recently, an eyewitness has confirmed what many
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ical terms is not enough. Ribuffo's broader perspec-
ues, discloses much more—both about American
he culture that nourished it.

Henry Ford and
The International Jew
Leo P. Ribuffo

Although historians still disagree about the extent of anti-Semitism during the late nineteenth century, the dominant attitude among Christian Americans, as Leonard Dinnerstein rightly concludes, was an amalgam of "affection, curiosity, suspicion and rejection." Comparing Americans and Europeans, we can say that anti-Semitism in the United States was relatively less violent, less racist, and less central to the worldviews of those who accepted it.

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a shift toward greater suspicion and rejection. The lynching of Leo Frank in 1915 was only the most dramatic incident in an era that marked, according to George Fredrickson, a peak of "formalized racism." After World War I, hostility toward Jews escalated, operating in three overlapping areas. First, "polite" anti-Semites, including President A. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard, restricted admissions to clubs, resorts, universities, and the professions. Second, supported by many leading psychologists, such popularizers as Lothrop Stoddard and Kenneth Roberts spread the Anglo-Saxon cult to a wide audience. Third, commentators and members of Congress increasingly associated Jews with radicalism in general and communism in particular. For example, Dr. George A. Simons, a former missionary in Russia, told a Senate committee that the "so-called Bolshevik movement" was "Yiddish." Simons's allegations, which particularly impressed Senator Knute Nelson, were largely endorsed by other witnesses, including a Northwestern University professor, a Commerce Department agent, two representatives of National City Bank, a YMCA official and vice counsel in Petrograd, and several Russian émigrés.

To Simons, "Yiddish" Bolshevism seemed to "dovetail" with the plot outlined in The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. In this notorious forgery created by Russian royalists at the turn of the century, a leader of a secret Jewish world government allegedly explained the plot to destroy Christian
civilization. For almost two thousand years, the Elders had been “splitting society by ideas” while manipulating economic and political power. Currently they popularized Darwinism, Marxism, “Nietzsche-ism” and other anti-Christian doctrines, undermined clergy, corrupted governments, and arranged wars that would profit Jews while killing Gentiles. Above all, the conspirators controlled both the mechanisms of capitalism and the radical movements pretending to offer alternatives. The Protocols’ generality left room for interpretations to fit local circumstances. Eventually, their basic charges were “Americanized” and disseminated under the imprimatur of a national hero, Henry Ford.

Along with the nation as a whole, Henry Ford faced a series of crises during the years 1915 to 1920. With the introduction of the Model T in 1908, he had begun to achieve his great goal, mass production of a reliable, inexpensive automobile. By the mid-1910s, his decision to freeze auto design and expand production instead of paying dividends alienated subordinates and minority stockholders. Undaunted, he fired employees who disagreed with him, bought out dissatisfied shareholders, and gained full control of the Ford Motor Company in 1920. Thereafter, except for his able son Edsel, he rarely encountered anyone who openly disagreed with him.

Ford became, in Keith Sward’s words, “as inaccessible as the Grand Lama.” He remained eager to offer wide-ranging advice, but now usually filtered opinions through Ernest G. Liebold, his secretary since 1911. An ambitious martinet, Liebold expanded his authority by exploiting Ford’s quirks, such as his dislike of paperwork and refusal to read most correspondence. The secretary gladly managed public relations, issued statements or answered letters in Ford’s name, and exercised power of attorney after 1918. Indeed, he substantially controlled Ford’s access to the world outside Dearborn.

To promote the views that he developed in virtual seclusion, Ford in 1919 purchased a weekly newspaper. The Dearborn Independent was designed to disseminate practical “ideas and ideals” without distortion by the “world’s channels of information.” The Dearborn Publishing Company, moreover, looked like a family enterprise. Henry Ford, his wife Clara, and his son Edsel were respectively president, vice president, and treasurer. Editorship of the Independent was bestowed on E. G. Pipp, a friend of Ford who had edited the Detroit News. William J. Cameron, an intelligent but hard-drinking veteran of the News, listened to Ford’s ruminations and then wrote “Mr. Ford’s Page.” Both men operated under the watchful eye of Liebold, who detested Pipp and barely tolerated Cameron.

Despite a promise on the masthead to chronicle “neglected truth,” the Independent at first printed nothing extraordinary. It supported prohibition, prison reform, the Versailles Treaty, and the League of Nations; yet, these serious issues often received less attention than light stories about prominent persons, cities, or colleges. For sixteen months, the newspaper did not mention an alleged Jewish conspiracy. The owner, however, had been contemplating the issue for several years, and had considered raising it during the 1918 senatorial campaign. After the election, Pipp recalled, Ford began to talk about Jews “frequently, almost continuously.”

The source of Ford’s animus remains obscure. Ford himself told Liebold and Fred Black, the Independent business manager, that Herman Bernstein, editor of the Jewish Tribune, and other passengers on Oscar II (the “peace ship” Ford charted in World War I) had blamed Jewish financiers for the war. Liebold, who said that unspecified behavior by Jewish journalists in Norway “confirmed” Ford’s suspicions, obviously shared and encouraged the automaker’s bias. Indeed, Ford’s secretary suspected Jewish automobile dealers of thwarting company policy and, a generation later, still recalled The International Jew as a worthwhile enterprise. Closer to home, Clara Ford may have promoted her husband’s bigotry. At least she opposed Jewish membership in the country club and urged Ford to fire an executive whose wife was half-Jewish.

Pipp acted briefly as a countervailing influence. Six months after buying the Independent in 1919, Ford wanted to run a series on Jewish subversion. The editor held out for almost a year. In April, 1920, he quit instead of sanctioning the articles. The imminent anti-Semitic campaign was probably not the only reason for Pipp’s departure. Liebold had been undermining his authority and restricting access to Ford. When he resigned, Pipp joined a formidable list of former employees who had refused to be sycoephants.

Because the office files of the Dearborn Independent were destroyed in 1963, and because other records for 1920 have disappeared, we must rely on scattered correspondence, self-serving reminiscences, and conjecture to trace the composition of The International Jew. Apparently research and writing began toward the end of Pipp’s tenure. Investigators directed by Liebold forwarded anti-Semitic information to Dearborn where, Pipp recalled, Ford swallowed “all . . . that was dished out.” William J. Cameron, who succeeded Pipp as editor, did most of the writing. Initially unaware of the Protocols, Cameron did little “preliminary work” for the first article. He read “whatever was around,” including Werner Sombart’s The Jews and Modern Capitalism. But Cameron! later protests that he considered the articles “useless” must not be taken as a face value. Fred Black recalled that Cameron “walked the floor” for three months before agreeing to write The International Jew. Within a year or two however, he came to believe most of what he wrote. In the meantime, along with other Ford employees, he followed orders.

The first article, “The International Jew: The World’s Problem,” appears on May 20, 1920. Liebold had suggested the title and date of publication in order to coincide with an attack on “greedy” Jews by Leo Franklin, a prominent Detroit rabbi and Ford’s former neighbor. Although the Independent
promised further revelations, the staff seems not to have planned more than a month ahead. Indeed, Black thought that Ford himself did not anticipate a sustained campaign.

Yet several developments kept the series alive until January 14, 1922. Ford, Liebold, and—eventually—Cameron got wrapped up in their project. Ford visited the Independent almost every day, concerning himself only with “Mr. Ford’s Page” and The International Jew. Despite their mutual hostility, Liebold and Cameron consulted often on the series, sometimes poring over articles together until three o’clock in the morning. Critics provided grist for the mill. When former President Taft or columnist Arthur Brisbane attacked The International Jew, they were denounced in subsequent articles as “gentle fronts.” Moreover, Liebold’s agents regularly supplied rumors, clippings, and forged documents.

The main detective operation, located on Broad Street in New York City, was managed by C. C. Daniels, a former lawyer for the Justice Department, whose aides, including several veterans of military intelligence, used secret identification numbers when contacting Dearborn. Norman Hapgood exaggerated only slightly when he said that the group “muckraked everybody who was a Jew or was suspected of being a Jew.” It attracted “adventurers, detectives, and criminals” and gave credence to their stories. For example, though Daniels’s brother Josephus, the secretary of the navy, might have told them otherwise, Ford investigators thought that President Wilson took orders from Justice Brandeis over a private telephone line. Daniels’s special concerns included Eugene Meyer, Jr., of the Federal Reserve Board, whom he accused of blocking Ford’s acquisition of the nitrate plants at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. “As you know,” he wrote to Liebold in 1922, “locks and bars make no difference to that portion of God’s chosen people seeking to displace the stars and stripes with the Jewish national flag and that calls Lenin [sic] the greatest Statesman alive.”

Liebold recalled that he needed few European agents because “people came over here and revealed their stories to us.” Russian émigrés ultimately provided a copy of the Protocols. Here, too, slight surviving evidence obscures the story. Sometime before the summer of 1920, Liebold apparently met Paquita de Shishmareff, a Russian émigré married to an American soldier. Liebold told Ford that Shishmareff, who is better known as Mrs. Leslie Fry, possessed “full and thorough knowledge of all Jewish operations in Europe.” According to Liebold’s reminiscences, she provided his “first knowledge” of the Protocols as well as a copy of the forgery. Whatever the original source, the Independent staff was studying the Protocols in the middle of June, 1920. On June 10, W. G. Eryon, a company employee in Delaware, dispatched several copies to Dearborn.

Starting with the July 24 article, the Protocols description of an international Jewish conspiracy provided the central thread of The International Jew.

For the next three years, Liebold expanded his contacts with Russian royals and their dubious documents. In addition to Mrs. Fry, he consulted Boris Brasol, an erstwhile member of the Black Hundreds, and several of their friends. A Ford agent in Paris paid seven thousand francs for a report by former Russian Judge Nicholas Sokoloff purporting to show that Jewish conspirators had murdered the Romanovs. Liebold was impressed and invited Sokoloff to Dearborn. The émigrés soon discovered that they were treated as capriciously as other Ford employees. When Sokoloff fell ill, Liebold “hustled” him out of Michigan, and later refused to support his widow and orphans.

Although the Dearborn Independent was indebted to émigrés for the Protocols, The International Jew was not, as Norman Cohn contends, “far more a Russo-German than an American product.” The alleged manifestations of the “world’s foremost problem” coincided with issues that had unsettled the United States since the Civil War.

First, the Independent complained that both the monopolistic activities of large corporations and the countervailing actions of government had produced a “steady curtailment” of freedom.

Second, joining the search for moral order that intensified after World War I, the Independent condemned new styles in dress and music, changing sexual mores, Hollywood “lasciviousness,” and the “filthy tide” sweeping over the theater. Sensitive to unraveling family bonds, the newspaper warned that children were drawn from “natural leaders in the home, church, and school to institutionalized ‘centers’ and scientific ‘play spots.’”

Third, the Independent addressed the issue that had grown in importance since the “endless stream” of immigrants had begun to arrive in the 1880s: What was Americanism? These strangers, especially residents of the “unassimilated province” known as New York City, were responsible for the “mad confusion that passes in some quarters as a picture” of the United States.

Fourth, the Independent worried about the problem of determining truth in the modern world. Even before the anti-Semitic campaign, the newspaper had shared the prevailing fear of deception by propaganda. People were “born believers” who needed “deeply” to affirm something. But it was hard to know what to believe. The International Jew protested that man was ruled “by a whole company of ideas into whose authority he has not inquired at all.” Not only did he live by the “say of others,” but “terrific social pressures” on behalf of “broadmindedness” discouraged probes beneath conventional wisdom. Sounding like Walter Lippmann or Harold Lasswell, the newspaper warned that credulity was especially dangerous in the current “era of false labels.”

The Protocols offered a “clue to the modern maze.” Hedging on the question of authenticity, as Liebold did in correspondence, the Independent said that the documents themselves were “comparatively unimportant.” They gave “meaning to certain previously observed facts.” Whether or not an Elder
of Zion actually gave these lectures, it was clear that Jews used ideas to "corrupt Collective Opinion," controlled finance, sponsored revolution, and were "everywhere" exercising power.

Following a "historical" survey, The International Jew purported to document the current activities of Hebrew capitalists, radicals, and propagandists. In the economic sphere, the Independent distinguished between Jewish "finance" and the "creative industry" dominated by Gentiles. From the Rothschild family on down, Jews were "essentially money-lenders" who rarely had a "permanent interest" in production. Rather, they seized a commodity "at just the point in its passage from producer to consumer where the heaviest profit can be extracted." Squeezing the "neck of the bottle" in this way, they dominated the grain, copper, fur, and cotton markets. The rising national debt was another "measure of our enslavement." Furthermore, in 1913, Paul Warburg, a German Jew who had emigrated "for the express purpose of changing our financial system," convinced Congress to pass the Federal Reserve Act. The Reserve Board helped the "banking aristocracy" to contact currency and centralize funds for speculation.

Through four volumes, Jewish vices appeared as the reverse of any "American view." The dichotomies between making and getting, morality and sensuality, fair trade and chicanery, "creative labor" and exploitation, heroism and cowardice, were only the beginning. Some of the most important differences impinged on politics. Anglo-Saxons had created the press to prevent secret domination by any minority, but Jews twisted news for their own advantage. Democratic procedures were another Anglo-Saxon inheritance; Jews "instinctively" favored autocracy. One of the "higher traits" of "our race" fostered obliviousness to Hebrew machinations. Eschewing conspiracies themselves, Anglo-Saxons neither expected them among other groups nor followed the available clues "through long and devious and darkened channels."

Above all, Gentiles advanced "by individual initiative," while Jews took advantage of unprecedented "racial loyalty and solidarity." Because success—a preeminent American and "Fordian" value—could "not be attacked nor condemned [sic]," the Independent hesitated to criticize Jews for doing "extraordinarily" well. Neither could it concede superiority to another "race." In essence, therefore, the newspaper cried foul. Because Jews took advantage of their position as an "international nation," it was "difficult to measure gentle and Jewish achievement by the same standard." Jews captured the "highest places" only because they began with an unfair advantage.

The Independent said that Jewish solidarity required "one rule for the Gentile and one for the Jews." In fact, the newspaper itself not surprisingly held to the double standard. It condemned acts by Jews which, if done by Christians, would have been considered innocent, legitimate, or admirable. The wartime ban on German and the fundamentalist effort to drive Darwin from the classroom were acceptable; Jewish objections to The Merchant of Venice violated "American principles." George Creel's chairmanship of the Committee on Public Information did not prompt a discussion of Protestant traits; Carl Laemmle's production of The Beast of Berlin for the same committee was a "lurid" attempt to profit from war. Jacob Schiff's use of dollar diplomacy on behalf of Russian Jews seemed sinister; efforts by E. H. Harriman to squeeze concessions from the Czar passed without comment. Similarly, Irish-American agitation about the Versailles Treaty went unrewarded; Jewish concern elicited complaints about the "kosher conference." The immigrant's willingness to change his name was seen as evidence of duplicity, not of a desire to assimilate.

In addition to assuming the worst, the Independent singled out Jewish participants in any endeavor and concluded that they were acting as Jews. But while Paul Warburg did play a major role in the passage of the Federal Reserve Act, he acted on behalf of major bankers of all faiths. Although the War Industries Board did create a "system of control such as the United States government never possessed," Chairman Baruch believed that the general welfare was synonymous with capitalism, not Judaism. Jews may have been represented disproportionately in the Soviet hierarchy, but they used their positions to further Marxist ends, including the secularization of Russian Jewry; almost none of the "Yiddish" Bolsheviks spoke Yiddish. In 1911 Jacob Schiff's objections to the Russian-American commercial treaty would have meant little if outrage among grass-roots and elite Gentiles had not moved three hundred Representatives to agree with him.

The disposition to single out Jews and to create a separate standard for them derived from three circumstances. First, as Irving Howe notes, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were "radically different from the dominant Protestant culture." The Independent was incensed by this lack of "conformity" to the nation's "determining ideals and ideas"; the recent arrivals seemed to think that the United States was "not any definite thing yet." Second, as John Higham argues, Jews attracted special attention because they were relatively more successful—and more visible—than other groups in the "new immigration." Third, despite proscribed indifference to Jewish religious practices, the Independent supposed that acceptance of the nation's ideals meant acquiescence in its "predominant Christian character." Jews, however, were determined "to wipe out of public life" every Christian reference. Their "impertinent interferences" included contempt for Sunday blue laws and protests against Christmas celebrations and Bible reading in public schools. Louis Marshall, president of the American Jewish Committee, even said that the United States was "not a Christian country." Such actions by a race that had had "no hand" in building the nation naturally stirred a "whirlwind of resentment."

From this matter-of-fact amalgamation of Christianity and "100 percent Americanism," the Independent moved to theology. The transition was easy for
William J. Cameron, who had preached occasionally, without benefit of ordination, to a "people's church" in Brooklyn, Michigan. Accepting the mangled history and biblical exegesis of the Anglo-Israelite Federation, Cameron believed that contemporary Anglo-Saxons had descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Hence they were "chosen" to receive the blessings that God had promised to Abraham's progeny. But this divine choice of Israel did not extend to Judea, or to the Jewish offspring of the two southern tribes. On the contrary, Anglo-Israelites were often hostile to contemporary Jews.

Fred Black speculated that Cameron's Anglo-Israelism had prepared him to accept conspiratorial anti-Semitism. Certainly the editor's faith gave a peculiar twist to the discussion of religion in The International Jew. Citing the Protocols' injunction to undermine clergy, the Independent blamed Jews for biblical criticism and "liberal" Protestantism, a typically mislabeled doctrine that reduced Jesus to a "well-meaning but wholly mistaken Jewish prophet." Discriminating between Israel and the rebellious Judeans, the weekly said that Jesus was not Jewish in the modern sense of the word. Neither was Moses nor any disciple—except Judas. Fundamentalists also read the Bible through "Jewish spectacles" when they confused modern Hebrews with God's chosen people. Not only did Jews reject Christ, but they abandoned the Old Testament in favor of the Talmud's "rabbinical speculation." Instead of fulfilling the prophetic promise of a return to Jerusalem, as many fundamentalists supposed, Zionism represented the "Bolshevist spirit all over again."

In the broadest sense, then, the Independent presented the "Jewish question" as a contest between two peoples, each supposing that God was on its side. There was "no idea deeper in Judaism" than the belief in divine election. But, the newspaper protested, the "Anglo-Saxon Celtic race" was the "Ruling People, chosen throughout the centuries to Master the world." Beneath the braggadocio, however, there lay a hint of the insecurity that fueled nativism in the 1920s. On the one hand, Yankees could beat Jews "any time" in a fair fight. Still the Kehillah's "extraordinary unity" was impressive. Unpatriotic American "mongrels" and "lick spittle Gentile Fronts who have no tribe...would be better off if they had one-thousandth the racial sense which the Jew possesses."

The Independent maintained that its pages contained "NO ATTACK...ON THE JEWS AS JEWS" (though it was not always possible to "distinguish the group" deserving censure). Occasionally the weekly made ostentatious efforts to sound fair. It quoted admirable (meaning unobtrusive) Jews, admitted that Paul Warburg's Federal Reserve Act contained "important improvements," and recognized Bernard Baruch's intelligence and energy. On January 17, 1922, a "candid address" to Jews urged them to recover Old Testament morality and practice "social responsibility." If Jews stopped trying "to twist Americanism into something else," they could participate without objection in finance, entertainment, and government.

The newspaper's remedies for the "world's foremost problem" combined faith in expertise, national unity, and publicity. A "scientific study of the Jewish Question" would forestall prejudice by transforming gentle assailants and Jewish defenders "both into investigators." Research by "qualified persons" would yield "society's point of view" which, the Independent claimed, was the perspective taken in its pages. In the interim, to combat Jewish adulteration of products, a consumer movement should "educate people in the art of buying." Most important, "clear publicity" must be the "chief weapon" against the Hebrew cabal. Their program would then be "checked the moment it is perceived and identified." Russia, Germany, and England had failed to solve the "Jewish Question," but the United States would succeed—without violence.

While new installments of The International Jew continued to unroll in its pages, the Independent collected in book form articles that had already appeared; sometimes two hundred thousand copies were printed in a single edition. The staff sent complimentary volumes to locally influential citizens, especially clergy, bankers, and stockbrokers.

To supplement The International Jew, the Independent ran "Jewish World Notes." This regular feature charged that Madame Curie was treated less well in New York than the spurious Jewish scientist Albert Einstein, chided Billy Sunday for ignorance of the Elders' conspiracy, derided Zionist immigration to Palestine, and feared that President-elect Harding, like his predecessors, was falling under Jewish influence. The Independent also kept up persistent attacks on alcohol, tobacco, movies, comic books, jazz, Wobbles, Soviets, and immigration. Simultaneously looking to Ford's financial interests, editor Cameron promoted highway construction, opposed federal aid to railroads, and looked greedily toward Muscle Shoals. In 1922, as Ford began to covet the presidency, his newspaper dutifully emphasized the inadequacy of other possible nominees.

If the Independent had offered only a perverse mixture of reform, eccentricity, internationalism, and nativism, it would have attracted relatively little attention. But The International Jew was extraordinary even for the "tribal twenties." Opponents mobilized quickly. The Federal Council of Churches condemned the articles in December, 1920. A month later, without specifically mentioning Ford, 119 prominent Christians, including William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, and William Cardinal O'Connell, signed "The Perils of Racial Prejudice," a statement asking Gentiles to halt the "vicious propaganda" against Jews. Officials in several cities considered censoring the Independent or removed it from public libraries.

At first many Jews wondered, as Louis Marshall asked, if The International Jew had Ford's personal "sanction." Returning Ford's annual gift, a new sedan, his former neighbor Rabbi Leo Franklin warned Ford that he was inflicting harm on innocent people. Similarly, Herman Bernstein, a voyager
on Oscar II, appealed to the automaker’s “humanitarian” nature. Even after Jewish spokesmen recognized the depth of Ford’s commitment to the anti-Semitic campaign, they disagreed on countermeasures. Following an initial protest, Marshall worked behind the scenes, sponsoring Bernstein’s rebuttal, The History of a Lie, recruiting signers for “The Perils of Radical Prejudice,” and in mid-1921 urging President Harding to intervene. Others preferred more militant tactics. The American Hebrew challenged Ford to abide by an impartial investigation, attorneys for the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation League advocated laws against the libel of groups, Yiddish newspapers rejected advertisements for Ford cars, and individual Jews refused to buy them.

The International Jew elicited support as well as opposition. Colonel Charles S. Bryan of the War Department appreciated particularly the attack on “East Side Scum.” The journalist W. J. Abbot expressed “sympathy” with Ford’s views and critic John J. Chapman hailed the “lucidity and good temper” of Volume II. C. Moberly White, an “authority” on revolution for the National Civic Federation, urged supplementary publication of the Protocols. According to Liebold, J. P. Morgan, Jr., liked the series. The number of Independent readers fluctuated widely over short periods because Ford dealers, who were ordered to sell the paper, showed little enthusiasm for the task. It appears, however, that The International Jew temporarily attracted new subscribers.

Liebold responded to protests and praise. Agreeing with the Independent that good Jews had “nothing to fear,” he urged them to join Ford’s crusade against the worldwide peril. But his supercilious tone was hardly reassuring. He accused Marshall of sounding like a “Bolshevik orator,” lectured Rabbi Franklin on the importance of principles, and generally praised the newspaper’s reliance on “actual facts.” Conversely, he thanked friends of The International Jew and encouraged their efforts, telling C. Moberly White, for example, that there was “quite a field” for distribution of the Protocols. Occasionally he was forced to retreat. “Amazed” by the accusation that he had been Wilson’s Jewish “mouthpiece,” columnist David Lawrence wrote to Ford, whom he considered a friend. A testy exchange followed with Liebold, the perennial ship, who finally said that the automaker had had “no knowledge” of the articles relating to Lawrence.

Indeed, consistently distancing his employer from The International Jew, Liebold answered protests in his own name and testified in 1924 that Ford devoted his time to the company’s “numerous and complex” operations. The Independent promoted the same fiction. Because Cameron explicitly attacked Jews on every page except “Mr. Ford’s Page,” devoted followers could believe that Ford was too busy making cars to supervise his own newspaper. The strategy was transparent, but it laid the groundwork for his face-saving retraction in 1927. The pause did not mean that Ford had begun to doubt the existence of a Jewish conspiracy. He still raised the matter in interviews. In addition, Liebold’s agents collected fresh material which, Pipp warned, Ford would order into print “whenever the whim may strike him again.” Apparently the whim struck within a year. In November, 1922, anti-Semitic references resurfaced in the Independent.

Starting in April, 1924, the Independent focused on “Jewish Exploitation of Farmers’ Organizations,” and on Aaron Sapiro, the alleged chief exploiter. After serving as counsel to the California marketing bureau, Sapiro began in 1919 to organize farm cooperatives in other states. Within four years, he created the National Council of Farmer’s Cooperative Marketing Associations, whose constituent groups represented 700,000 farmers. Presidents Harding and Coolidge, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, former Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois, and Senator Arthur Capper, leader of the congressional farm bloc, encouraged Sapiro and sometimes provided substantial assistance. By 1923, however, many cooperative associations collapsed and enthusiasm began to ebb among farmers. In 1926 the National Council quietly disbanded.

Sapiro was a natural target. Cherishing the myth of the sturdy Christian farmer, the Independent and its publisher assumed that Jews entered agriculture only as greedy middlemen. Ford joked that he would pay one thousand dollars to anyone who brought in a Jewish farmer “dead or alive.” Moreover, farm cooperatives fostered the “steady trend toward systematization” deplored in The International Jew. And Sapiro’s financial backers included two of The International Jew’s foremost villains, Bernard Baruch and Eugene Meyer, Jr.

Still, the Independent’s assault had an ironic aspect because Ford and Sapiro shared more common ground that either realized. Like Ford, Sapiro cherished farming as a virtuous way of life untainted by radicalism or federal planning. Furthermore, he too was a proud man who resented attacks on his character. In January, 1925, therefore, Sapiro sent a thirty-one-page letter to Ford and his associates, demanding a retraction of “Jewish Exploitation.” When the Independent refused to comply, Sapiro sued Ford and the Dearborn Publishing Company for a million dollars in order to vindicate “myself and my race.”

Sapiro’s was the third suit provoked by Ford’s anti-Semitism. In January, 1921, Morris Geist had sought five million dollars in damages because the Independent accused him of producing lewd plays. Two years later Herman Bernstein had filed a complaint denying that he had told Ford of an international Jewish conspiracy. Neither case came to trial. Nor did they alter the newspaper’s course.

The Independent repudiated The International Jew only after Sapiro pressed the issue. In March, 1927, his suit alleging 141 libels by Ford and the Dearborn Publishing Company began in Federal District Court in Detroit. Opening for the plaintiff, attorney William Henry Gallagher called the Independent Ford’s “mouthpiece” and held him responsible for malicious attacks on “Sapiro and
his race." The defense, led by Senator James A. Reed (Democrat, Missouri), responded that the weekly had had a "moral duty" to expose Sapiro as a "grafter, faker, fraud, and cheat." The Independent's discussion of Jews was irrelevant, Reed added, because the law did not recognize libel of a "race." Sapiro raised the religious issue merely to "capitalize" on sympathy. Finally, making the familiar distinction between Ford and his newspaper, Reed said that the automaker had not read the series on Sapiro "to this blessed day."

The rival attorneys were skilled and well matched. Gallagher raised doubts about Cameron's sobriety and Ford's intelligence. On the other hand, defense objections excluded from evidence letters to Ford protesting inaccuracies in "Jewish Exploitation of Farmers' Organizations." Gallagher called James Martin Miller, a former Independent employee, to testify that Ford personally had charged Sapiro with manipulating agriculture for a "bunch of Jews." Asking one question to reveal that Miller had sued for back pay, Reed stopped him, "That's all." The two sides persistently clashed over Gallagher's effort to broaden the discussion of anti-Semitism. Poking fun at the defense's "extraordinary sensitiveness" to the word "Jew," Gallagher said that comparable "apprehension" three years earlier would have prevented the suit.

The most famous figure in the case avoided an appearance. At first, Ford planned to take the stand. Then he changed his mind and walled himself off from process servers. Company officials claimed that a subpoena issued for Ford was mistakenly presented to his brother. After Gallagher threatened to begin contempt proceedings, Ford's lawyers said that he would speak voluntarily. On March 31, however, he was the victim of a strange accident. A Studebaker sedan forced Ford's car off the road and down a fifteen-foot embankment. The automaker was taken to Henry Ford Hospital where he was treated and shielded by friendly physicians.

Sapiro suggested that Ford "faked" the accident, which has never been fully explained, because his "vanity was punctured at the collapse of his case." Indeed, sensing the jury's skepticism, defense lawyers did fear the verdict. On April 11, using reports from some of the fifty Ford service agents who prowled through the courthouse, they told Judge Raymond that a juror, Mrs. Cora Hoffman, had lied during the venire and later was offered a bribe by a Jew who wanted to convict Ford. Because Mrs. Hoffman's vehement denials appeared in the press, Raymond granted a defense motion of mistrial on April 21. The Court scheduled a retrial for September 12 as lawyers continued to spar. Valuing Raymond's restrictions on discussion of the "Jewish Question," Reed blocked Gallagher's attempt to change judges.

Judge Raymond adhered to the legal fiction that the Independent's attacks on Jews were largely irrelevant to the suit, but Ford knew better. By repudiating The International Jew, he could open the way to an out-of-court settlement and avoid testifying. During a May 11 meeting with Arthur Brisbane, who

remained friendly even though the Independent labeled him a "gentle front," Ford mentioned his decision to close the newspaper. At roughly the same time, he told Joseph Palma, head of the United States Secret Service field office in New York City, that he had underestimated the impact of the Jewish series; he wanted the "wrong righted." Serving as Ford's emissaries, Palma and Earl J. David, a former assistant attorney general, met secretly with Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee. On July 9, Ford announced through Brisbane that "articles reflecting upon Jews" would "never again" appear in the Independent. Liebold, Cameron, and Edsel Ford had known nothing of the negotiations.

The retrial, written by Marshall, allowed Ford to slip through the loophole held open since 1920 by Liebold, Cameron, and a formidable array of lawyers. Ford said that he had failed to "keep informed" about the actions of his newspaper. Thus he was "deeply mortified" to learn that the Independent had reprinted a series based on the "grossest forgeries," the Protocols of Zion. Fully aware of the virtues of the Jewish people," he begged their forgiveness, promising to withdraw The International Jew from circulation, and pledged future friendship and good will." Marshall considered the statement "humiliating" and was surprised that Ford accepted it.

Sapiro and Bernstein quickly dropped their suits in return for apologies and reimbursement of legal expenses. On July 30, the charge that Sapiro had belonged to an international conspiracy was formally "withdrawn" by the Independent. Sapiro pronounced himself "entirely satisfied," embraced the admission that Ford had been "misled," and claimed credit for helping a "great man get right."

Unfortunately the apologies of 1927, like the remission of 1922, did not mean that Ford had "got right." He closed the Independent on December 30, 1927 but—contrary to his lawyers' promise to Marshall—kept Liebold and Cameron, both unrepentant, in his employ. He ordered destruction of thousands of copies of The International Jew; yet, despite entreaties by Marshall and Bernstein, barely publicized his retraction in Europe. His subordinates interceded to halt circulation abroad only when pressed by Jewish leaders. Furthermore, Ford informed the Manchester Guardian in 1940 that "international Jewish bankers" caused World War II. At roughly the same time, he told the activist Gerald L. K. Smith that he had allowed Bennett to forge his signature on the retraction, hoped to someday reissue The International Jew and urged Smith to do so if he could not.

Partly due to Ford's laxity, the series continued to circulate among the rabid Jew-baiters whom the Independent professed to disdain. Norman Cohn estimates that The International Jew "probably did more than any other work to make the Protocols world-famous." The Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach called the "great influence" of the books on young Germans of his generation. In Mein Kampf, Hitler applauded Ford's efforts. Within the United States,
The International Jew provided a “usable past” for anti-Semites like Smith, who ultimately published an abridgement. As early as 1922, Norman Hapgood angrily held Ford responsible for letting “loose a malicious force that added fury to similar forces already in existence.”

Detached analysis of The International Jew and its supplements illuminates attitudes toward Jews as well as broader aspects of our culture. First, the text undermines the assumption that Christian belief and practice hardly influenced anti-Semitism in the United States. The International Jew was imbued with Ford’s faith that the national “genius” was “Christian in the broadest sense” and destined to remain so. The series portrayed a clash between two “chosen” peoples, and William J. Cameron, the chief compiler, sometimes cast the conflict in terms of Anglo-Israelite theology. Although we cannot infer the attitudes of a complex society from motifs in a single literary source, there is warrant for paying closer attention to the Christian roots of American anti-Semitism.

Second, a reading of The International Jew prompts yet another consideration of the relationship between “populism,” “progressivism,” and anti-Semitism. While Ford and Independent editor Cameron remained aloof from populism, their weekly explicitly endorsed “sane progressivism.” The adjective may seem inappropriate, but the general identification makes sense. Ford contributed $36,000 to Woodrow Wilson’s campaign in 1916 and was convinced by the president to run for senator two years later. Throughout the 1920s he was hailed as the preeminent business statesman whose commitment to efficiency, social service, and paternal labor relations promised industrial peace. Certainly The International Jew contained characteristic progressive themes. For example, adapting a growing consumer movement to its anti-Semitic ends, the Independent urged a boycott of Jewish merchants. Furthermore, the “Jewish question” must be subjected to “scientific study” by experts.

The most striking progressive legacy was The International Jew’s assertion that “clear publicity” was an American alternative to Jewish disfranchisement or pogroms. Richard Hofstadter observed that progressive intellectuals, scholars, and journalists alike “confirmed, if they did not create a fresh mode of criticism” that purported to uncover “reality.” They believed that “reality” was “hidden, neglected, and offstage,” something to be dug out from under superficial explanations. Norman Hapgood shrewdly saw that Ford’s detectives “muckraked” Jews and suspected Jews. Ford apparently shared the Independent’s faith in publicity. In My Life and Work, he maintained that the Jewish threat could be “controlled by mere exposure.”

Third, an interpretation of The International Jew helps to sort out “crucial differences in the variety of things called anti-Semitism.” The Independent distinguished its answers to the “Jewish Question”—consumer protection, scientific study, and publicity—from violent European solutions. Ford himself claimed only to oppose “false ideas,” called hatred of individuals “neither American nor Christian,” and remained personally fond of several Jews, including the architect Albert Kahn, baseball player Hank Greenberg, and Rabbi Leo Franklin; he was perplexed by Franklin’s refusal of a sedan in 1920 to protest The International Jew. These actions by Ford and his newspaper, though eccentric or self-serving, nevertheless point to complexities within anti-Semitism during the “tribal twenties.”

A venerable nativist position, presented eloquently in Josiah Strong’s 1885 polemic, Our Country, held that the “new immigration,” including Jews, was culturally regressive and therefore must be taught superior Anglo-Saxon ways. The racial theorists who gained prominence after 1900 held that the “new immigration,” including those whom Kenneth Roberts called “mongolid” Jews, was inately inferior and therefore incapable of learning Anglo-Saxon ways. Whereas Strong suggested that “our country” might benefit from a blend of “races” under Anglo-Saxon guidance, Madison Grant, the premier “Nordic” ideologue in 1915, insisted that assimilation would backfire, producing a “mongrel” nation. Although the doctrine of inherent racial inferiority never fully superseded the earlier tradition, by the 1920s most nativists mixed the two attitudes in varying proportions. For example, Ford and the Independent sometimes ascribed behavior by Eastern European immigrants to “nasty Orientalism” or “Tartar” origins. More often, however, they complained that these Jews refused to be like Anglo-Saxons. In the final analysis, The International Jew, the major nativist tract of the 1920s, was closer to Strong’s assimilationist ethnocentrism than to Grant’s biological determinism.

The distinction may provide little comfort to victims of discrimination (though in the long run they gain from it), but it does suggest that the nation’s liberal tradition even affects our nativists. Hence, they are more likely than counterparts in Germany or France to judge ethnic traits, in this case Jews, on the basis of individual behavior instead of putative genetic traits. Significantly, the Independent did not concur in the basic premise of Mein Kampf, that Jews betrayed “definite racial characteristics.”

Fourth, we must ask how thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of readers could believe The International Jew’s farfetched thesis that a worldwide Jewish network threatened their way of life. Richard Hofstadter maintains that adherents to such conspiracy theories betray a “paranoid style,” a frame of mind qualitatively different from normal thinking. Indeed, the notion that Jews make up a psychologically abnormal fringe is popular. It is nonetheless misleading. Much as they exaggerate the tolerance of the dominant culture, leading scholars also mistakenly assume that it was imbued with their own version of liberal rationalism. During the 1920s, however, following a government-sponsored war scare and Red Scare, belief in some sort of conspiracy theory may have been the norm instead of an aberration. In this context, The
International anti-Semitism and the progressive era were often intertwined. The postwar fear of hidden forces, as expressed by such figures as H. G. Wells and H. L. Mencken, was not without basis. The government and the military, for example, were increasingly concerned about the potential for subversion by those outside the dominant social group.

The sociologist Peter Berger observed that the knowledge of the Jewish minority was based on negative stereotypes. These stereotypes, he argued, represented the whole society's view of the Jews, and they were not without consequences. Berger noted that the knowledge of Jews as a group was often based on negative stereotypes, and this knowledge was used to justify discriminatory policies.

Finally, the sociologist Max Weber argued that the notion of the Jewish minority was a social construction, and that the knowledge of Jews was often based on negative stereotypes. Weber argued that the knowledge of Jews was a social construction, and that this knowledge was used to justify discriminatory policies.

In 1923, more than one-third of 260,000 voters polled by Collin's favorable organization showed a preference for Ford over his opponents. Collin's organization also conducted a poll of labor leaders, and the results were similar. The poll showed that labor leaders favored Ford by a margin of 2 to 1. The results of the poll were widely reported in the press, and they helped to solidify Ford's position as the leader of the labor movement.

Ford felt he had been betrayed by his labor leaders. He had promised them better pay, better working conditions, and a more participatory role in the company, but he felt that they had not delivered on their promises. Ford felt that his labor leaders were more interested in their own careers than in the welfare of the workers.

In 1927, Ford's labor leaders turned on him, and they persuaded him to sign a contract with the United Auto Workers (UAW). The contract gave the UAW the right to negotiate with Ford on behalf of the workers. Ford felt that this was a betrayal, and he resigned from the board of directors of the company.

Ford's resignation was a significant event. It marked the end of Ford's era as the leader of the labor movement, and it also marked the beginning of a new era in American labor history. The UAW would go on to become one of the most powerful labor unions in the country, and it would play a major role in the development of the American labor movement.

Similarly, the labor leaders who turned on Ford in 1927 would go on to become some of the most influential figures in American labor history. They would use their influence to negotiate contracts that would benefit the workers, and they would help to establish a strong labor movement in the United States.