of inspecting the books of Kutisker's enterprises. Instead of writing a report on financial transactions, he wrote a type of criminal investigation report and indictment that was aimed not so much against Kutisker, but against his famous Berlin lawyer Julius Werthauer and the latter's law partner, who allegedly had known about the fraudulent loans and had advised Kutisker. With the latter dead, the case took a new turn. A private feud emerged between Lachmann and Werthauer, which prompted a series of lawsuits that Lachmann lost; on top of this, Lachmann also lost his standing as a sworn expert in Berlin. All of this spurred him on to write long memoranda and open letters that circulated not only in the newspapers of the political Right. He saw himself not only as a modern Michael Kohlhaas, that archetypical figure in the play of Heinrich von Kleist who wanted to have his personal injustices redeemed; he also saw himself in tradition of Cicero and others who had attacked the corruption of the ancient Roman Republic.⁸⁷

Lachmann's story was tragic, but not only because he was heavily in debt by the early 1930s. Lachmann and the former state attorney Caspary, with whom he had closely collaborated in 1925 (as he already had with the latter's father) were both Jewish, and it was the political Right who was cashing in on this acrimonious campaign of Lachmann. Most people following the case thought the obstinate accountant was simply obsessed or downright crazy, an assessment confirmed by the psychiatric opinions of him solicited by the courts in connection with the trials. In 1930, the journalist Gottfried Zarnow included the Lachmann case in his bestseller *Gefesselte Justiz*, in which the cases of Sklarz, Parvus-Helphand, Barmat, Kutisker, and others were rehashed in a semidocumentary manner.⁸⁸ This time the National Socialists were able to take the political initiative. In the winter of 1932–33, the Prussian Diet once more set up a fact-finding committee, the so-called Zarnow Committee, which

was to investigate the allegations made in the book, thus unraveling again the earlier cases of Barmat and Kutisker and those allegedly pulling the strings. This committee met the last time at the end of January 1933 under the chairmanship of the NSDAP representative Roland Freisler, the later head of the *Volksgerichtshof*, whose ruthlessness towards his political enemies could already be seen.⁸⁹

The story of Julius Barmat does not end in the seemingly stable years of the late Weimar Republic. In his biography, history did repeat itself, and it is hard to say whether to view this as a tragedy or a rather cynical comedy. After his release from prison in 1930, Julius Barmat and his brothers settled again in Amsterdam. Soon he was linked to what was known as the Stavisky affair in France, a financial scandal similar in nature that deeply rocked the French nation in the first half of the 1930s. New "affairs" involving Barmat came up in Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium, where fascist organizations, apparently aided by Germany, were active to scandalize their business. Starting in 1934, Barmat found himself again involved in several court trials. In Belgium, the highly regarded Catholic minister-president, van Zeeland, had to defend himself against accusations of making allegedly crooked loans to banks close to Barmat during van Zeeland's tenure as vice-president of the Belgian national bank.⁹⁰ Under massive public pressure, van Zeeland and all members of his cabinet were finally forced to resign in 1937—Belgium had its Barma scandal. Julius Barmat, who was to be extradited from Holland to Belgium, died on 6 January 1938. When one of his brothers allegedly fled to Russia, the *Völkische Beobachter* wrote sarcastically that he had turned to the red dictator for protection and was now "among his own." Julius Barmat had become the "*Giftblüte der Demokratie*" (poisonous flower of democracy) and the "gravedigger of the democratic system," the man who represented the demise of the republic.⁹¹ With such a reputation, it was no small wonder that the Reich Propaganda Ministry was looking for someone to write Barmat's story—even if the story turned out to really be that of Kutisker. The Barmats and Kutisker came to epitomize in National Socialist propaganda the rats that infested the world—the Eastern Jews who threw off their caftans, shaved their beards, and became cosmopolitan men—in other words, they represented the "*Ewige Jude*" (wandering Jew) as depicted in the 1941 film of the same name.⁹² By then, Joseph Goebbels, the profiteer from the "revolution of 1933," had for a long time settled in the elegant villa colony of Schwanenwerder. Roland Freisler was one who advocated *Völkrecht*, people's law, the premises of which diverged from those of the rule of "positive law" that was seen as having protected men like Barmat. Incidentally, his brother Georg Freisler had taken over the law practice of Johannes Werthauer, who had escaped in 1933 to Switzerland.⁹³ Werthauer had been one of the first thirty people designated in August 1933 not only to lose his German citizenship but also to be expropriated, which started the larger process

of Jewish expropriation actively propagated by National Socialists also with respect to "Jewish war and inflation profiteering."⁹⁴ Probably in 1934, Philipp Lachmann wrote the last of his lengthy memorandums, this time to Hermann Göring in his function as minister-president of Prussia, arguing for some retribution "for seven years of fighting" and, more urgently employment for himself and Caspary. His efforts were to no avail. Not only was he considered a known complainer, but, now even more importantly, also a Jew, and for the latter there was no place anymore in public service.⁹⁵

Notes

1. It is not clear who made the first reference to a "Panama"; however, it was used equally both by the Left and the Right. For the Panama scandal, see Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (London, 1982), chap. 10. There does not exist a comprehensive history of the scandal; see also Cordula Ludwig, *Korruption und Nationalsozialismus in Berlin 1924–1934* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), 66–75; Stephan Malinowski, "Politische Skandale als Zerrspiegel der Demokratie. Die Fälle Barmat und Sklarek im Kalkül der Weimarer Rechten," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 5 (1996): 46–65.
2. Winfried Steffani, *Die Untersuchungsausschüsse des preußischen Landtags zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1960), 169–90.
3. Hagen Schulze, *Otto Braun oder Preußens demokratische Sendung. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), 466–74; Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924 bis 1930* (Berlin, 1985), 222–28.
4. Joseph Kaufhold, *Der Barmat-Sumpf* (Berlin, 1925); Karl Ludwig Rintelen, *Ein undemokratischer Demokrat: Gustav Bauer: Gewerkschaftsführer—Freund Friedrich Eberts—Reichskanzler. Eine politische Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 235–48.
5. See also Malinowski, "Politische Skandale," 52.
6. Winkler, *Schein*, 229–31; Walter Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert 1871–1925. Reichspräsident der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2006), 911–980. It is somewhat curious that all of the more recent biographies of Friedrich Ebert, including that of Walter Mühlhausen, mention the *Magdeburger Hochverratsprozess* but not the Barmat affair.
7. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, 2. Wahlperiode, 1. Tagung 1925, vol. 7, 2973.
8. Victor Schiff, *Die Höfle-Tragödie. Geschichte eines Justizmordes* (Berlin, 1925), 7, 14, 88.
9. Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago, 1988); Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, IL, 1985); Frank Bösch, "Politische Skandale in Deutschland und Großbritannien," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 7, no. 13 (February 2006): 25–32.
10. See, i.e., Heinz Reif, "Antisemitismus in den Agrarverbänden Nordostdeutschlands während der Weimarer Republik," in *Ostelbische Agrargesellschaft in Kaiserreich und Republik. Agrarkrise, junkerliche Interessenpolitik, Modernisierungsstrategien*, ed. Heinz Reif (Berlin, 1993), 379–415. Reif stresses the importance of the case (404). However his description on the basis of the agrarian press is a good example of how fact and contemporary fiction are mixed.

11. Martin H. Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt. Revolution, Inflation und Moderne: München 1914–1924* (Munich, 1999), esp. chap. 8.
12. See also the brilliant book by Dietz Bering, *Kampf um Namen. Bernhard Weiß gegen Joseph Goebbels* (Stuttgart, 1991). Almost no contemporary photographs remain, yet an abundance of caricatures. For some pictures of the people involved, see Edmund Schulz (mit einer Einleitung von Friedrich Georg Jünger) ed., *Das Gesicht der Demokratie* (Leipzig, 1931), 93–98. No mention of the case is made in Cornelia Hecht, *Deutsche Juden und Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2003).
13. See the compilation of critiques in Walter Mehring, "Der Kaufmann von Berlin," in *Drei Jüdische Dramen. Mit Dokumenten zur Rezeption*, ed. Hans J. Weitz (Göttingen, 1995), 297–357, esp. the critique of the *Berliner Tageblatt* journalist Ernst Feder, 325f, and the conversation of the latter with Mehring, who noted that after many fights with Piscator he originally had wanted to stop the play. Ernst Feder, *Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten 1926–1932*, ed. Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel and Arnold Paucker (Stuttgart, 1971), 223f. For an analysis see Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, "Shylock in Berlin. Walter Mehring und das Judenporträt im Zeitstück der Weimarer Republik," in *Conditio Judaica. Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis 1933/1938*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler (Tübingen, 1993), 307–23; however, the author does not mention the actual case.
14. "Linkskurve," in Mehring, "Kaufmann von Berlin," 306.
15. For a detailed, although not complete description, see the eighty-page verdict handed down by the court on 30 June 1926, Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB) A Rep 358, 62, vol. I. See also the references to Kutisker in the final summaries of the various party representatives in the last session of the Prussian fact-finding committee: *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, vol. 7, 1480.
16. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, vol. 7, 2966.
17. Verdict against Kutisker (note 15), 76.
18. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, vol. 7, 2965; see, i.e., "Zum Antrag betreffend den Angeschuldigten Rühle," n.d., Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PK), I HA Rep 84a no. 56550, fol. 156.
19. The best description (however, without footnotes) is by Günter Casper, "Der Kutisker-Roman," in *Fallada-Studien* (Berlin, 1987), 218–32. See also Cecilia von Studnitz, *Es war wie ein Rausch. Fallada und sein Leben* (Düsseldorf, 1997), chap. 19.
20. Quoted in Casper, "Kutisker-Roman," 325. With respect to Fallada's anti-Semitism and planned novel, see also Ellis Shookman, "Making History in Hans Fallada's *Bauern, Bonzen und Bomben*: Schleswig-Holstein, Nazism, and the *Landvolkbewegung*," *German Studies Review* 13 (1990): 461–80; Thomas Bredohl, "Some Thoughts on the Political Opinions of Hans Fallada: A Response to Ellis Shookman," *German Studies Review* 15 (1992): esp. 539–41.
21. Casper, "Kutisker-Roman," 229, 220.
22. Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Hamburg, 1986).
23. A very factual business history of the Barmats can be found in the published verdict of the court, which is a remarkable piece of contemporary economic history. *Urteil des Schöffengerichts Berlin-Mitte, Abteilung 206, vom 30. März 1928 in der Strafsache gegen Barmat und Genossen* (Berlin, 1929). Some of the verdict is based on the indictment, which was also published as *Anklageschrift gegen Barmat und Genossen*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1926).
24. "Barmat und die Auskunfteien," n.d., Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA-AA) R 30337 fol. 173–74.

25. Maurer, *Ostjuden*; Shulamit Volkov, "Die Dynamik der Dissimilation. Deutsche Juden und die ostjüdische Einwanderer," in *Zebrochene Geschichte*, ed. Dirk Blasius and Dan Diner (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 64–78. For example, see "Das Ostjudenproblem," *Neue Preussische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, 1 February 1925; "Die Ostjuden-Plage," *Neue Preussische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, 13 February 1925; "Henry Barmats Wohnung," 26 February 1925.
26. Gerald D. Feldman, *Hugo Stinnes. Biographie eines Industriellen 1870–1924* (Munich, 1998), 936.
27. *Urteil des Schöffengerichts Berlin-Mitte*, 11.
28. Verhör Julius Barmats, 12 January 1925, I HA Rep 84a no. 56541, fol. 240–44; Henri Barmat to Ministerialdirektor Huber, 25 January 1925, I HA Rep 84a nr.56544, fol. 102–29.
29. *Urteil des Schöffengerichts Berlin-Mitte*, 15f. This political issue was not part of the trial. This protest, which must be seen also in the context of the firing of government officials and the debates over "revaluation" of former debts, cannot be dealt with here. On the difficulties of agriculture, see Heinrich Becker, *Handlungsspielräume der Agrarpolitik in der Weimarer Republik zwischen 1923 und 1929* (Stuttgart, 1990). A strong critique by the Bavarian Government that referred to a "deep-seated and dangerous excitement" among the population can be found in *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Die Kabinette Luther* (Boppard, 1977), 1:70–80.
30. For the changing debates over "Wucher" see Martin H. Geyer, "Defining the Common Good and Social Justice: Popular and Legal Concepts of *Wucher* in Germany from the 1860s to the 1920s," in *Private Law and Social Inequality in the Industrial Age: Comparing Legal Cultures in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford, 2000), 457–83.
31. The Communists were well informed when it came to the Barmat scandal, according to the conservative *Kreuz-Zeitung*: "Barmat Verteidigung im Reichstag," *Neue Preussische (Kreuz-) Zeitung* 36, 22 February 1925.
32. Karl Radek, *Die Barmat-Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1925), 43. Next to the articles of the *Rote Fahne*, see also Anonymous, *Barmat und seine Partei* (Berlin, 1925); and the concluding comment by Bartels in the *Preussische Untersuchungsausschuß, Sammlung der Drucksachen des preussischen Landtages*, vol. 7, 2986–3004.
33. Robert Siegel, *Die Lensch-Cunow-Haenisch-Gruppe. Eine Studie zum rechten Flügel der SPD im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1976).
34. Radek, *Barmat-Sozialdemokratie*, 30. For an account of the SPD during the war, see esp. Susanne Miller, *Burgfrieden und Klassenkampf. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1974).
35. Harry Graf Kessler, *Tagebücher 1918–1937*, ed. Wolfgang Peiffer-Belli (Berlin, 1961), 203.
36. For the following, see the early, rich account by Maximilian Harden, "Gold oder Weihrauch," *Die Zukunft* 108 (1920): 1–29; Radek, *Barmat- Sozialdemokratie*, 32–37; Winfried B. Scharlau and Zbynek A. Zeman, *Freibeuter der Revolution: Parvus-Helphand. Eine politische Biographie* (Cologne, 1964); Elisabeth Heresch, *Geheimakte Parvus: Die gekaufte Revolution* (München, 2000).
37. Scharlau and Zeman, *Freibeuter*, 151–243.
38. Maximilian Harden, "Für die Republik," *Die Zukunft* 107 (1919), esp. 276–82; see also Harden, "Gold oder Weihrauch."
39. Harden, "Republik," 279.

40. The Sklarz affair and Scheidemann's involvement is not mentioned in the standard accounts of the SPD; for some aspects of this political scandal, see Niels H. M. Albrecht, "Die Macht einer Verleumdungskampagne. Antidemokratische Agitationen der Presse und Justiz gegen die Weimarer Republik und ihren ersten Reichspräsidenten Friedrich Ebert vom "Badebild" bis zum Magdeburger Prozess" (Phil. Diss., Bremen, 2002), 133–50. In a series of articles reprinted in several conservative newspapers, Eduard Kenkel draws the connection between the Kutisker-Barmat case and that of Sklarz; see "Bilder aus der preußischen Justiz," in *Bergisch-Märkische Zeitung*, 16–23 September 1925.
41. On the establishment of the *Untersuchungsausschuß*, see Protokoll der Sitzung des Parteiausschusses, Berlin, den 13. Dezember 1919, in *Protokolle der Sitzungen des Parteiausschusses der SPD 1912 bis 1921* (repr. Berlin, 1980), 1, 49–55; SPD, *Untersuchungsausschuß zum Fall Sklarz* (Berlin, 1920).
42. For a detailed description of Bauer's involvement, his attempts to cover up his connection to Barmat, and his later exposure, see Rintelen, *Undemokratischer Demokrat*, 235–48, esp. 244–46. In the summer of 1924, he was reinstated due to the efforts by the right wing, but this remained a contested issue.
43. The impact of the Barmat affair is altogether left out by Winkler, *Schein*, 319–27.
44. "Scheidemann gegen Sonnenfeld," *Vorwärts* 305 (17 June 1920). Maximilian Harden, "Das sechste Siegel," *Die Zukunft* 108 (1920): 88f. Otto Armin (Alfred Roth), *Die Juden in den Kriegs-Gesellschaften und in der Kriegs-Wirtschaft* (Munich, 1921), 72f.
45. This aspect of the story cannot be pursued here but was very present in 1925 and led to vicious clashes in the fact-finding committee. See, for example, "Auseinandersetzungen im 'Barmat-Ausschuß,'" *Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 60, 5 February 1925. Schulze, *Otto Braun*. 377–81. Gottfried Zarnow [Ewald Moritz], *Gefesselte Justiz. Politische Bilder aus Deutscher Gegenwart*, 1 vol.; *Recht und Willkür im politischen Parteienstaat*, 2 vols.; *Politische Bilder aus deutscher Gegenwart* (Munich, 1930–1932), 1:9–12.
46. The distribution of this pamphlet was banned during the year it was published; its antiquarian availability today is a good indication of how widespread it was.
47. Sincton Upclair, *Der Rattenkönig und ihre Helfer. Die Wahrheit über den Fall Sklarz* (Berlin, 1920), 5–10, 12. For the emergence of the anti-Semitic movement, see Uwe Lohalm, *Völkischer Radikalismus. Die Geschichte des Deutsch-Völkischen Schutz- und Trutzbundes 1919–1923* (Hamburg, 1970).
48. Otto Armin (Alfred Roth), *Von Rathenau zu Barmat* (Stuttgart, 1925). In this pamphlet the author uses passages taken from his *Juden in den Kriegs-Gesellschaften*. Werner Jochmann, "Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus," in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution*, ed. Werner Mosse (Tübingen, 1971), 409–510; Hecht, *Antisemitismus*, 63–65, 138–52.
49. Otto Armin (Alfred Roth), *Rathenau*, 4. For a good summary of this argument in the agrarian context, see Reif, "Anti-Semitismus."
50. Reif, "Anti-Semitismus," 4, 8.
51. Quoted in Rosenberg, "Offener Brief an Hugo Stinnes," *Der Weltkampf. Halbmonatsschrift für die Judenfrage aller Länder* 2 (1925): 651.
52. So the title in Otto Armin (Alfred Roth), *Rathenau*, 62.
53. Alfred Rosenberg, "Offener Brief an Frau Hugo Stinnes," *Der Weltkampf* 2 (1925): 652.
54. Nathanael Jünger, *Kaufmann von Mühlheim. Ein Hugo-Stinnes-Roman* (Wismar, 1925). See also Bernd Widdig, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), chap. 6.

55. Markwart, "Die Hintermänner," *Hammer. Zeitschrift für nationales Leben*, no. 25 (1926): 406f.
56. Anonymous, "Barmat und Co. oder der größte Sieg der Demokratie," *Der Weltkampf* 5 (1925): 193.
57. Anonymous, "Parvus-Helphand-Markus-Klein," *Der Weltkampf* 2 (1925): 91.
58. Rumpelstilzchen [Adolf Stein], *Rumpelstilzchen 1924/25: Haste Worte* (Berlin, 1925), 152f. Anonymous, "Barmat und Co.,"; Karl Rohe, *Das Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbände zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1966).
59. Rintelen, *undemokratischer Demokrat*, 243f.
60. Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, chap. 7.
61. Anonymous, "Barmat und Co.," 22.
62. The newspaper columns of the conservative journalist Adolf Stein are full of such resentments; see Rumpelstilzchen, 1920/21: *Berliner Allerlei* (Berlin, 1921), 27; for an estimate of the huge expenditures of the Barmats, see *Anklageschrift gegen Barmat*, 162–66.
63. Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economic and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), 124–73.
64. See the cartoon published in the *Rote Fahne*, 25 February 1925; protocols of the interrogation of Wilhelm Richter by the state attorneys, LAB Rep 358 no. 421, vol. 1, fol. 113–26; see Anonymous, "Parvus-Helphand-Markus-Klein," 329, 342.
65. Anonymous, "Parvus-Helphand-Markus-Klein," 340.
66. Space limitations do not permit a detailed discussion here. Unfortunately, we probably know more about gift giving in the early modern period than in the twentieth century.
67. Document without title, GStA PK I. HA Rep 84a, no. 56541, fol. 225–29.
68. See *Anklageschrift gegen Barmat*, 123, 133; "Zum Antrag betreffend den Angeschuldigten Rühle" (note 18).
69. Radek, *Barmat-Sozialdemokratie*, 16.
70. "Aus dem Barmat-Sumpf. Nervenzusammenbruch und Geständnis Richters," *Bergisch-Märkische Zeitung*, 8 July 1925.
71. For a "republican account," see Carl Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, vol. 2. (Cologne, 1950), 50–55; Erich Eyck, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Erlenbach, 1956), 1:432–36; and Steffani, *Untersuchungsausschüsse*, 169–90.
72. Siegfried Löwenstein, "Betrachtungen zum Barmat-Prozeß," *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* 33 (1928): 554.
73. Schiff, *Höfle-Tragödie*, 11.
74. Löwenstein, "Betrachtungen," 554.
75. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, 7:2964.
76. The later chancellor, Hermann Müller, would entertain guests at dinner parties with a story about Ebert's reaction to learning that Barmat had made calls from the offices of the Reich president to Amsterdam. On that occasion, Ebert supposedly commented: "Wenn der Saujud noch mal wiederkommt, schmeiß ich ihn hinaus." ("If that Jewish slob comes again, I'll kick him out!"). See Ernst Feder, *Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten 1926–1932*, ed. Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel and Arnold Paucker (Stuttgart, 1971), 102.
77. Anonymous, "Barmat-Urteil," *Die Weltbühne* 24 (1928): 533. Another member of the Center Party, Lange-Hegermann, a deputy to the Reichstag, was a high official in the Merkurbank of the Barmat-Konzern.

78. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, 7:2986.
79. "Der Verlauf der Reichstagssitzung," *Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 38, 23 January 1925.
80. *Sammlung der Drucksachen des preußischen Landtages*, 6:2937.
81. For a harsh critique, see Rechtsanwalt F. Nübell, "Der Fall Kutisker," *Das Tagebuch* (1926), 982–87; Ferdinand Nübell, "Kutisker und die Ärzte," *Die Weltbühne* 23, no. 2 (1927): 92–95.
82. Löwenstein, "Betrachtungen," 556.
83. *Ibid.*, 557.
84. Bewer, "Die Lehren des Barmat Prozesses—ein Lob der Richter," *Deutsche Richter Zeitung* 20 (1928): 228–29.
85. *Urteil des Schöffengerichts Berlin-Mitte, Abteilung 206, vom 30. März 1928 in der Strafsache gegen Barmat und Genossen* (Berlin, 1929), 40.
86. *Ibid.*, 40f.
87. Philipp Lachmann an den Ministerpräsidenten [Otto Braun], 12 October 1927, I HA Rep 84a no. 56597, fol. 123–25; in this file there are several of his memoranda. See also Zarnow, *Gefesselte Justiz*, 1:25–29. Next to Werthauer, the Jewish *Staatssekretär* in the office of the minister president Otto Braun, Robert Weismann, was attacked, also for his alleged involvement in the Sklarz case in 1920–21, when Weismann was still the first state attorney in Berlin Mitte.
88. Just a year before, another case in Berlin involving the brothers Sklarek had come up, a case that resembled the Kutisker–Barmat scandal. Christian Engeli, *Gustav Böß, Oberbürgermeister von Berlin 1921–1930* (Stuttgart, 1971), 226–71. Dagmar Reese, "Skandal und Ressentiment: Das Beispiel des Berliner Sklarek-Skandals," in *Anatomie des politischen Skandals*, ed. Rolf Ebbinghaus and Sighart Neckel (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 374–95; Malinowski, "Politische Skandale."
89. *Niederschriften über die Verhandlungen des 19. Ausschusses—Untersuchungsausschuss zur Prüfung der preußischen Rechtspflege—zum Fall Kutisker-Werthauer*, Preußischer Landtag 4. Wahlperiode, 1. Tagung 1932, I HA Rep 84a 56566 fol. 24–47; "Kuttner wehrt sich," *Vossische Zeitung*, 7 February 1933.
90. Leon Degrelle, *Franck. Barmat. van Zeeland* (Bruxelles, 1937). In 1934, the propaganda ministry arranged that materials from the Barmat trial were given to a correspondent of the Amsterdam newspaper *De Telegraaf*; see "Der Generstaatsanwalt bei dem Kammergericht an den Preußischen Justizminister," 29 September 1934, GStA PK I. HA Rep 84a, no. 56542.
91. "Heimgefunden," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 12 November 1937. "Judko Barmat, Ostjüdische Abenteuer in Belgien: Die Giftblüte der Demokratie," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8 January 1938.
92. Yizhak Ahren, Stig Hornsjhøh-Møller, and Christoph B. Melchers, "Der Ewige Jude:" *Wie Goebbels hetzte. Untersuchungen zum nationalsozialistischen Propagandafilm* (Aachen, 1990).
93. Gert Bucheit, *Richter in roter Robe. Freisler. Präsident des Volksgerichtshofes* (München, 1968), 276f.
94. "Ausgestoßen," no mention of the newspaper, I HA Rep 84a no. 56600, fol. 125.
95. Philipp Lachmann to Preußischer Ministerpräsident, General Göring, 20 April 1934, I Ha Rep 84a no. 56603, fol. 10–24.