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# “The Same Causes Occasioning the Same Effects”: The “Jewish Question”, the “Chinese Question” and the Global Precedents of Exclusion in Late Nineteenth Century Central Europe

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## Abstract

Why was the “Chinese Question” of immigration control and exclusion in the United States imagined as an appealing precedent for dealing with the “Jewish Question” of emancipation and citizenship in fin-de-siècle Romania, Hungary, and Austria? The present article examines a vast corpus of parliamentary debates, press, and pamphlets, in order to demonstrate how thinking in terms of “questions” enabled historical actors to place themselves within a “global moment” by highlighting structural similarities that would justify the analogy. By rhetorically turning to an America that was placed at the forefront of “liberal” progress, yet now began to explicitly place limits to its inclusiveness, politicians in Central and Eastern Europe sought to present their own exclusionary policies as timely and acceptable, rather than anachronistic affronts to the spirit of the age. Drawing upon this global precedent was therefore hoped to ward off criticism: if “civilized” America could draw the line, be it as a matter of principle or pragmatism, then antisemitism could be justified with reference to Sinophobia.

**Keywords:** antisemitism; Sinophobia; questions; trans-Atlantic history; emancipation; Coolie trade; Central Europe; United States of America

## Introduction

On 16 February 1879, John A. Kasson (1822–1910), the American ambassador to Vienna, reported to the Secretary of State on a meeting with Ion Bălăceanu (1828–1914), Romania’s diplomatic envoy to Austria-Hungary. Bălăceanu had hoped to help secure the recognition of Romanian independence from the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the Congress of Berlin, but Kasson insisted that the resulting treaty demanded equal political rights for the Jewish community as a precondition. Bălăceanu countered by dramatically overinflating the number of Romanian Jews, and, in Kasson’s words, ‘thought Roumania had a right to protect her own native race from a foreign incursion of this character’. If Romanian diplomacy generally insisted that an ongoing Jewish ‘invasion’ swelled the ranks of a recently arrived and unassimilated minority, Bălăceanu added a further flourish:

He referred with politeness, and not without a point which I appreciated to the law just passed by one House of our Congress for the suppression of Chinese immigration to the United States, although the proportion of that race present in the United States to the native population is minute in comparison with that of the Jewish immigrants to native

Roumanians. He, however, repeated the assurance that they would be placed on a basis of equality before the law.<sup>1</sup>

In 1882, during the debates that resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act, Kasson would plead that, if the House of Representatives would ‘not yield to the principle of justice, fairness, and right, [then] yield to the demands of your own commercial interest as against your rivals of the Old World, and be just to China’. Kasson did not advocate the unrestricted immigration of Chinese workers, seen as less ‘civilized’ than the Chinese government. Nevertheless, he worried about the impacts of American legislation on the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, which regulated relations between the two countries, as the future of China seemed one of ever-increasing ‘progress’ and rising prominence.<sup>2</sup>

Opposing stances aside, Kasson and Bălăceanu were both concerned with reconciling standards of international conduct with an exclusionary political consensus at home. By 1879, Romania had attracted international disapproval for its discrimination against its Jewish population, who were barred from attaining citizenship by Article Seven of the 1866 Constitution. Indeed, in the 1870s, what little attention had been given to Romania by US diplomacy carried humanitarian implications. Benjamin Franklin Peixotto (1834–1890), the American consul in Bucharest between 1871 and 1876, was sent as an extraordinary envoy, paid for by the American Jewish community rather than the government.<sup>3</sup> Eager to make up for the expulsion of Jewish traders ‘as a class’ from Civil War battlefields, president Ulysses S. Grant (1869–1877) was receptive to a growing humanitarian lobby, furnishing Peixotto with an official letter which concluded: ‘The United States, knowing no distinction of her citizens on account of religion or nativity, naturally believes in a civilization the world over which will secure the same universal views’.<sup>4</sup>

However, Romania was not merely on the receiving end of global attention, but actively drew upon global precedents in order to respond to what it perceived as foreign powers’ encroachment into its internal policies. Referencing debates on Chinese exclusion in the US Congress, Bălăceanu framed them as comparable to, and legitimizing for, Romania’s own course of action, denying the Americans a moral high ground for criticism and intervention. And he was not alone in doing so. A 1906 collection of documents on American diplomatic intervention in favour of Jewish rights included Kasson’s dispatch alongside reports in which Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire invoked the precedent set by Chinese exclusion in the US.<sup>5</sup>

That immigration developments in America, from initial stirrings on the West Coast, through protracted debates in Congress, to the promulgation of nationwide restrictions, were followed by a global audience is unsurprising. Kasson’s report was soon published, and it was seized upon by an American Jewish press unnerved by transatlantic parallels, as well as by European pamphleteers hoping for ‘an honest and complete resolution of the Jewish Question’ in Romania, who saw

<sup>1</sup>Kasson to Ewarts, Vienna, 16 February 1879, in *Jews in the Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, ed. Cyrus Adler (Baltimore: Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1906), 50–51.

<sup>2</sup>John A. Kasson, 22 March 1882, House of Representatives, *Congressional Record, Forty-Seventh Congress, First Session*, vol. 13, Part 3, 2172–3. Counter to those seeking to restrict Chinese immigration for twenty years, Kasson proposed a ten-year period. See also Edward Younger, *John A. Kasson: Politics and Diplomacy from Lincoln to McKinley* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1955), 314.

<sup>3</sup>Lloyd P. Gartner, ‘Roumania, America, and World Jewry: Consul Peixotto in Bucharest, 1870–1876’, *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1968): 24–117. See also Paul D. Quinlan, ‘Early American Relations with Romania, 1858–1914’, *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 22, no. 2 (1980): 187–207.

<sup>4</sup>Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Shoken Books, 2012), 108–116. According to Peixotto’s memoirs, his first speech before the Romanian prince also contained a similar phrase – ‘a civilization which will disseminate over the entire globe the same liberal and enlightened views’; see Benjamin F. Peixotto, ‘Story of the Roumanian Mission: Chapter XIII’, *The Menorah*, January–June 1887, 304.

<sup>5</sup>Summary of Forster to Ewarts, Sankt Petersburg, 30 December 1880, 83; Merrill to Quincy, Jerusalem, 8 May 1893, in *Jews in the Diplomatic Correspondence*, 21.

America's delay in recognizing its independence as a 'noble course of action'.<sup>6</sup> What is striking is the frequency and discursive importance of analogies between the imagological representations of Jews and Chinese, between the so-called 'Jewish Question' and 'Chinese Question' as forms of problematization, or between American legislation and antisemitic legislative proposals in Europe.

Indeed, starting in the late 1870s, politicians in Romania, Hungary, and Austria justified exclusionary policies and deflected criticism by pointing to the precedent set by an America cast as a paragon of inclusion which nevertheless chose to draw the line at Chinese immigration. This rested on a vague but compelling invocation of the United States as simultaneously liberal yet willing to legislate seemingly uncharacteristic (yet expedient) exclusionary measures.<sup>7</sup> In 1879, Romanian politicians took Congress debates on Chinese immigration restriction as their cue, as they sought to prevent the collective naturalization of the Jewish minority, whose very presence they described as an ongoing 'invasion'. In 1882, with the adoption of federal anti-Chinese legislation in the US and a dramatic increase in Jewish migration from Russia to America via Austria-Hungary, Hungarian antisemitic MPs found it timely to draw upon the American precedent to prevent the arrival or settlement of refugees. And, in 1887 and thereafter, antisemites in the Austrian parliament repeatedly and explicitly called for the implementation of laws identical to those existing in the US, to the same effect.

Intuitively, one might expect these three geographically adjacent cases to be connected by mutual exchanges, if persuaded by Michael Mann's dictum that 'very little that is transnational is global. Most influences which transcend national borders emanate not from the globe but the neighborhood'.<sup>8</sup> And yet, even as a transnational history of regional antisemitic cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe is yet to be written, the three case studies examined here were global in taking the United States as a shared point of reference. The present article aims to integrate these case studies on several levels, with reference to race and labour, 'questions' and global moments, precedent, and liberalism.

A vast literature has examined the circulation and impact of anti-Chinese laws across the British Empire, how this precedent influenced American reactions, and how, in turn, American legislation set the tone for a modern, restrictive global immigration regime.<sup>9</sup> Still, far less has been said about how such factors had impacts elsewhere, even as the racist *topos* of the 'Yellow Peril' spread across Europe and became imbricated with antisemitism.<sup>10</sup> Even the most recent calls to reframe our understanding of antisemitism as a global process draw primarily on the German case

<sup>6</sup>Tao Zhang, 'The "Jewish Messenger" in America's Chinese Exclusion Debates, 1869–1902', *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 26, no. 2 (2022): 24; 'Roumanian Diplomacy', *The Jewish Messenger*, 16 January 1880, 4; M. Herzfeld, *Die Emancipation der Juden in Rumänien oder 888 von 300.000: Marescu, Istoczy, Harr, Stöcker, Treitschke* (Vienna: Jos. Ruziczka, 1880), 1–2.

<sup>7</sup>On European cultural perceptions of the USA, see Aurelian Craiutu and Jeffrey C. Isaac, eds., *America through European Eyes: British and French Reflections on the New World from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009); Axel Körner, Nicola Miller, and Adam I.P. Smith, eds., *America Imagined: Explaining the United States in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>8</sup>Michael Mann, 'Globalization, Macro-Regions and Nation-States', in *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 28. The author would like to thank Prof Diana Mishkova for providing the reference.

<sup>9</sup>See, for instance, David C. Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); David Scott FitzGerald and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup>See Sebastian Conrad and Klaus Mühlhahn, 'Global Mobility and Nationalism: Chinese Migration and the Reterritorialization of Belonging, 1880–1910', in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 185–8; Daniel Renshaw, 'Prejudice and Paranoia: A Comparative study of Antisemitism and Sinophobia in Turn-of-the-Century Britain', *Patterns of Prejudice* 50, no. 1 (2016): 38–60.

as a point of entry for the entanglement with American Sinophobia.<sup>11</sup> This has notably included the influence of American racial restrictions on Nazi legislation, with Asian exclusion framed as proof of how ‘equality and freedom’ had been tempered, even rejected, in light of racial ‘experience’.<sup>12</sup>

By contrast, the present article makes the case that such analogies, both earlier and on a broader scale, proved ‘good to think with’, and Central and Eastern Europe was integral to this global process. In so doing, it aims to expand our knowledge of how the recurring invocation of American precedent was a significant discursive feature of emerging antisemitism across the region, even if transatlantic legislative transplants did not ultimately take root. By looking at how two comparable ‘questions’ were interpreted as part of a synchronous exclusionary global moment, this article will argue that the racial and economic grounds for anti-Chinese discrimination in the USA were translated and transposed into the language of European antisemitism, and the limits of what counted as ‘liberal’ were renegotiated in the process.

### Synchronizing ‘Questions’: Race, Economics, Precedent, and the Limits of Liberalism

To make sense of this global phenomenon in its regional and temporal confines, we must first note that comparisons had long been drawn between the Jews and the Chinese. These were most often rooted in the similar positions occupied by two diasporic peoples in global trade networks.<sup>13</sup> Referring to the Chinese as the ‘Jews of the Orient’ was an already widespread cliché by the mid-nineteenth century, with Jews and Chinese perceived as *the* quintessentially global ethnicities of the time.<sup>14</sup> As the synchronicity of growing antisemitism and Sinophobia converged into a global moment,<sup>15</sup> observers began discussing similarities between the Jewish and Chinese ‘questions’, their underlying causes, their potential resolution, and their nature, often argued to be economic at heart.

In May 1880, for instance, the Parisian Société d’Économie Politique debated the comparability of the two ‘questions’ and their common causal mechanisms, placing California and Romania in a shared global setting.<sup>16</sup> Initially intended as an intervention on the ‘Chinese question’, the discussion snowballed by framing it as ‘but one of the aspects of the interesting question of freedom of labour’, of restricting wage-depressing competition, and, abstractly, as ‘in some sense universal’. To this, replies listed other potential analogies, both in terms of concrete situations of racialized competition and of other ‘questions’, such as that of ‘machines and adequately remunerated labour’ or of ‘female labour’. The Chinese were accused of creating an economic imbalance by producing without consuming. This, in turn, fuelled debates about whether a Chinese ‘invasion’ was an economic blessing or curse, the interconnected topics of racial conquest, war, and hierarchy, and how these tied in with economic protectionism. It was by teasing apart the ‘economic’ and ‘political’ facets of the ‘question’ that the analogy with Romania’s Jews came under

<sup>11</sup>Richard E. Frankel, *Antisemitism Before the Holocaust: Re-Evaluating Antisemitic Exceptionalism in Germany and the United States, 1880–1945* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 8–29; Christian S. Davis, ‘The Rhetoric of Colonialism and Antisemitism in Imperial Germany’, in *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries: Europe and its Colonies 1880–1945*, ed. Raul Cârstocea and Éva Kovács (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2019), 53–66.

<sup>12</sup>James Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 37.

<sup>13</sup>On the two communities as ‘service nomads’, see Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup>On Jewish–Chinese comparisons, see Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); Jay Geller, *The Other Jewish Question: Identifying the Jew and Making Sense of Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), chap. 2. The author would like to thank Daniel Chirot for providing additional bibliographic material.

<sup>15</sup>On ‘global moments’ as perceived by historical actors, see Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, ‘Introduction: Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s’, in *Competing Visions*, 12–16.

<sup>16</sup>Séance du 5 mai: La question des chinois en Californie, des juifs en Roumanie, etc., *Annales de la Société d’Économie Politique* 13 (1880–1882): 70–90.

scrutiny. For economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu (1843–1916), the penetration and concentration of an ‘unassimilable element’ in countries with an underpopulated internal frontier (such as the US or colonial Algeria) or with a still-precarious international standing (such as Romania) was, humanitarianism aside, an understandable source of political discontent. To this, one further reply came from geographer Charles-Louis Vogel (1818–1906), former secretary to Romanian prince Carol I (1839–1914, r. 1866–1914). Jewish immigration to Romania, Vogel offered, was only partly comparable to that of the Chinese to California, as it was not an influx of labourers but of middlemen and usurers, a ‘proletariat’ radically different from the locals and slow to assimilate. For his part, American consul-general George Walker (1824–1888), a special guest at the debate, also found the comparison imperfect. The ‘Chinese question’ was more than a mere ‘question of labour or competition’: it was a ‘mixed question’ transcending labour and politics, one of ‘civilization’. Walker pointed to the ‘very liberal’ citizenship laws of the USA as proof that the ‘indigestible’ ‘Mongolians’ could not and would not assimilate, unlike Europeans, or the emancipated African Americans whom the Chinese threatened to replace as unfree labourers.

Reporting on the meeting in his *Revista Științifică* (Scientific Review), Romanian economist and statesman P. S. Aurelian (1833–1909), a member of the Société, noted that no real conclusion was reached, attacking ‘orthodox’ economists ‘who would rather the world perish than see what they call the laws of science be broken’. Aurelian agreed with Vogel that Leroy-Beaulieu misunderstood the Romanian ‘Jewish Question’ as one of labour competition. Neither was assimilation a solution stemming from some ‘law of mankind’, Aurelian argued: ‘Is any interbreeding (*corcire*) possible between such different races? Are we still in the age of barbarian invasions so, as to speak of assimilation through interbreeding?’ ‘National existence’, Aurelian concluded, was a matter above and beyond ‘conforming to so-called principles’, especially since ‘the Romanians were, and are, the most tolerant people in Europe’. Race and economics made Jewish assimilation a practical impossibility.<sup>17</sup>

Framed in a language we will encounter time and again, this debate is representative in several ways. Firstly, it spoke to the entangled nature of race and labour. In the USA and across the globe, Chinese (and Indian) workers were cast as unfree ‘coolies’, combining racial stereotyping and economic anxieties.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, Jewish economic competition in Europe had long been associated with *topoi* of extraction or circulation, rather than productive labour.<sup>19</sup> Common to both discourses was an insistence on the impossibility of assimilation, and race offered a key conceptual framework. Notwithstanding growing literatures on both the global logics of racial thought and on ‘race’ in Central and Eastern Europe in particular,<sup>20</sup> the nineteenth century remains a blind spot for the region. A forceful critique of static ‘comparativist’ models is that they downplay the relationality of how, in a given national context, ideas of race are historically influenced by (often long-distance) transfers, and of how the material existence and enforcement of racial orders depends on the existence of legitimizing precedents.<sup>21</sup> In a reflexive move, this

<sup>17</sup>P. S. Aurelianu, ‘Cronica științifică’ [Scientific chronicle], *Revista Științifică*, 1 May 1880, 84.

<sup>18</sup>G. Balachandran, ‘Making Coolies, (Un)making Workers: “Globalizing” Labour in the Late-19th and Early-20th Centuries’, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25, no. 3 (2011): 266–96. For America, see Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Lorenzo Costaguta, *Workers of All Colors Unite: Race and the Origins of American Socialism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2023).

<sup>19</sup>Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock’s Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>20</sup>On race and the global, see Alexander D. Barder, *Global Race War: International Politics and Racial Hierarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); James Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). On race in Central and Eastern Europe: Dušan I. Bjelić, ‘Abolition of a National Paradigm: The Case Against Benedict Anderson and Maria Todorova’s Raceless Imaginaries’, *Interventions* 24, no. 2 (2022): 239–62; Catherine Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

<sup>21</sup>David Theo Goldberg, ‘Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts on Method’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 7 (2009): 1271–82.

article focuses *relationally* on the comparativist arguments of historical actors themselves. Put simply, both scholars at the Société d'Économie Politique and politicians in Central and Eastern Europe found analogies between Jews and Chinese and their corresponding 'questions'; looking back, we may see in this the kind of *relational* connection that helped make race global.

Secondly, then, if our actors' analogies were imperfect, they were nevertheless perceived as revealing, not least if couched in a language of 'questions'. Indeed, 'questions' must be taken seriously as a way of thinking about the global: as recently explored by Holly Case, the long nineteenth century was indeed an 'age of questions', in their 'publicistic habitat' of 'timeliness and urgency', often 'bundled' together by 'querists' engaging in their quest for resolution.<sup>22</sup> In Romania, Hungary, and Austria, analogies between the two ethnicities used the 'question form' to connect geographically disparate realities and allow for their comparability. As debated in parliaments, press, and pamphlets, thinking about and through 'questions' was helpful in both localizing and internationalizing them, especially when emancipation, equality, or 'a right to belong' were concerned, and marginal actors sought the support of an ever-broader public.<sup>23</sup>

'Querists' were also interested in how 'questions' had been dealt with elsewhere as a matter of experience and precedent, sometimes allowing them to self-congratulatorily argue for the felicitous inexistence of a 'question' in a national context.<sup>24</sup> But while advocates of emancipation 'bundled' far-flung 'questions' in order to present them as both comparable and entangled, part of a single narrative of progress,<sup>25</sup> the same applied to their opponents. Imagining oneself as part of a global *exclusionary* moment meant legitimizing one's stance on the 'Jewish question' as appositely non-anachronistic, if America's solution to its 'Chinese Question' could be presented as turning the tide in favour of nativism.

If 'questions' had a universalizing impetus, this meant their resolution also had a universalizing impact, but additionally that any 'question' could rhetorically be invoked to be at the root of all others.<sup>26</sup> This was made plain by an insistence on the 'economic' or 'social' nature of the 'Jewish Question' as a means of sidestepping accusations of religious discrimination, which were feared by adversaries of emancipation as damaging their claims to being in sync with the arguments of their age. The temporal makeup of 'questions' brought together both the urgency of tackling them and their politics of (global) timeliness.

One further aspect binding together our three case studies is, as suggested above, the issue of precedent. This was a concept invoked by historical actors, though not in strictly legal terms, even if existing legislation elsewhere was presented as worth emulating. The primary law-making role of parliaments may easily be obscured by their function as political fora where ideas are circulated and localized, a locus of transfer when taken with the often global press and pamphlets referenced in debates. Still, thinking in legal terms is helpful, even if precedent was not applied *within* the bounds of a given legal system and therefore was not binding.<sup>27</sup> Precedent relies on the idea that analogous causes and conditions imply similar outcomes, even if not every analogy may function as, or allow for, a precedent. This is why arguing for the commensurability of 'questions' proved central. Though in none of the three cases did a legal transplant take place, it is nevertheless true that a criterion of prestige applied. The United States could be presented as a model worth emulating not only by virtue of imagined democratic qualities, but because of the emerging limits

<sup>22</sup>Holly Case, *The Age of Questions: Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) 5.

<sup>23</sup>Case, *Age of Questions*, 46–7.

<sup>24</sup>Case, *Age of Questions*, 58, 60–61.

<sup>25</sup>Case, *Age of Questions*, 75.

<sup>26</sup>Case, *Age of Questions*, 123.

<sup>27</sup>See, more generally, Neil Duxbury, *The Nature and Authority of Precedent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

thereof. And, if the 'New World' was the future, this was a further argument, as any transplant is inherently future-oriented.<sup>28</sup>

At this point, we must qualify the notion that the American precedent was necessarily framed as virtuous by those seeking to emulate it. The tone of its invocation was on a spectrum between the positive and an imperial *tu quoque* whereby the exclusionary practices of a powerful Western Other prevented them from passing judgement on those in the global (semi-)periphery. *Tu quoque*, better known as a logical fallacy, and a line of defence taken in international criminal tribunals by those accused of crimes against humanity, provides a useful framing device.<sup>29</sup> At its heart lies the notion that those in whose name justice is carried out are in no position to pass judgement, insofar as they, too, may be found guilty of the same actions, therefore lacking the authority that moral high ground and abstract impartiality would provide. From this rhetorical standpoint, whether America's own exclusionary policies appeared *fully* justified or principled to historical actors was beside the point; theirs was a precedent that could be invoked while positing an implicit hierarchy of civilization. If even a more progressive polity was within rights to cast out the un-civilized so as to maintain its own standard of civilization, then so could an admittedly less advanced one, without losing its own standing. Implicit here was also a condemnation of the double standards of international society, born of power imbalances – yet this was no critique of 'might makes right', so much as a desire to do unto others as still others could do.

Certainly, a *tu quoque* could carry within it an implicit admission and critique of the normatively dubious nature of a given policy. And, when voiced from a position of self-assumed relative backwardness, it also acted as an implicit form of self-criticism.<sup>30</sup> This brings us to the issue of liberalism, its limits, and the critique of liberalism as represented by America. In all three cases, references to America were doubled by the admission that Romania, Hungary, or Austria were less 'liberal' – even as antisemitic politicians felt within their rights criticizing what they saw as the dangers of excessive liberalism, humanitarianism, or cosmopolitanism. Yet, at the same time, what are we to make of the fact that in the Romanian case the ruling party preserving a legal basis for exclusion branded itself 'Liberal', or that, in both the Hungarian and the Austrian case, the main actors involved in antisemitic agitation began their careers in liberal groupings? There is a tension between what one might normatively expect to conform to 'liberal' as a label, and what the historical record offers up. This has proven to be a fruitful line of inquiry through an examination of the relationship between liberalism and empire, with its attending racial hierarchies and justifications of dominion and extraction,<sup>31</sup> and for scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe noting the limits of 'peripheral' liberalism, often in terms of its entanglement with ethnic nationalism.<sup>32</sup> Yet, accepting that mainstream liberalism was undergirded in the nineteenth century by an exclusionary and paternalistic impetus,<sup>33</sup> the self-definition of antisemites as

<sup>28</sup>George Rodrigo Bandeira Galindo, 'Legal Transplants between Time and Space', in *Entanglements in Legal History: Conceptual Approaches*, ed. Thomas Duve (Frankfurt am Main: Max Planck Institute for Legal History, 2014), 129–48.

<sup>29</sup>Katerina Borrelli, 'Between Show-Trials and Utopia: A Study of the Tu Quoque Defence', *Leiden Journal of International Law* 32, no. 2 (2019): 315–31.

<sup>30</sup>I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for this perceptive suggestion.

<sup>31</sup>For instance, Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Onur Ulas Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>32</sup>On Austria-Hungary see Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Jonathan Kwan, *Liberalism and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1861–1895* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); on Romania see Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750–1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

<sup>33</sup>Alan S. Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Political Culture of Limited Suffrage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

'liberals' remains a test-case for its degree of contestation as a label.<sup>34</sup> Positioning oneself as authorized to comment on the 'is' and the 'ought to be' of 'liberalism' allowed drawing a connection between the exclusionary limits of imperial liberalism in the US and those of national(ist) liberalism at home. Not all those involved defined themselves as liberals, even as 'liberal' remained a positive qualifier. Rather, in their *tu quoque*, a criticism of international double standards also came with a critique of 'liberalism' as upheld by those ready to condemn them. Leaning on the global precedent of how others dealt with their 'questions' along economic/racial lines meant defending a paradoxical position of clarity *and* relative backwardness from a semi-peripheral vantage point.

### 1879: Romania

In 1876, the widely read *Archives Israélites*<sup>35</sup> in Paris published a letter on behalf of a Romanian Jew who had allegedly been denied a right to reply by *Românul* (*The Romanian*), Bucharest's preeminent Liberal journal. *Românul* had, in March of that year, reported with satisfaction on the forthcoming Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of a Californian law 'closing the border to all infirm, idiotic, deaf-mute Chinese', unless two years' welfare provision was guaranteed upon entry. 'As is known by all . . . the United States are, as a rule, the world's most advanced democratic republic. Why is it, then, that when we might want to apply similar measures against vagabonds, it is the Americans themselves, protectors of a German-Jewish proletariat, who brand us as barbaric?'.<sup>36</sup> Referring to the Jews as 'vagabonds' evoked stereotypical cultural representations of rootlessness, but also referred to concrete legal policies. Since the mid-1860s, fears that Jews would, once enfranchised, substitute themselves for a native Romanian middle class, take over rural holdings, exploit the peasantry, and grow ever more numerous were mainstays of exclusionary arguments.<sup>37</sup> A growing body of legislation was used to exclude and to justify, on economic grounds, the deportation of Jewish 'proletarians' supposedly devoid of demonstrable capital, and, as non-Christians, Jews were barred from attaining citizenship as per Article Seven of the Constitution of 1866.<sup>38</sup> This singled out Romania as a target for diplomatic pressure and condemnation by an international public in an age of emerging humanitarianism, and cast into question the credentials of the young Romanian state as a 'civilized' polity.<sup>39</sup> Such measures, in fact, had also been the motive behind American involvement through Peixotto's consular mission and – given his publication of a German-language pro-Jewish newspaper in Bucharest, but also a suspicion that Yiddish-speaking Jews acted as vanguards of pan-German encroachment in Romania – the reason why *Românul* could praise the US in the abstract *and* attack them in practice.

<sup>34</sup>Lisa Moses Leff, 'Liberalism and Antisemitism: A Reassessment from the Peripheries', in *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History*, ed. Abigail Green and Simon Levis Sullam (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) 23–45.

<sup>35</sup>On the place of the 'Archives' within broader Jewish press networks, see Heidi Knörzer, 'La presse juive, espace politique transnational entre la France et l'Allemagne: le cas des Archives israélites et de l'Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums (1840–1900)', *Archives Juives* 66, no. 2 (2013): 81–96.

<sup>36</sup>'Felurimi' [Varia], *Românul*, 11 March 1876, 223.

<sup>37</sup>On antisemitism in nineteenth century Romania, see Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România (1866–1919): de la excludere la emancipare* [Romanian Jews, 1866–1919: From exclusion to emancipation] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2009); Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew: Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); William A. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991); Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities*.

<sup>38</sup>Silvia Marton, *La construction politique de la nation: la nation dans les débats du Parlement de la Roumanie, (1866–1871)* (Iasi: Institutul European, 2009).

<sup>39</sup>See Abigail Green, 'From Protection to Humanitarian Intervention? Enforcing Jewish Rights in Romania and Morocco around 1880', in *The Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas and Practice from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Fabian Klose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 142–61; Abigail Green, 'Intervening in the Jewish Question, 1840–1878', in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trimm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139–59; Sam Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews: Britain and Eastern Europe's 'Jewish Question', 1867–1925* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

The case mentioned by *Românulă* was likely *Chy Lung v. Freeman*, one not primarily concerning disability, but triggered by a Californian statute on the immigration of 'lewd and debauched women'. Its contestation set a precedent for the authority of the federal government in immigration enforcement.<sup>40</sup> But neither the unnamed author in *Românulă*, nor J. Julosky, seeking redress in the pages of the *Archives Israélites*, were particularly concerned with this. Rather, as Julosky countered, Romanian laws were not directed against 'vagabonds', but Jews in general, especially offensive since a 'Jewish proletariat' did not, to his mind, exist. Julosky cited the community's philanthropic involvement across ethnic lines as proof of its integration and standing in a country 'emancipated by the blood of thousands of Jewish, French, English, Italian soldiers, fallen in the Crimean War; whereas I know not of one Romanian to have taken part in that war'.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, while the autonomy of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, united as of 1859, was acknowledged and guaranteed by European powers, their neutrality (and their occupation, first by the Russians, then by the Hapsburgs) during the war allowed for framing them as passive beneficiaries of (partial) emancipation, a deliberately provocative retort.

All of this became more pressing in the wake of the 1878 Congress of Berlin. After the last of the Russo-Turkish wars, the independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro (as well as the autonomy of a new Bulgarian state) were rendered conditional upon the granting of equal citizenship to their inhabitants, irrespective of religious affiliation. This reopening of the 'Eastern question' thus brought with it entanglements with other 'questions'.<sup>42</sup> In Romania, legislative debates were fuelled by uproar over the involvement of European powers and the international Jewish lobby in Berlin,<sup>43</sup> while a sense of injustice over the loss of Southern Bessarabia to Russia and the (initially unattractive) award of the multi-ethnic Ottoman province of Dobruja as compensation.

By 1879, the threat of diplomatic isolation was palpable, yet no amendment offering full political and civil equality to Romania's Jewish minority was acceptable to parliament, now a constitutional assembly. In the Chamber of Deputies debate of 25 February, prime minister I. C. Brătianu (1821–1891), reviled by the international Jewish community for his role in administrative and legal persecution, intervened to argue that the 'Jewish question' in Europe had remained largely unsolvable, the continent having for centuries grappled with it. This only offered a guiding principle rather than a resolution to be emulated by Romania, side-tracked by its historical role as a bulwark of Europe against Oriental expansion. It was unreasonable for Europe to demand, Brătianu protested, that half a million Jews be instantly assimilated, when even their elites, aside a few praiseworthy exceptions, had not been so already. The horizon of expectation for this transformation was minimally half a century away, just as the 'Jewish question' had not existed in 1848, when Brătianu and fellow revolutionaries had proclaimed the emancipation of the (few, Sephardi) Wallachian Jews. It was in Moldavia that the policy of 'colonizing' (Ashkenazi) Jews on boyars' lands for the establishment of fairs and towns had first occasioned the emergence of the 'question'.<sup>44</sup> Brătianu's politics of temporal and civilizational lag framed Romania as simultaneously delayed in its development, yet not far behind Europe in the grand scheme of

<sup>40</sup>See Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) 184. On disability and immigration laws, see Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland, eds., *Migration, Health and Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013). On gender and 'coolie labour', see Heidi Tinsman, 'Freeing Chinese Men on the *Maria Luz*: Gender and the Latin American Coolie Trade', *Journal of Global History*, Published online, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S174002282300027X>.

<sup>41</sup>'Correspondances particulières de l'étranger', *Archives Israélites*, 15 April 1876, 249–50.

<sup>42</sup>Jean-Michel Johnston and Oded Y. Steinberg, 'Armenians, Jews, and Humanitarianism in the "Age of Questions", 1830–1900', *The Historical Journal* 6, no. 1 (2023): 72–100.

<sup>43</sup>See Carsten Wilke, 'Competitive Advocacy: The Romanian Committee of Berlin and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1872–1878', *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 15 (2016): 131–55.

<sup>44</sup>I. C. Brătianu, Chamber of Deputies, 25 February 1879, *Monitorul Oficial* [Official gazette] (henceforth *MOF*), 1284–7. See also Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher, eds., *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism* (New York: Berghahn, 2019).

emancipation, while Romanian Jews were themselves lagging in terms of ‘assimilation’, a process which came with its slower tempo of socio-cultural unfolding. This ‘question’, for Brătianu, could not be ‘cut like a Gordian knot’: the temporalities of its resolution were geographically uneven and blurred.<sup>45</sup>

Brătianu’s invocation of a ‘bulwark myth’, highlighting Romania’s historical mission in Europe and implying a corresponding debt of gratitude and/or patience in return, was hardly singular. To Romanian MPs, the ‘Jewish invasion’ was only the latest (and supposedly gravest) historical cataclysm befalling the country, the Jews merely ‘new barbarians, seeking to overrun the country *en masse*’.<sup>46</sup> Still, self-assumed relative backwardness was not incompatible with claims of progress, as expounded in a marathon speech by MP George Missail (1835–1906) in the lower chamber of the Romanian parliament on 7 March. Had not Romania abolished both ‘white slavery’ by putting an end to serfdom in 1746, before France, and ‘black slavery’ by emancipating the Roma in 1854, before America or the Ottoman Empire, ‘and all of this without Europe butting in?’<sup>47</sup>

Part of an array of references to foreign pamphlets and press, the speaker referenced an Istanbul correspondent to the *Journal des Débats*<sup>48</sup> stating in late 1878 that ‘the Chinese are treated more harshly still in the United States’ than Romanian Jews, ‘a measure doubtless contrary to pure morality, but salutary for the interests of the majority’.<sup>49</sup> Missail then pointed to state laws in America, such as New Hampshire’s recently repealed provision against Catholics holding office, or New York’s own prohibition against foreigners owning land, neither of which had resulted in diplomatic isolation. However, it seemed, ‘the United States are far away, whereas Romania is here, between hammer and anvil, in the middle of Europe’: geographical distance could make such analogies as inconsequential as they were hoped to be rhetorically revealing. Conversely, Missail attacked comparisons between the abolition of slavery in the American South and Jewish emancipation, lamenting the state of whites now ‘literally overrun and exploited by an ignorant and greedy populace’.<sup>50</sup>

Missail’s racist reference to African-American emancipation, as well as to the abolition of Roma slavery, may have been prompted by the analogies made by the Alliance Israélite Universelle throughout the 1860s, placing its lobbying efforts within a broader frame of precedent. As leader of the AIU, Adolphe Crémieux (1796–1880) had visited Bucharest in the summer of 1866, unsuccessfully attempting to persuade Romania to enshrine Jewish equality in the constitution. Crémieux made use of the analogy, even if now-emancipated Blacks in the French colonies or America were cast as civilizationally inferior, much as East European or Oriental Jews were also perceived by both him and the Romanians.<sup>51</sup> For Missail, this transatlantic to-and-fro of selective, racialized praise and blame was symptomatic of how America could be envied for what it got away with. For Crémieux, it spoke to the teleologies of emancipation – the precedents drawn from American experience were open to competitive reinterpretation in Europe.

After a rant against the power of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Missail bid his audience to follow him across the Atlantic, ‘emigrating to America on the ark of my convictions, in order to gather new arguments from California. Well! What do we find there? The same causes occasioning

<sup>45</sup>For the ‘Gordian knot’ metaphor, see Case, *Age of Questions*, 194.

<sup>46</sup>For instance: P. Vioreanu, Senate, 27 February 1879, *MOF*, 1413–16.

<sup>47</sup>George Missail, Chamber of Deputies, 7 March 1879, *MOF*, 1615.

<sup>48</sup>Despite a declining print-run, the *Journal* remained one of a select group of ‘feuilles de qualité’; see Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral, and Fernand Terrou, *Histoire générale de la presse française: Tome 3, de 1871 à 1940* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 208–10, 316.

<sup>49</sup>Missail, *MOF*, 1625–6; *Journal des Débats*, 30 November 1878, 2–3. The quote referenced by Missail had also been recently published in the Conservative newspaper *Timpul* (The Times), perhaps his immediate source of reference; see *Timpul*, 24 November 1878, 1.

<sup>50</sup>Missail, *MOF*, 1628.

<sup>51</sup>Noémie Duhaut, ‘“A French Jew Emancipated the Blacks”: Discursive Strategies of French Jews in the Age of Transnational Emancipations’, *French Historical Studies* 64, no. 4 (2021): 645–74.

the same effects as in our old Europe. I therefore want to speak of the Chinese invasion that, in only a short amount of time, has terrified fifty million Americans'.<sup>52</sup> Here, Missail drew on the authority of an article from the *Révue des Deux Mondes*,<sup>53</sup> examining Denis Kearney's (1847–1907) 'socialist' anti-Chinese agitation in California and its intersecting 'questions' of race and labour. Authored by Charles-Victor Crosnier de Varigny (1829–1899) in late 1878, it began its narrative in a broader global setting, quoting an apocryphal intervention on the 'Asiatic question' by Pyotr Andreyevich Shuvalov (1827–1889) at the Congress of Berlin. The Russian diplomat had allegedly warned against the danger posed to the world by 'hundreds of millions of human beings, on the day that they shall adopt the weapons of a civilization they detest'.<sup>54</sup> The immediate context of Shuvalov's supposed warning may have been the arrival of British Indian troops to Malta, an unprecedented military deployment of the colonial/racial Other in Europe.<sup>55</sup> However, in the article, Shuvalov's statement reframed the American 'Chinese question' as emblematic of more than the 'Yellow Peril', but of irreducible civilizational and racial conflict between 'whites' and all others.

On both global and national scales, analogous anxieties drew authority from the same sources: De Varigny's text was simultaneously referenced in the United States Congress in early 1879. The 'great French magazine[s]' warnings of California becoming a 'Chinese colony' by the end of the century were quoted by Californian senator Aaron A. Sargent (1827–1877) and representative Horace Davis (1831–1916) in debates on restricting Chinese immigration, intently followed by the public across the Atlantic.<sup>56</sup> Yet, going full circle, the *Journal des Débats* mentioned Romania's treatment of the Jews in a report on the presidential veto that had killed the congressional bill, as a parallel drawn by a New York congressman between Old World Judeophobia and West Coast Sinophobia.<sup>57</sup> In turn, this elicited a response on the part of P. S. Aurelian, wondering what Peixotto, an erstwhile advocate of Jewish immigration from Romania to America, might now think of the American anti-Chinese movement.<sup>58</sup> Mediated through the French press in its transatlantic reach, this circuit of news and talking-points reinforced synchronicity and analogy, even when implications varied.

In his final statement, Missail doubled down on the rhetorical invocation of the Americans. In his view, even 'without concluding whether [the US] case is identical to [the Romanians]', 'this most liberal, tolerant, and cosmopolitan of peoples' was nevertheless alarmed by an 'invasion' proportionally amounting to only a third of Romania's purported half a million Jews 'among a nation only four million strong, and a barely established one, at that'. Missail summed up his

<sup>52</sup>Missail, *MOF*, 1636.

<sup>53</sup>As the title of the *Révue* suggests, its geographic scope was trans-Atlantic, and its readership was global, with some 25,000 copies per issue circulated in the 1870s; see Thomas Loué, 'Un modèle matriciel: les revues de culture générale', in *La belle époque des revues, 1880–1914*, ed. Jacqueline Puet-Despatin, Michel Leymarie, and Jean-Yves Mollier (Paris: Éditions de l'IMEC, 2002), 59. On its broader impact as a model, see Eliana de Freitas Dutra, 'The Revue des Deux Mondes in the Context of Transatlantic Exchanges', in *The Cultural Revolution of the Nineteenth Century: Theatre, the Book-Trade and Reading in the Transatlantic World*, eds. Márcia Abreu and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 121–39.

<sup>54</sup>Charles de Varigny, 'L'invasion chinoise et le socialisme aux États-Unis', *Révue des Deux Mondes*, 1 October 1878, 589–613.

<sup>55</sup>The rumour was explicitly connected to the presence of Indian troops in the press; see 'Civilisation in Danger', *New-York Tribune*, 3 July 1878, 1. That Shuvalov was greatly concerned with troops in Malta is reflected in a dispatch to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, urging him not to 'deduce war from this'; see R. W. Seton-Watson, 'Russo-British Relations, 1875–1878: 2nd Series. XII. The Détente between Lord Salisbury and Count Shuvalov (April 1878)', *Slavonic and East European Review* 28 (1950): 510. See also John C. Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870–1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 48–50.

<sup>56</sup>Aaron A. Sargent, Senate, 13 February 1879, *Congressional Record, Forty-Fifth Congress, Third Session*, vol. 8, Part 2, 1266; Horace Davis, House of Representatives, 28 January 1879, *Congressional Record, Forty-Fifth Congress, Third Session*, vol. 8, Part 3, Appendix, 30.

<sup>57</sup>Ernest Dottain in *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 17 March 1879, 1–2. For the quote cited (but misattributed) by Dottain see Stanley Matthews, Senate, 13 February 1879, *Congressional Record, Forty-Fifth Congress, Third Session*, vol. 8, Part 2, 1275. On the debates and veto, see Ari Hoogenboom, *Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 387–91.

<sup>58</sup>P. S. Aurelian, 'Cronica Științifică' [Scientific chronicle], *Revista Științifică*, 1 March 1879, 18–19.

diatribe in racial terms in one parting salvo, claiming that a conspiracy was directed against Romania and its historical/racial mission in the Orient:

In the name of which right does Europe demand that tolerant Romania be more hospitable and liberal than the entire world? And who can host in their home more guests than there is room for, without the masters themselves being thrown out? Or is the unity and homogeneity of this Latin island so upsetting that it calls out for destruction?<sup>59</sup>

In the following months, the campaign for the recognition of Romania's independence was supported by a number of pamphlets which also often pointed to the American precedent of exclusion. Most notable was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vasile Boerescu (1830–1883), Romania's foremost expert on international law,<sup>60</sup> who embarked on a grand tour, including Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Dieppe (where he met with the British Foreign Secretary), and Paris, where he anonymously published a pamphlet on 28 August. Beginning on a conciliatory tone, the author acknowledged that Romanians wanted 'to enter the great family of European states, understanding the need to introduce to their public law principles adopted today by all modern, civilized states, so as to effortlessly conform to the spirit of the century'.<sup>61</sup> But, he pleaded, the only solution that parliament might deem acceptable would be one 'reconciling the exigencies of European diplomacy with the economic and national interests of the Romanian people'.<sup>62</sup>

The scope of Boerescu's comparisons was broader than a fixation on America. Algeria, with its enfranchised Jewish minority and non-citizen Arab majority was a useful foil for describing the dangers of wholesale emancipation, as inter-ethnic strife was now deemed the rule there as a consequence of the Crémieux Decree of 1870.<sup>63</sup> Once again, the relative recency of Jewish emancipation in 'civilized' countries could also be turned against them. Boerescu strategically presented Romania as a pupil not to be refused 'the benefit of experience acquired by its elders in civilization and practice'. If talk of reverting to an *individual* accession to citizenship came soon after collective emancipation in Algeria, this was vindication enough for Romania's own projected policies,<sup>64</sup> and an attack against Crémieux, a widely unpopular figure in Romania. But Boerescu went further: Portugal, Norway, Sweden, and Bavaria still placed some restrictions on Jews' political rights, just as France itself was moving to restrict the influence of 'religious congregations', especially the Jesuits.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, the 'somewhat analogous question' of the Chinese on America's West Coast was placed not only in relation to the 'Jewish question' in Romania, but also with an incipient iteration thereof on the East Coast: 'why, then, are general restrictive measures taken by Romania against all foreigners seen more negatively than the intolerant dispositions already in place against the Chinese in America?'.<sup>66</sup> The attitude of *tu quoque* behind Boerescu's reasoning could not have been clearer, a fact not lost on the French press. Some journalists welcomed his Algerian comparison, some reacted against it, some qualified it by extolling the merits of the "eminently civilizing regime" that had supposedly managed to rapidly remould the Jewish community there.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Missail, *MOF*, 1639.

<sup>60</sup>On Boerescu's earlier career, see Andrei Dan Sorescu, 'National History as a History of Compacts: Jus Publicum Europaeum and Suzerainty in Romania in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *East Central Europe* 45, no. 1 (2018): 63–93.

<sup>61</sup>[Vasile Boerescu], *Mémoire sur la revision de l'Article 7 de la Constitution roumaine* (Paris: E. Briere, 1879), 8.

<sup>62</sup>[Boerescu], *Mémoire sur la revision*, 10.

<sup>63</sup>See Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>64</sup>[Boerescu], *Mémoire sur la revision*, 10–13. For the legislative proposal in favour of abrogating the Crémieux Decree, see *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 13 August 1871, 2671–2.

<sup>65</sup>[Boerescu], *Mémoire sur la revision*, 15–16, 22.

<sup>66</sup>[Boerescu], *Mémoire sur la revision*, 21–22.

<sup>67</sup>'La Question Israélite en Roumanie', *Le Constitutionnel*, 13 September 1879, 1–2; Daniel [pseud.], 'Boeresco-Loriquet', *L'Événement*, 15 September 1879, 1–2; 'Le mémoire de M. Boeresco', *La Liberté*, 3 September 1879, 1.

In Bucharest, analogy again made its appearance in the decisive parliamentary session of autumn 1879. As part of a litany of *tu quoques*, D. Rosetti-Tețcanu (1853–1897), one of the ‘non-revisionists’ aiming to block any attempt at altering the constitution, drew upon the economic precedent of how ‘in America Chinese workers are thrown into the sea under the pretext that they deprive the Americans of their daily bread’. ‘Future Romania’, he argued on the other hand, would have surely remained preferable to ‘eternal Russia’ to Bessarabia’s Jews upon the region’s (re-)annexation by Russia, an assertion of relative liberalism.<sup>68</sup> Weeks later, fellow ‘non-revisionist’, jurist Nicolae Blaramberg (1837–1896), conjured up the menacing image of a Jewish ‘invasion’ – ‘not taking the frank and brutal form of bayonets, but the cowardly, disguised, deceitful form of hospitality’ – and again billed the American precedent as fundamentally economic. ‘That cosmopolitan and liberal people *par excellence*’, Blaramberg pleaded, had even violated the Burlingame Treaty as a measure of self-defence. He went on to reference a report on Californian legislation in the *Courrier des États-Unis* so as to persuade his audience of ‘the degree of identity between the American case and the Chinese, and ours with the Jews’. The ‘excessive sobriety’ of both the Chinese and the Jews, Blaramberg concluded his racial-economic contestation of the limits of liberalism, ran against the maxim that ‘an individual producing without consuming will to some degree perturb the economic equilibrium of a given society, and be harmful to it’.<sup>69</sup> As the Romanian parliament moved to vote for the individual, case-by-case enfranchisement of the country’s Jewish population in late 1879, the continued insistence on the economic aspect of the ‘Jewish question’ allowed for its trans-hemispheric retranslation.

## 1882: Hungary

Unlike in Romania, in Hungary, Jewish emancipation was a mostly settled issue by 1867, as the community was exceptionally well-aculturated, especially in urban areas.<sup>70</sup> Yet antisemitism began to make itself felt in the mid-1870s, when Győző Istóczy (1842–1915), found it a convenient means of increasing his political visibility.<sup>71</sup> Though initially a marginal liberal MP, Istóczy managed to attract the support of other parliamentarians, and, by the mid-1880s, to briefly establish a party. This was in no small part due to events in 1881–1882. A mass emigration movement brought Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms and precarity in Russia to Austria-Hungary, on their way to the US.<sup>72</sup> As this generated a humanitarian crisis on the empire’s eastern border, Istóczy capitalized on growing public anxiety. Fanning the flames of anti-Jewish sentiment around Pesach, following the disappearance and death of a young woman in the town of Tiszaeszlár, Istóczy and his associates framed the event as a ritual murder. This gave way to mass hysteria and violence, and to a renewed interest in blood libel as an accusation against the Jews.<sup>73</sup>

Against this backdrop, Istóczy and his cohort seized upon developments across the Atlantic, just as the Romanians had some three years earlier. In fact, the main publication of the Hungarian

<sup>68</sup>D. Rosetti-Tețcanu, Chamber of Deputies, 10 September 1879, *MOF*, 5897–8.

<sup>69</sup>Nicolae Blaramberg, Chamber of Deputies, 2 October 1879, *MOF*, 6415–17. On the *Courrier* as trans-Atlantic vector for information diffusion, see Guillaume Pinson, ‘Les journaux francophones au dix-neuvième siècle: Entre enjeux locaux et perspective globale’, *French Politics, Culture & Society* 35, no. 1 (2017): 7–18.

<sup>70</sup>On Jewish emancipation and antisemitism in Hungary, see Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Homes & Meier, 1999); Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 1996; Judit Kubinszky, *Politikai antiszemitizmus Magyarországon, 1875–1890* [Political Antisemitism in Hungary, 1875–1890] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1975). For a comparison with Romania, see Raul Cârstocea, ‘Uneasy Twins? The Entangled Histories of Jewish Emancipation and anti-Semitism in Romania and Hungary, 1866–1913’, *Slovo* 21, no. 2 (2009): 64–85.

<sup>71</sup>Andrew Handler, *An Early Blueprint for Zionism: Győző Istóczy’s Political anti-Semitism* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989).

<sup>72</sup>See John D. Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Börries Kuzmany, *Brody: A Galician Border City in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), chap. 7.

<sup>73</sup>Andrew Handler, *Blood Libel at Tiszaeszlár* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1980).

antisemitic movement, the monthly *12 Röpirat* (Twelve Pamphlets), had already shown an interest in what it saw as the force of American precedent beginning with its first issue, on 15 October 1880. There, a report on a would-be antisemitic congress in Saratoga, ‘sent by a friend of our cause in Illinois’, was taken as proof of America’s ‘bitterness’ against the Jews, as the editorial introduction trumpeted.<sup>74</sup> However, the Hungarians had unwittingly, if enthusiastically, translated a satirical piece, by British-American journalist and politician Harry Hananel Marks (1855–1916). No ‘American Society for the Suppression of the Jewish Race’ had ever been founded, nor any congress had been held. Rather, Marks’ pamphlet, *Down with the Jews!*, aimed to expose the extremism of antisemitic talking-points, ramping them up beyond the presumable limits of the plausible, and framing them as a list of congress resolutions, among which featured:

That the severest measures are needed to destroy the blighting effects of the ever increasing Jewish influence all over the world and, therefore, we are opposed to the enforcement of Article VII of the Treaty of Berlin guaranteeing the Jews of Roumania equal rights with Christians. We are unalterably opposed to the further emancipation of the Jewish people and we appeal to all Christian peoples to aid us in restoring the Ghetto, the Inquisition and their agencies for the extermination of the Jews.<sup>75</sup>

Ironically, it was both Marks and the Hungarians that had missed a punchline. What the former had hoped would be absurd in its extremism was used by the latter as proof of how a global movement and moment were in the making. After all, the supposed circulation of the text itself, not plucked from the flows of the global press, but transmitted within a thin yet nonetheless transatlantic network of like-minded individuals, reinforced this perception.

By the summer of 1882, Hungary’s parliamentary antisemitic contingent had managed to inflame public opinion by making Tiszaeszlár the issue of the day, drawing strength from a petitionary movement against Jewish immigration. Already in mid-May, the movement’s monthly publication set the stage for the use of analogies between the ‘Chinese’ and ‘Jewish question’, conjuring up a web of connections now woven between Russia, the United States, and Austria-Hungary by the global flux of Jewish migration. Even as (Austria-)Hungary was to be defended, the Tsarist Empire was within sovereign rights to pursue its anti-Jewish policies; the principle of intervention, recently invoked by US, was rejected.<sup>76</sup> Besides, one article went on, neither the American president nor the foreign secretary ‘ought forget that, while there is no official Jewish question in America today, there *is* an official Chinese question’.<sup>77</sup> In April, Congress had voted the Chinese Exclusion Act, doubled by renewed agitation in California – ‘and such “religious and racial intolerance” is professed in the freest state in the world!’. The article then took a now-familiar turn, by applauding the virtues of the laborious Chinese, whose only fault was that of depressing wages,

an eminently cultured people [*kulturnép*] when contrasted to that enemy of all culture, the Jew. The nation that persecutes such a cultured people therefore is least of all within rights to protest the policy pursued by other states against the Jewish leech-race. For, if Sinophobia is a legitimate principle, then antisemitism is a hundred times more so. Let America first set its own house in order! Besides, it may well be that the US government is only interested in the fate of the Russian Jews because it is beginning to resent the blessings of their immigration.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> ‘Egy amerikai zsidóellenes congressus’ [An American Anti-Jewish Congress], *12 Röpirat*, 15 October 1880, 29–34.

<sup>75</sup> Harry H. Marks, ‘Down with the Jews!’, *American Jewish Archives* 26, no. 1 (1964): 1–8.

<sup>76</sup> See Ann E. Healy, ‘Tsarist Anti-Semitism and Russian-American Relations’, *Slavic Review* 42, no. 3 (1983): 408–25.

<sup>77</sup> ‘A zsidó harctérről: Havi szemle’ [From the Jewish Battlefield. Monthly Dispatch], *12 Röpirat*, 15 May 1882, 10–11.

<sup>78</sup> ‘A zsidó harctérről: Havi szemle.’

That the two ‘questions’ were comparable enough to bolster a *tu quoque* against intervention was not undermined by this ad-hoc hierarchy between the contingent economic evils of Chinese economic presence and the absolute evil of the Jews *qua* anti-Kulturvolk.

In parliament, the global scope of Jewish migration was soon recast in even starker terms, with a peculiar temporal twist. Although Budapest could not, in fact, legislate empire-wide immigration restriction, this was an opportunity for publicity, especially if packaged with the removal of the existing Jewish population. Istóczy, already a known proponent of the Jewish settlement of Ottoman Palestine, seized upon the hesitancy of Austro-Hungarian Jews vis-à-vis the budding proto-Zionist colonization movement. While a Jewish congress in Vienna had recently reiterated an indefinitely deferred commitment to postponing any such plans until the arrival of the Messiah,<sup>79</sup> Istóczy explicitly counterposed a theory of timeliness – that of the *Zeitgeist* (*korszellem*):

The Messiah is already here, in the form of the *Zeitgeist*. [Hilarity.] Yes, this Messiah is the *Zeitgeist* that the Jews themselves have been creating in Europe for some thirty years, but which has now suddenly turned against them, and – make no mistake – so thoroughly and irreversibly that they have no prospect of seizing it again. In a few years they will have played their part among European peoples.

The sudden anachronism of Jewish presence was not, therefore, absolute, insofar as it was site-specific: Palestine was a temporal and spatial solution. Following Istóczy’s logic, the supposed plan of transforming Europe into a ‘Jewish aristocratic universal republic’ was not only geographically out of place. It also ran counter to the increasingly normative narrative of nation-state-centric progress: ‘are the Jewish people the only ones who lack the pride of striving for an independent state?’. Of course, the way this was articulated left room for ambiguity. Not only was Hungary itself one half of a composite imperial formation rather than an independent state, but ‘Europe’ and ‘Christendom’ equally played a part in Istóczy’s diatribe as superordinate categories. And this continental scale, in turn, allowed him to pivot toward inter-continental analogies: ‘If, in America, Monroe’s watchword is “America for the Americans!”’, so, too, in Europe, it shall be “Europe for the Christian peoples!”. And, just as the days of Islam are numbered in Europe, so, too, will there be no more room for the people of the Talmud’.<sup>80</sup> Here, the other, more traditionally anachronistic Other of Europe was called upon, linking the ‘Eastern question’ of Ottoman dissolution to the ‘Jewish question’, its ‘definite and radical solution’ involving a diplomatic intervention in Istanbul in favour of colonizing Palestine. As Holly Case powerfully notes, the search for a ‘final solution’ to the ‘Jewish question’ as an ‘ontological’ one, of a people’s existence and ‘essence’, would become increasingly prominent by the end of the century.<sup>81</sup>

If Istóczy insisted on ‘definitiveness’, this meant that the partial emigration of Russian Jews to America was only ‘a temporary solution’. What then, he wondered, if a Jewish ‘proletariat’ from across Eastern Europe would leave *en masse*? The ‘question’ was now posed by Istóczy on a global scale, and, again, based on precedent and on the limits of liberalism:

The legislature of the practical-minded American people would soon enact an anti-Jewish bill, just as it enacted an anti-Chinese bill only a few weeks ago; and, just as an anti-Chinese alliance has already been formed in California to remove the Chinese from the territory of the United States by force, so, too, an anti-Jewish alliance could quite easily be formed in free

<sup>79</sup>On the temporalities of Zionism versus Messianism, see Chaim I. Waxman, ‘Messianism, Zionism, and the State of Israel’, *Modern Judaism* 7, no. 2 (1987): 175–92; Eyal Chowers, ‘Time in Zionism: The Life and Afterlife of a Temporal Revolution’, *Political Theory* 26, no. 5 (1998): 652–85.

<sup>80</sup>Győző Istóczy, 9 June 1882, *Országgyűlés. Képviselőházának naplója* (Parliament. Journal of the Chamber of Deputies) (henceforth OKN), vol. 6, 261.

<sup>81</sup>Case, *Age of Questions*, 117–19.

America for a similar purpose. For, the American people, for all their open-mindedness and religious tolerance, have not yet lost their common sense to sick pseudo-humanist phraseology and *humbug* [in the original]. And, as there is no state outside of North America [*sic*] willing to receive even part of the Jewish people now emigrating from Eastern Europe, the Jews have no other choice, and as a nation can have no other ideal than the return to their ancient homeland.<sup>82</sup>

In an age of ever-increasing mobility, the antisemites' need for certainty in solving the 'Jewish question' made for an ever-shrinking mental map of possibility. What remained contested was the nature of liberalism and its limits, as 'humbug' could not bear too heavy a conceptual load. This was tackled later the same day by Lajos Hentaller (1852–1912), a supporter of émigré revolutionary Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894). Whereas Kossuth was a symbol of the global liberal-democratic canon, and condemned antisemitic violence in the wake of Tiszaeszlár,<sup>83</sup> Hentaller threw in his lot with Istóczy, defending immigration restriction as compatible with the priorities of national self-preservation through a comparison between America's Chinese and Russian Jews:

It is precisely the principles of humanism and liberalism that I cannot reconcile with the idea of letting Jews immigrate from Russia into our country, at a time when our own countrymen are emigrating *en masse* because of poverty. I cannot reconcile the principles of true humanism, liberalism, with trying to help emigrants from a foreign country, when it is precisely because of bad government that we are forced to reject aid to our own countrymen, who are crying out for help.<sup>84</sup>

The synergy between nationalism and 'liberalism' thus pre-empted cosmopolitan sympathies, prioritizing one's in-group. Acknowledging backwardness as part of his *tu quoque*, Hentaller insisted that America, as a republican state more institutionally 'humane and liberal than our monarchical form of government', had curtailed Chinese immigration. Hentaller lauded the Chinese for their frugality, 'useful as producers, but not as consumers. The Russian Jew is the opposite'. Here again, racialized economics resurfaced as a means of articulating the limits of liberalism, both at home and abroad. As Hentaller grimly concluded, 'he who would now erect a barrier against plague and pestilence would not err against humanism and liberalism in the least'.<sup>85</sup> Whatever these concepts were taken to encapsulate, exclusion by way of immigration restriction was taken to fortify, rather than contradict them.

Finally, one particularly interesting instance in which Chinese exclusion served as a source for analogy was the first international antisemitic congress, held in Dresden, in September 1882.<sup>86</sup> Reuniting German, Austrian, and Hungarian delegates, its manifesto 'to the Christian peoples of Europe' was authored by Istóczy. Its closing address, at which a painting depicting the victim of Tiszaeszlár was unveiled, was held by MP Géza Ónody (1848–1923), Istóczy's close associate and the main agitator responsible for the moral panic surrounding the murder trial. Indeed, the importance of the congress, though overlooked in hindsight, lay with the internationalization of the Tiszaeszlár affair and dissemination of blood libel as a talking-point for the budding antisemitic movement across Europe.<sup>87</sup> Ónody depicted Tiszaeszlár – his hometown – as a place overrun by Galician Jews

<sup>82</sup>Istóczy, 9 June 1882, *OKN*, vol. 6, 261–2.

<sup>83</sup>Handler, *An Early Blueprint for Zionism*, 102–5.

<sup>84</sup>Lajos Hentaller, 9 June 1882, *OKN*, vol. 6, 268.

<sup>85</sup>Lajos Hentaller, 9 June 1882, *OKN*, vol. 6, 268.

<sup>86</sup>C. C. Aronsfeld, 'The First Anti-Semitic International 1882–83', *Immigrants & Minorities* 4, no. 1 (1985): 64–75; Ulrich Wyrwa, 'Die Internationalen Antijüdischen Kongresse von 1882 und 1883 in Dresden und Chemnitz Zum Antisemitismus als europäischer Bewegung', [www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1481](http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1481).

<sup>87</sup>See Hillel J. Kieval, *Blood Inscriptions: Science, Modernity, and Ritual Murder at Europe's Fin de Siècle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), chap. 3.

incapable of adapting to 'the great laws of European cultural life'. It was a 'Mecca' for them on account of its famous rabbis, which was taken as circumstantial evidence of their involvement in the ritual murder and of a cabal stretching across the empire. A 'duty of self-defence' was therefore invoked, so as to 'confine [the Jews], both socially and legislatively, within the limits permitted and even demanded by common sense, through the legal restrictions already applied in a precedent-setting way by the practical Americans to the Chinese'.<sup>88</sup> This was the desired power of precedent, based on a vague if compelling image of America, before an international audience to whom the example was presumed to be either familiar, or instantly persuasive. For both Istóczy and Ónody, 'common sense' was not in short supply across the Atlantic: the 'humbug' of tolerance could be done away with now that the Americans had shown the way.

### 1887: Austria

The rise of antisemitism in *fin-de-siècle* Austria represented, as in Hungary, the erosion of a seemingly solid consensus on the legal inclusion of the Jewish community. This was most visible in Vienna, where growing numbers attracted the rancour of politicians such as Georg Ritter von Schönerer (1842–1921) and Karl Lueger (1844–1910). That American legislation was invoked as an exclusionary precedent in late nineteenth century Austria is perhaps the (relatively) best-known example of the three cases that this study has set out to examine.<sup>89</sup> Yet this acknowledgement of transatlantic emulation has thus far been restricted to one particular event: a failed proposal fielded to the lower chamber of the imperial parliament on 27 May 1887 by a group led by Schönerer, an ex-liberal who had grown to embrace pan-Germanism and racial antisemitism. This was a call for 'legal protection measures for the honest working classes', German or otherwise (though 'Aryan' and 'Christian' nonetheless), faced with the supposedly ever-augmenting demographic and economic predominance of the Jews. The proposal thus demanded an 'antisemitic law with strict provisions against the immigration and settlement of foreign Jews, following the example of the Anti-Chinese Bills passed in the United States in 1882 and 1884'.<sup>90</sup> The brevity of the document and the few votes it received notwithstanding, a companion-pamphlet published at the end of the previous year as part of a campaign to raise signatures for the proposal provides us with a more compelling picture.

Initially serialized in Schönerer's *Unverfälschten Deutschen Worte*, the anonymously published tract was authored by his collaborator, Carl Beurle (1860–1919).<sup>91</sup> In his pamphlet, Beurle mentioned a previous attempt to introduce a bill against Jewish immigration in late May 1882, though it, too, had been given little attention or support, and did not yet mention an American precedent.<sup>92</sup> However, only two weeks later, the German Jewish paper *Der Israelit* had noted the US diplomatic envoy William Walter Phelps (1839–1894), present in the Austrian parliament, reportedly was approached by an MP on the issue of Jewish immigration to the United States,

<sup>88</sup>A drezdai német reformegylet nyilvános előadási estélye' [Evening Public Lecture at the German Reform Society in Dresden], 12 *Röpirat*, 15 September 1882, 29.

<sup>89</sup>For instance: Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 129; Andrew Gladling Whiteside, *The Socialism of Fools: Georg Ritter von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 120–21; George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success, 1880s–1980s* (Cambridge MA: Abt Books, 1988), 94.

<sup>90</sup>27 May 1887, *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des Österreichischen Reichsrates* (henceforth SPSHAOR), Session 10, vol. 5, 6424–5.

<sup>91</sup>Kurt Tweraser, 'Carl Beurle and the Triumph of German Nationalism in Austria', *German Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (1981): 413–14.

<sup>92</sup>Carl Beurle, *Die Amerikanische Anti-Chinesen-Bill* (Vienna: V. Schönerer, 1886), 34; 22 May 1882, SPSHAOR, Session 9, vol. 8, 8331–2.

given fears that Vienna would become a bottleneck for onward travel.<sup>93</sup> Phelps reassured them that America ‘had long received its best forces through immigration’ from Europe. This was not comparable to the recently enacted anti-Chinese measures, ‘taken with a heavy heart, only because the Chinese would never settle in America, arriving without families, seeking a temporary profit, not even deigning to enrich the soil of the country with their corpses’.<sup>94</sup> This, in turn, served to further contrast archaic Russian ‘despotism’ and its deleterious socio-economic effects to what the United States stood to gain, with the implication that the migration of economically ‘useful’ populations was a global zero-sum game.<sup>95</sup>

To return to Beurle’s pamphlet, its baseline assumption was that American politicians, ‘who will certainly not be accused of any “reactionary” sentiment, chose between upholding a “principle” and protecting the population’: expediency in protecting civilization could not undermine its standing.<sup>96</sup> Based on a contemporary German travelogue, Beurle insisted that any examination of the ‘Chinese question’ made the need to implement similar measures ‘self-evident’: ‘The Jews are the exact counterpart to the Chinese ... if we insert the word “Jew” instead of the word “Chinese” everywhere, we have an exact reproduction of all those reasons which are commonly cited against Semites’. And yet, even as complete commensurability was asserted, exceptionalizing the Jews proved irresistible, subverting it. ‘It would be easy to prove that Semitism exerts an even more detrimental influence than Chinesism’, Beurle went on. Chinese labour, though it depressed wages, was essentially productive, whereas Jews merely acted as superfluous, extractive middlemen.<sup>97</sup> To this familiar economic charge was added a layer of statistical anxiety, for ‘we do not know how many thousands of Jews from Russia and Romania immigrate to Austria-Hungary every year, and how many thousands of Jews from Galicia and Hungary immigrate to our Alpine counties, or to Bohemia and Moravia’. On this reading, Hungary or Romania were only sources for the problem, not partners in solving it.<sup>98</sup> This double bind of internal migration and trans-border immigration further called for emulating American legislation, as the number of Jews in Vienna alone was alleged to be larger than in Britain and France combined, a sufficient cause for the existence in Austria of a ‘Jewish question’, demanding resolution.<sup>99</sup>

In mid-1888, Schönerer’s movement was decapitated by the arrest of its leader, who had led a nocturnal charge against the headquarters of a ‘Jewish’ newspaper which had prematurely reported on the passing of the German Kaiser. But this did not bring an end to the rhetorical comparison of the Chinese and Jewish ‘questions’. Another similar proposal was submitted to the Reichsrat, on 18 February 1890, when Karl Türk (1840–1908) continued Schönerer’s campaign,<sup>100</sup> only to face the ironies of left-wing firebrand Ferdinand Kronawetter (1838–1913). ‘It is really a shame that the precious time of the House has been taken up to discuss today, at the end of the nineteenth century, whether human beings and citizens should be inherently equal to one another and enjoy equal rights. One would not believe that such a question could still be raised in a *Kulturstaat*’, Kronawetter began, equating antisemitism with anachronism. Natural law, he mused, knew of no racial distinctions. Kronawetter attacked ‘those gentlemen who always accuse

<sup>93</sup>More generally, see Markian Prokopovych, ‘Urban History of Overseas Migration in Habsburg Central Europe: Vienna and Budapest in the Late Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Migration History* 2, no. 2 (2016): 330–51; Annemarie Steidl, *On Many Routes: Internal, European, and Transatlantic Migration in the Late Habsburg Empire* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2021); Tobias Brinkmann, “‘Travelling with Ballin’: The Impact of American Immigration Policies on Jewish Transmigration within Central Europe, 1880–1914”, *International Review of Social History* 53, no. 3 (2008): 459–84.

<sup>94</sup>On the historical practice of Chinese post-mortem repatriation, see Sue Fawn Chung and Priscilla Wegars, eds., *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors* (Lanham: AltaMira, 2005).

<sup>95</sup>‘Zeitungs- und Correspondenzen’, *Der Israelit*, 7 June 1882, 565.

<sup>96</sup>Beurle, *Amerikanische Anti-Chinesen-Bill*, 27.

<sup>97</sup>Beurle, *Amerikanische Anti-Chinesen-Bill*, 28–9.

<sup>98</sup>Beurle, *Amerikanische Anti-Chinesen-Bill*, 30.

<sup>99</sup>Beurle, *Amerikanische Anti-Chinesen-Bill*, 32–3.

<sup>100</sup>18 February 1890, *SPSHAOR*, Session 10, vol. 11, 13454–62.

us democrats of being republicans' who 'suddenly find that it is also possible to create good laws under a republican government' and propound them as models. Was there not a double hypocrisy in selectively pointing to progressive America's handling of this 'question', 'generalized' there as not restricted to Jewish (or Chinese) immigration, but one of poor relief for those arriving without means of subsistence? It was a matter of capital, or the absence thereof; of the global mobility of a proletariat, or of the well-off, which, again, knew no racial division.<sup>101</sup> Here again, the 'question-form' could allow for strategic reframing: too narrow a focus on race discredited the broader economic aspect that could afford a resolution befitting the spirit of the age.

In 1891, another proposal was fielded along the same lines, its motivation mentioning how, already, 'in America, even Jewish charities are taking a stand against the further immigration of Russian Jews, although Judaization there has not yet gone as far as it has in our state'.<sup>102</sup> And, in late 1893, this sense of urgency was even more acute, when, with a change in government, previous attempts and the lukewarm admission of the previous PM that legislation was inadequate were invoked: 'if all countries (or one country after the other) deny entry to the Jews and only we hospitably keep our doors open, then either we or our children will likely be forced to emigrate'.<sup>103</sup> This fantasy of demographic displacement hinged less upon a logic of precedent and emulation, and more on the hydraulic imagery of an 'influx' reaching its last possible channel when all other floodgates were already closed, implying a global scale for the problem. Such motions were far from isolated, and continued into the early years of the twentieth century, even if all met with failure – theirs was a recurring presence in parliament.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, we may consider how Schönerer's pan-Germanism helped circulate the *topos* transnationally. Otto Böckel (1859–1923), a Hessian librarian and folklorist, had the dubious honour of becoming the first MP elected to the German Reichstag on a purely antisemitic platform, in early 1887.<sup>105</sup> Already in the summer of that year, a report circulated of Böckel lauding American anti-Chinese legislation as model and strategy at a beer-hall meeting in Berlin.<sup>106</sup> It was soon followed by another describing how, on the outskirts of Böckel's electoral stronghold of Marburg, the anniversary of his antisemitic 'Reform Association' was attended by Schönerer himself. There, the Austrian MP 'gave a two-hour lecture on Germanism in Austria and its struggles against Jewry, vividly describing how the Germans there are harassed by Slavs and Jews, praising the emergence of anti-Semitism as a great national achievement, and demanding exceptional laws such as those adopted in free America against the Chinese as a remedy against the Jews'.<sup>107</sup> Without implying that these particular talking-points provided *the* crucial common ground between two antisemitic activists, such exchanges stood out to contemporary observers as worthy of being singled out, if not for their strangeness, then certainly for their persistence.

## Conclusion

Thinking about and through 'questions' and precedent helped span the gap between the national and the global, legitimizing antisemitism by way of comparison. This comparison, grounded in both the racial-economic representations of 'Chinaman' and 'Jew' and in 'questions' on either side of the Atlantic, was a source for connection and transfer, a vector for 'the globalization of the racial'<sup>108</sup> at a

<sup>101</sup> 18 February 1890, *SPSHAOR*, Session 10, vol. 11, 13462–5.

<sup>102</sup> 20 June 1891, *SPSHAOR*, Session 11, vol. 2, 1003–4.

<sup>103</sup> 15 December 1893, *SPSHAOR*, Session 11, vol. 10, 12260–61.

<sup>104</sup> Benno Gammerl, *Subjects, Citizens, and Others: Administering Ethnic Heterogeneity in the British and Habsburg Empires, 1867–1918* (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 67–70, 106–7.

<sup>105</sup> Richard S. Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 38–66.

<sup>106</sup> 'Zeitungsnachrichten', *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 14 July 1887, 441.

<sup>107</sup> 'Zeitungsnachrichten', *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 25 August 1887, 538.

<sup>108</sup> Goldberg, 'Racial Comparisons', 1725.

time when race as a category was beginning to gain increasing importance in antisemitic discourse. ‘Questions’ facilitated this diffusion even if reference was sometimes asymmetrical – not every invocation of American precedent in solving an explicitly invoked ‘Jewish question’ was doubled by an equally explicit textual reference to a ‘Chinese question’. Nevertheless, as framing devices, ‘questions’ were catalysts for circulation and analogy: it was by its elevation to the rank of ‘question’ that racial unrest in America became notable for a transatlantic public. The ontological existence of ‘questions’ was taken seriously by historical actors, both in how they delineated the geographic and temporal scale of a problematic, and how they clustered concepts around them, such as ‘liberalism’ or ‘civilization’. ‘Questions’, generating interconnectedness in their perceived comparability, were the gateways to the ‘global moment’ that actors imagined. It was these ‘question’-fuelled comparisons, in short, that facilitated the sense of synchronicity, the sense of precedent, and the *tu quoque*. Indeed, imagining a progressive America that acted ‘pragmatically’, against abstract principles, had a special pull, both for emulation and also in terms of providing a *tu quoque* defence against the accusation that such policies were contrary to the spirit of the age.

Yet for all the self-assumed synchronicity within a global moment, not all involved were in the same position. While Romanian statesmen were confronted with the problem of international recognition, in Hungary or Austria these legislative proposals were fielded by marginal, if rising, political forces. Austria-Hungary stood to lose little as a European power from such initiatives, while maverick politicians could hope to boost their European profiles as early adopters of what they assumed was a new set of norms. Still, in all three cases, there was an implicit insistence on remaining within the bounds of some liberal framework, insofar as America could be argued to embody it by default. This fixation on America, in turn, made for scant mention of one’s neighbours as sources of precedent: there was, perhaps, little prestige to be found in this, a language barrier, and a predominant focus on current events further afield. Comparison was mobilized by relatively small and privileged groups, yet was thus locally vested with more immediate political meaning than the globally circulated press reports they drew upon, even if this made for limited discursive variation or granularity. To conclude, this search for textual recurrences, now long since forgotten, is a necessary step in making sense of how the global was imagined, along with its attending gradient of spatial and temporal scales. Even if primarily visible on a national level, the arena for debate in which these talking points were tested and honed always aimed to transcend it: justifying exclusion at home sometimes needed the weight of global precedent.

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