

tive process, as Hilberg and others have proposed. Altogether, the features, which express an obsession with the (assumed) riches of the Jews, cannot simply be explained as by-products of the exclusion process, and the comprehensive removal process of Jews from influence on German economic life cannot be understood as social exclusion only.

Why this obsession with the (assumed) importance of the economic dimension of Jews, Jewry and Judaism? Adam Tooze states that “in general, the idea that the tiny Jewish minority had ever occupied a ‘dominant position’ in the economy [...] should be seen for what it always was – an absurd anti-Semitic myth”.⁴⁷ However, though this myth is absurd from the perspective of rational unbiased analysis, it was important and influential as a cultural construct; for the understanding of the Holocaust the historian has to acknowledge this importance. Moreover, one has to admit that the mythical belief regarding the Jews had peculiar characteristics even when regarded from the perspective of the post-World War I trend in European countries of *Volkswirtschaft* (national economy).⁴⁸ This mythical belief resulted from centuries-old antisemitic traditions which were engraved in European cultural images, especially in the German *Kultur*. Since the Middle Ages Jews had become stereotyped as being linked in their essence to money: extortionate usurers, powerful and deceiving merchants, greedy etc. The 1834 German dictionary of J. H. Kaltschmidt, for instance, defined “*der Jude*” (the Jew) as “Hebrew, Israelite, haggler, usurer” (*Hebräer, Israelit, Schacherer, Wucherer*), the expression “*die Judelei*” as “[typically] Jewish profit seeking” (*die jüdische Gewinnsucht*), and the verb “*jüdeln, juden, jüdnen*” as “usury, seeking excessive (or: unduly) profit” (*wuchern, übermässig Gewinn suchen*).⁴⁹ In modern times, in the enlightened eighteenth century⁵⁰ and especially in the nineteenth century, the “money-Jew” was a recurring character in antisemitic discourse and caricatures which reacted to the economic and social modernization

47 Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, p. 277.

48 The many contributions on the Nazi attitude towards the Jews included in Kreutzmüller/Wildt/Zimmermann (eds.), *National Economies*, prove its exceptional radicalism as compared with non-Nazi ethno-centric economic policies. See also: Petersen, *Judenbild und Wirtschaftsleben*.

49 Kaltschmidt, *Gesamt-Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, p. 456.

50 Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, p. 345.