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Abstract

The study analyzes the connection of antisemitism and antiurbanism in voelkish thought in the years between 1902 and 1940. The antisemitic discourse about urban life and Jews in the voelkish movement is based on three topoi: The personification of urbanization in the Jews, the notion that Jews and Germans adapt differently to urban life and the imagination of big cities as a “Jewish” system of seduction and perverseness. The study reveals that Jews are accused of having a specific and unique ability to adjust to urban life. Big cities are on the other hand perceived as a symbolization of “Jewish principles” (modern money economy, cosmopolitanism, debauch). The study makes also a contribution to a theory of antiurbanism and to the ongoing academic discussion about the relationship between voelkisch anti-Semitism and modern society by pointing out that voelkisch thinking is characterized by a different approach to technology and urban life: Technological rationality and progress fit into voelkisch ideology. Modern city life on the contrary was not compatible with voelkish thought.